

# SECURITY STAKES AND CHALLENGES IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

**PATRICK FERRAS**

*Observatory of the Horn of Africa*

patferras@gmail.com

## Introduction

The aim of this article is to make a contribution to the analysis of African solutions to the continental crises emerging from the Horn of Africa. It bases its findings on my experiences in a career as a French officer and numerous researches studies in the field since 2007.

In Addis Ababa, the seat of the African organization, the festivities of the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of the Organization of African Unity (1963) and its successor, the African Union (AU), will be chaired by the AU president, Ethiopian Prime minister Haylä Maryam Dessalegn. Just like the European Union (27 states), the AU (54 states) is an example of advanced complex and regional integration.

Africa is a continent where peace and security problems persist and show no sign of decreasing. The recent creation of two UN missions for Mali and Somalia and the situation in the Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of Congo are examples of disruption of peace and international security.

Since 2002, Africa has established protocols and mechanisms and created its own organization to try to solve its peace and security problems. This African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) should be operational in 2015 after a few years of increase in power strongly supported by American and European partners. At the same time as this difficult challenge, despite few reforms in security sectors, African armies remain at a low operational level and do not have the will to get involved in the African continent.

Having presented the strategic interest of the Horn of Africa, we will assess peace and security in the most conflict-torn region in Africa. The peace and security structure foreseen by the APSA a few years ago has evolved and is a goal in view of the plurality of the committed actors. This region is a laboratory of types of intervention and thus of resolution of conflicts. Three states, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, are very committed in diverse military operations. The example of the Ethiopian National Defence Forces concretely shows an appropriation of the reform of the security sector adapted to the country and its geopolitical environment. Having analyzed the security stakes, we shall suggest some paths for the future of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Horn of Africa.

### **The strategic interest of the Horn of Africa**

Only a few miles from the Arabian Peninsula and thus near seaways vital to the world economy, the Horn of Africa is a strategic area. The French and American military presences underline this. It nevertheless remains a geographical space mentioned (in the media) for plagues such as maritime piracy, forced migration, humanitarian crises and war.

The Horn of Africa continues to illustrate a paradox: even when numerous regional actors are committed to peacekeeping or support operations, this region remains the most conflict-torn of the continent. It includes a large part of the problems of different forms of war - interstate, intra-state, by proxy. All states of the Horn of Africa are in conflict or major crisis.

South Sudan acquired its independence after a civil war lasting more than 20 years (Geoffroy, 2012: 8-11; Raimbaud, 2012: 335-375). The first months of this new status ended in an armed conflict with its neighbour to the north. In spite of calls for restraint and dialogue, it is not very likely that these two states will cease their disputes.

Uganda is marked by an old, little known conflict which widely overflows its borders. The fight against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) very quickly entered the current South Sudan and a few years ago the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Central African Republic.

Eritrea opposed Yemen for the sovereignty of the Hanish islands in the Red Sea (Reid, 2009: 131-149). Both states accepted French mediation and an international decision on the distribution of islands<sup>1</sup>.

The conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea lasted two years (1998-2000) and between 50,000 and 100,000 people died. Further to the peace agreement signed on December 12th 2000 in Algiers, the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) and a border demarcation committee were set up. The committee had to stop its demarcation work on the ground at the end of 2007 and the UNMEE withdrew in July 2008. It was a new situation in which a United Nations mission accepted by both belligerent parties had to give up. The two states are now in a situation of "neither peace, nor war", mobilizing a great deal of their army. The border dispute between Djibouti and Eritrea led to limited confrontations in June 2008. So far, Qatari mediation has made no fundamental advances on the ground.

Somalia has faced a civil war and several foreign interventions since 1991 (Fontrier, 2012: 5-25). The most recent were that with Ethiopia from December 2006 to January 2009 and Ethiopia and Kenya since the end of 2011. The embryonic Somali army trained in Uganda and supported by the AMISOM fights Shabaab, which makes regular attacks thereby weakening the state reconstruction process.

As we have just seen, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda and Somalia are in crises where armies are present in peacekeeping or support missions and also national interventions.

### **UN peacekeeping operations**

The United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations manages and supports 16 operations,<sup>2</sup> eight of which are in Africa. The last one, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission was created on April 25th, 2013<sup>3</sup>. The operations account for 94,035 uniformed personnel, 79,693 of whom are military observers and soldiers and 12,540 police officers. There are also 16,971 civilian personnel and 2,089 United Nations volunteers. A total of around 113,000 people are allocated to peacekeeping operations. The budget is 7.33 billion dollars for the year from July 1st, 2012 to June 30th, 2013.

