# WARFARE AND HUMAN (IN)SECURITY IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

### Laura M. Herța\*

#### Abstract:

The main purpose of this article is to show that certain postulates of Realist and Neorealist thinking in International Relations (IR) are not really applicable on the regional configurations in the Horn of Africa. The main goals herein are: 1) to identify and underline certain endemic sources of insecurity in the Horn of Africa and 2) to argue that state-centric views on security in this region do not offer solutions for the security of individuals. The main argument which will be built throughout this article is that (Neo)realist, state-centric approaches do not trigger the security of states (through counter-balancing configurations and territorial gains) in the Horn of Africa and that Human Security is a more appropriate framework for analysis in this case. Basically the argument is that "powerful states" mean different things when exploring different regions and the huge difference between highly militarized states (hence powerful in material terms), on the one hand, and weak states, on the other, needs to be emphasized.

**Keywords:** Horn of Africa, warfare, security, regional hegemony, (Neo)realism, Human Security

#### Introduction

The main purpose of this article is to show that certain postulates of Realist and Neorealist thinking in International Relations (IR) are not really applicable on the regional configurations in the Horn of Africa.

<sup>\*</sup> Laura M. Herţa holds a PhD in History and is currently Lecturer in International Relations within the Department of International Relations and American Studies, Faculty of European Studies, and member of the Centre for African Studies (Babeş-Bolyai University). Contact: laura.herta@euro.ubbcluj.ro

Therefore, the article will be structured as follows: the first part will briefly outline some of the arguments and contentions of the Realist and Neorealist theory, by focusing on key concepts such as power, hegemony, centrality of states, state security. Then the discussion on the meaning of security in IR literature will follow suit, by focusing on the "widening and deepening" of security, and by emphasizing the arguments embedded in Human Security. The second part of the article will explore the weaknesses of states in the Horn of Africa and traits of insecurity, by looking at both the recurrence of inter-state wars and at the proliferation of intra-state violence.

As such, the main goals herein are: 1) to identify and underline certain endemic sources of insecurity in the Horn of Africa and 2) to argue that state-centric views on security in this region do not offer solutions for the security of individuals.

The main argument which will be built throughout this article is that (Neo)realist, state-centric approaches do not trigger the security of states (through counter-balancing configurations and territorial gains) in the Horn of Africa and that Human Security is a more appropriate framework for analysis in this case. Basically the argument is that "powerful states" mean different things when exploring different regions and the huge difference between highly militarized states (hence powerful in material terms), on the one hand, and weak states, on the other, needs to be emphasized.

## Realism and Neorealism: main tenets and caveats regarding security and war

Despite numerous discussions on the limits of (Neo)realism and the abundant and outstanding criticism formulated against this theoretical approach, there is one predominant idea in IR: that (Neo)realism is a crucial and challenging theory within the study of International Relations/International Politics/World Politics, which ignited a pivotal transformation in thinking about the international system and the behaviour of states within it. A great deal of coherent and innovative works emerged as both *a criticism against* and *a tribute to* (Neo)realism.¹ As Richard Ashley formulated it, "Neorealism

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> See, for example, Alexander Wendt's title of his prestigious and widely quoted book *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), which represents a critical view against (Neo)realism, but also a tribute to renowned Neorealist scholar Kenneth Waltz and his seminal book *Theory of International Politics* (1979).

[...] is a progressive scientific redemption of classical realist scholarship. It serves the interests of classical realism under new and challenging circumstances [...] neorealim is twice blessed. It is heir to and carries forward both of the great revolutions that preceded it: realism against idealism, and science against traditionalist thought."<sup>2</sup>

Realism is mainly associated with classical realism and the work of Hans Morgenthau and focuses on the human nature (and hence occurrence, recurrence, and ubiquity of conflict) which is inherently predisposed to power-seeking and dominance. Morgenthau defined power broadly as "anything that establishes and maintains the control of man over man." As John Mearsheimer explained the classical realist thinking, "virtually everyone is born with a will to power hardwired into them, which effectively means that great powers are led by individuals who are bent on having their state dominate its rivals."4 One key feature of Realism is its commitment to rationality, meaning that state leaders are rational leaders who are able to calculate positive outcomes that produce the maximization of power for the state. One other major concept introduced by Morgenthau is "the balance of power", which the scholar described as "necessary outgrowth" of "power politics". 5 Robert O. Keohane emphasized that "the 'balance of power' is for Morgenthau a 'universal concept'", but the term was used so broadly to prove its universality that it became inconsistent. Hence, "without coherent definitions of 'power' and 'balance of power', Morgenthau was unable to create a consistent and convincing theory."6

Neorealism emerged during the Cold War period (more precisely in the 1970s) and extended and nuanced the precursors' arguments, chiefly by shifting the attention to the international system in which states are determined

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Richard Ashley, "The Poverty of Neorealism", in Robert O. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, p. 160.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> See Hans Morgethau's *Six Principles of Political Realism*, in *Politics among Nations*, New York: Knopf, 1948.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, "Structural Realism," in Tim Dunne; Milja Kurki; Steve Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 72.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Morgenthau, op. cit., p. 161.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Robert O. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, p. 13.

to behave and interact. One prominent scholar was Kenneth Waltz. According to Keohane, "for Waltz, a good theory will not merely point to the importance of power and the balance of power, as Morgenthau did, but will account for the recurrent formation of balances of power in world politics, and tell us how changing power configurations affect patterns of alignments and conflict in world politics." For Kenneth Waltz, the anarchic nature of the international system allows for conflict to emerge and "states are unitary actors who, at minimum, seek their own preservation and, at maximum, drive for universal domination."

Ole Waever underlined that "security is, in historical terms, the field where states threaten each other, challenge each other's sovereignty, try to impose their will on each other, defend their independence [...]". The Realist postulates have been dominating the field of Security Studies throughout time and especially during the Cold War, when national security became the centrepiece of concern. The Realist account on national security is indicative for the materialist-loaded conception of states' ability to maximize the military capabilities in order to address the security problem. On the systemic level, the international system was (and always is) governed by anarchy (and ubiquity of conflict/violence/attack) which led to an international order wherein security from outside threats was the essence of rational thinking. Therefore, statism and self-help are overriding principles whereas power was exclusively and overwhelmingly centred on military capacity. Thus, states ("like-units" in Kenneth Waltz's terms<sup>10</sup>) are mainly preoccupied with external threats. Basically, issues of security were concerned with the "phenomenon of war" and with "the study of the threat, use and control of military force."11

Neorealism did not focus on human nature, since it is actually a systemic theory which argues that conflict, power-seeking behaviour, and war are the results if the anarchic international order. Anarchy governs the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Keohane, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics, Reading: Addison Wesley, 1979, p. 118.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Ole Waever, "Securitization and Desecuritization", in Barry Buzan; Lene Hansen (eds.), *International Security* (volume III *Widening Security*), London: Sage Publications, 2007, pp. 66-98.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Waltz, Theory of International Politics.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Stephan Walt, "The Renaissance of Security Studies", *International Studies Quarterly*, 1991, 35 (2), pp. 211-139.

international system and since there is no higher authority above states to regulate inter-state relations or hamper warmongering behaviour, then "international anarchy is the permissive cause for war."<sup>12</sup>

"Some states may hunger for power for power's sake. Neorealist theory, however, shows that it is not necessary to assume an innate lust for power in order to account for the sometimes fierce competition that marks the international arena. *In an anarchic domain, a state of