Only half of the peacekeeping operations are in Africa but they monopolize 75 per cent of United Nations personnel. Their weight is thus extremely important and Africa is the main place of their deployment.

Three major operations are taking place in the Horn of Africa and underline the importance of the security stakes in this region. They are related to the consequences of the conflict between North and South Sudan and the independence of South Sudan.

#### *The United Nations Mission for Abyei*

Security Council Resolution 1990 of June 27th, 2011 reacted to the urgent situation in the Abyei area of Sudan by creating the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). The Security Council was deeply worried about the violence, escalation of tensions and people's movements. The force's mission is to check the tense border zone between North and South and it is authorized to use force to protect civilians and humanitarian workers in the Abyei area. It was set up after the Sudan Government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) reached an agreement in Addis Ababa to demilitarize Abyei and allow Ethiopian forces to control the area. At the end of the UN Security Council mission, the UNISFA will control and check redeployment of all the Sudanese armed forces and MPLS forces or the entity that will succeed it outside the Abyei area. This area will be demilitarized and only the UNISFA and the Abyei police will have to be present. In case of need and in cooperation with the Abyei police, UNISFA troops will also ensure the security of the oil infrastructure there. On March 31st, 2013, it comprised 3,977 uniformed personnel, 3,827 of whom were soldiers, 140 military observers and 10 police officers, plus 146 international civilian staff members, local civilians and volunteers. Ethiopia has been involved in the agreements between Sudan and South Sudan and supplies almost the entire contingent of troops in the mission.

#### *The United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID)*

Acting under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, the Security Council Resolution 1769 of July 31st, 2007 authorized UNAMID to take all necessary measures in the sectors where its contingents would be deployed and as far as its capacities allowed. UNAMID will protect its staff, places, installations and equipment and ensure the security and free circulation of its personnel and humanitarian agents. It will facilitate the fast and effective implementation of the Peace Agreement for Darfur, prevent any disturbance and armed attacks and protect civilians without prejudice to the responsibility of the Sudanese Government. It will contribute to restoring the necessary security conditions for humanitarian assistance throughout Darfur and to the protection of people threatened by physical violence. For its mandate, the UNAMID has 20,071 uniformed personnel (14,902 soldiers, 311 military observers and 4,858 policemen) and 4,434 international civilian staff members, local civilians and volunteers<sup>4</sup>.

With a staff of about 25,000 people, UNAMID is the most important mission in the Horn of Africa.

### *The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)*

Having determined that the situation facing South Sudan continues to constitute a threat to international peace and the security in the region and acting according to the Chapter of the UN Charter, Security Council Resolution 1996 of July 8, 2011 set up the UNMISS. Its mandate aims at strengthening peace and the new state and promoting long-term economic development. It will support the government in the exercise of its responsibilities regarding prevention, mitigation and regulation of conflicts; help it to insure security, set up the rule of law and strengthen the police and justice sectors. On March 31st 2013, it comprised 7,259 uniformed personnel (6,560 soldiers, 143 military observers and 556 police officer) and 2,598 international civilian staff members, local civilians and volunteers.

These three missions help to ensure security in both Sudans and are fundamental elements in support for the construction of the state of the South Sudan.

Other institutions or partners support United Nations in the peace and security missions.

### **The missions of the African Union (AU) and external partners**

Two missions are in progress in the Horn of Africa: the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Regional Cooperation Initiative against the Lord's Resistance Army.

AMISOM was created by decision of the African Union Peace and Security Council on January 19th, 2007 and confirmed by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1744. Its mandate is to provide support for the federal transition institutions in their efforts to stabilize the situation in the country and the continuation of dialogue and reconciliation, facilitate the supply of humanitarian aid and create the right conditions for long-term stabilization, reconstruction and development in Somalia. It evolved in face of the threat from Al Shabaab and opposition groups in Somalia.

Five contributors sent troops within the framework of the AMISOM. Uganda (6,223 soldiers) and Burundi (5,432) were the first elements of this African force. They were joined by Djibouti (960) and Kenya (4,652) and 850 soldiers from Sierra Leone are expected soon.

AMISOM is an African force of more than 15,000 people allocated to the stabilization of the Somali state in terms of security and the reconstruction of its institutions.

The first activities of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) took place in Uganda in 1987. They crossed national borders for several years and thus raised a grave regional security problem. Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, Sudan and the Central African Republic were affected by LRA troop movements, which we recently estimated at 400 people. To put an end to this conflict, which was responsible for 100,000 deaths, 20,000 kidnappings of children and about a million displaced persons in the north of the country, the African Union set up a regional cooperation initiative against the LRA in November 22nd 2011 (decision of the Peace and Security Council). Its mission is to fight the LRA and strengthen the operational capacities of countries affected by its activities. Four countries decided to allocate contingents of troops<sup>5</sup>. At the end of February 2013, 3,360 people were dedicated to this initiative.

While the will of the African Union to fight against the LRA is justified, it collides with the military limits and geopolitical situation of the states concerned. Only Uganda, concerned primarily and supported by American military advisors, showed an effort to combat the threat. The European Union Training Mission in Somalia (EUTM Somalia) is a military mission aimed at strengthening the Somali national government and institutions by giving military training to the Somali national armed forces. It was launched to support United Nations Security Council Resolution 1872 (2009). It is part of the EU's global approach to challenges in the Horn of Africa. This action's main goal is to train the new Somali army. The mission is located at two sites in Uganda. The general staff is in Kampala and the training is given in Bihanga. It has trained 3,000 troops.

The dispute between Djibouti and Eritrea began in March, 2008 following Eritrea's deployment of troops and military equipment to Ras Doumeira and the island of Doumeira, both administered by Djibouti in an area where the border remains a de facto line because of divergent former colonial agreements<sup>6</sup>.

The agreement between Eritrea and Djibouti under the mediation of Qatar on June 6th, 2010 specifies that both countries agree to solve their border dispute by a negotiated agreement and entrust Qatar with setting up a mechanism to facilitate the demarcation of the border, control the border and solve the question of prisoners of war and missing persons. Hundreds of Qatari soldiers are in the mission.

The Horn of Africa is a region where United Nations peacekeeping troops are deployed to support African Union missions and the European and Qatari initiatives. They are connected to building, disintegration or reconfiguration of the state. They help to put an end to violence. They take place in an African context of a will to manage the conflicts in the continent.<sup>7</sup>

### **The new African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA)**

On succeeding the Organization of African Unity, the African Union developed its perception of peace and security in the continent. The decision to create a Peace and Security Council (PSC - Protocol of July 9th, 2002) and its official launch in 2004 was a major act for the new African institution. It consists of fifteen representative members of five African regions and there is no right of veto.

Its objectives are the promotion of the peace, security and stability in Africa, the prevention and anticipation of conflicts and the promotion of peace building and reconstruction after conflicts. The PSC leans mainly on regional economic communities, regional mechanisms and the African Standby Force to achieve its objectives<sup>8</sup>. The ASF should have an intervention brigade per region by 2015. It derives from the African concern to react with African means for regulation of crises in Africa. It must be able to be deployed on short notice and consists of permanent general staffs and readiness units in their country of origin.

In the Horn of Africa, for the East Brigade, it was necessary to create a special organization to include the states<sup>9</sup> that wished to join it, the Eastern African Standby Force Coordination Mechanism (EASFCOM), which replaced the temporary coordination structure of the IGAD<sup>10</sup>. EASFCOM includes IGAD states and also the Indian Ocean Commission and the East African Community.

To satisfy both regional powers of the EASFCOM, certain components are situated in Ethiopia (headquarters of the brigade and the logistics base) and others in Kenya (Planning Element, International Peace Support Training Centre). This distribution presents handicaps (in terms of cohesion) due to location in two different geographical areas.

The Amani Africa exercise cycle was launched in 2008 to estimate the African Standby Forces. The last stage will take place in Botswana at the end of 2014 and should end in certification of the ASF. This cycle took place within the EU / AU partnership.

The implementation of the APSA and thus the increase in power of the Eastern Africa Standby Force Coordination Mechanism evolves according to the balance of power between African countries in political and military potential (Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi). The lack of regional cohesion hinders the development of EASFCOM. Furthermore, this strength seems very dependent on the international support.

If the African Peace and Security Architecture increases in power, it will be effective and operational only if the military actors (the national armies) are capable of making the necessary contributions for the deployment of the African Standby Forces.

The conflict in Mali and the rebellion in the Central African Republic caused analysts to question the value of the African armies. From the headline of the French *Jeune Afrique* journal ("Why are they so hopeless?" of December, 2012) to that in *Africa Report* ("African armies are better than you think" of April, 2013), this question remains and has not found a satisfactory global answer. What about all the cooperation programmes with the European and American armies? Where are the programmes launched under the concept of reform of the security sector? Every army is a particular case and requires an appropriate study. It is also connected to the state and its construction.

To illustrate our comment, it seems worthwhile to study the increasing importance of the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF) since 1991 (Ferras, 2011). It could supply a reference framework.

### **African military actors, the example of the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF)**

In 1991, the Tigray and Eritrea liberation movement defeated the Ethiopian army, one of the most powerful in Africa. After the fall of the Marxist military dictatorship of Mängestu Haylä Maryam, Ethiopia built a transitional government for four years. It drafted the new constitution (1994). The government's priority was military reorganization on its constitutional side and its weight in relation to the government (budgetary costs, staff). According to the Constitution (Articles 51 and 86), Ethiopian defence policy is based on four principles:

1. Defend the sovereignty of national territory;
2. Protect national interests (ensuring national independence);
3. Intervene in case of deterioration of the situation in one of the federated states when it can no longer be controlled;
4. Seek and support peaceful solutions to international disputes (litigation, conflicts).

These principles provide a clear framework for national defence in Ethiopia. The bulk of power in this area is in the hands of the Prime Minister who is the commander in chief of the armed forces. The Minister of Defence and Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces assist him. General Gäbrä Tsadqan Gäbrä Tänsaé, chief of staff until 2001, who fought against the dictatorship of Mängestu Haylä Maryam for sixteen years, played a key role in developing the concept of the Ethiopian armed forces. He defined the characteristics of a national army and they have been incorporated in the Constitution and army doctrine. The national army remains under the orders of political power and is a safeguard of the constitution and the Nation.

The first action taken by the transitional government was to demobilize most of the national army (Fontrier, 2012: 10-25). Indeed, its excess strength did not meet priorities, which were the reconstruction of the state, development and the fight against poverty. The first demobilization (and disarmament) returned to civilian life approximately 403,000 soldiers including 38,000 war invalids. Some managers whose specificities were essential to the reorganization and did not have direct relationships with the Därg regime have been maintained in the new national army. The role of the national army during the transition period was played by the armed forces of the main opposition movement, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front which led the fall of Mängestu Haylä Maryam.

The Constitution provides that the composition of the armed forces must reflect a fair representation of the "peoples, nations and nationalities" that make up Ethiopia. The army faced a second demobilization. In 1991, the people under arms came mainly from the Teyray People Liberation Front and 30,000 of them were returned to civilian life in 1995 to satisfy the principle of stability of the nations, nationalities and people that make up Ethiopia. Meanwhile, a recruitment campaign began especially in regions under-represented in the national army. While maintaining the defence capacity in the country, the army underwent two major demobilizations in three years. In 1998, the army had not completed its transfer and during the reorganization it was difficult to consider dealing with a major commitment. The armed forces had 50,000 to 60,000 troops (Army and Air Force, the abandoned Navy).

The conflict lasted two years and resulted in 50,000 to 100,000 deaths. The Ethiopians and the new Ethiopian army were surprised. The authorities had to mobilize, train and deploy their troops quickly. In 1999, the Ethiopians took over Badme after heavy fighting and recovered all the territories they had controlled before the conflict in May 2000.

At the end of the conflict with Eritrea, Ethiopia's national defence forces underwent their third demobilization in less than ten years. The armed forces in 2008 stabilized at between 140,000 and 150,000 men. Today they are around 135,000. The defence budget declined and was around 1 per cent of Gross Domestic Product in 2012.

In December 2006, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia called for Ethiopia's help against the establishment of an Islamic state. Ethiopian troops entered Somalia in December 2006 and quickly routed the Islamic Courts Union forces. The Ethiopian presence lasted two years and ended in early 2009 because of the withdrawal announced by the Government of Ethiopia. A second deployment of troops occurred at the end of 2011 to help the Somali army, AMISOM and the Kenyan army to fight against Al Shabaab. The end of this intervention had been announced by the Prime minister in April 2013.

In addition to these three major conflicts, Ethiopian National Defence Forces intervened in the national sphere and also for the benefit of the international community. The ENDF was the fourth contributor to UN peacekeeping operations with 6,514 troops deployed. This involvement with the international community also came with participation in the Global War



on Terror (GWOT). Ethiopia was also involved in the concept of the African Standby Force (ASF).

Ethiopia, which had underestimated its geopolitical environment during the first years of the post-Mängestu period, readjusted its defence instrument by taking account of its conflict with Eritrea, which marked a regional break. The intervention of Ethiopian troops in Somalia definitively let Ethiopia in to its regional area.

The plans for the reorganization of the ENDF before the fall of Mängestu did not envisage the Ethiopian army as we know it today. The first years of the period devoted internal geopolitics to the organization of armed forces. The conflict with Eritrea showed that an army was also connected to its geopolitical environment. The ENDF is thus the product of Ethiopia's internal and external geopolitics.

The example of the Ethiopian army and its reorganization underline the need to adapt the reforms of the military instrument by taking account of national specificities and also the geopolitical environment of the state in question. In view of the level of conflict in Africa, armies must not be neglected in a perspective of national or international commitment.

### **Some lines of reflection on security and challenges in the Horn of Africa**

It seems clear that the regionalization in Africa is far from finished and that rivalries between regional organizations, states and the African Union are still great (Gnanguenon, 2010). The Horn of Africa does not escape this lack of coherence between geographical regions and from regional economic communities. The rivalries in the domains of peace and security led to the creation of a coordination mechanism (EASFCOM). But the IGAD and the EAC continue to take their own action in these particular fields. The African Union does not seem to have enough recognized authority “to rationalize” the structures and avoid unsatisfactory “doubles”. The commitment of numerous actors to internal conflicts in the region but also marginally out of the region does not help to clarify the situation.

The financial aspect remains essential and the AU and EASFCOM are dependent on international contributions. The Chinese donations for the construction of the African Union headquarters<sup>11</sup> in Addis Abäba and AMISOM are recent examples. Without international intervention, the African Peace and Security Architecture is blocked. The Mali donors' conference in Addis Abäba in February 2013 showed this. Less than a fifth of the 480 million dollars required was brought by Africa. The budget of the African Union is 278 million dollars in 2013 (*Africa Report*, May 2013). Another example is the London Conference for Somalia (May 7th, 2013) which was able to find 300 million dollars in international aid. The APSA is a necessary project for Africa and its future. But this project is very ambitious and too dependent on external donations.

The common African defence and security policy drafted in 2004 should be taken back and set out in a white paper on defence and security in Africa to lay foundations accepted by all and taking into account experiences of the first decade of the APSA. It would make a balanced assessment of the African armies, equipment and efforts needed to reach a common goal.

In the Horn of Africa, the EASFCOM remains a major challenge both in the organization and capacities of military intervention. EASFCOM is therefore delaying its commitment, in particular in Somalia. As Colonel Metayer pointed out during a colloquium (2011, in Paris) on Somalia, “It would bring a more convenient framework to balance the levers of action between pressure, diplomatic dialogue and development aid” and could “assert its point of view and its voice to contribute completely to the resolution of an African crisis”.

The troops of the main military actors in the Horn of Africa were committed in Somalia. Ethiopia and Kenya showed an interest in having forces and committing them in a national context for the conservation of their interests. They underlined that they could precede a peace support operation, be launched in parallel or become part of it. The various commitments in Somalia open opportunities to develop scenarios for the African Standby Force. To be achieved, it is necessary to have a reactive, operational military tool. The Horn of Africa has an expertise on the subject that it would be good to include in future reflections. The intervention in Mali and Somalia shows that the main military operations will be carried out by some leading nations in Africa that have a military capacity and recognized leadership. Their action would have an attractive effect on the small African military nations. Large-scale military actions require assets in strategic transport, intelligence and targeting and planning capacities. Only the continental level of the African Union would be able to plan, manage and acquire these assets, which cannot be acquired by a single African state.

## **Conclusion**

The challenges and the security stakes in the Horn of Africa are gigantic. By welcoming a third of the United Nations peacekeeping troops, it has reached a level of unbearable conflict for both the continent and its countries. The first decade of the African Peace and Security Architecture laid the foundations of an organization and try to lean on regions to find solutions. 2015 will validate the concept of the African Standby Force.

But the commitment difficulties for political and military reasons do not have to block attempts to anticipate or solve crises. If standby brigades can be useful, they will not provide all the solutions, in particular during complex crises. The states whose national interests will be affected by a conflict will always reserve the possibility of making a unilateral commitment or forming ad hoc coalitions. The Horn of Africa is a laboratory that opens paths of reflection or studies of the future of the African Peace and Security Architecture.

## **Notes:**

1 The conflict started in 1995.

2 The mission in Afghanistan is a political mission.

3 The other missions are deployed in Liberia, South Sudan, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Western Sahara, Abeyi and the Ivory Coast.

4 March 31, 2013.

5 Uganda (3,000) – CAR (360) – South Sudan (500) – DRC (500).

6 12 Djiboutian soldiers were killed between the 10 and the 13 June, 2008. 60 were wounded.

7 Chapter 8 of the United Nations Charter.

8 Three other bodies worked with the CPS: the Panel of the Wise, the Peace Fund and the Continental Early Warning System.

9 Countries of IGAD and Seychelles, Mauritius, Comoros, Rwanda and Burundi.

10 Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

11 China offered the new headquarters and paid more than 250 million dollars.

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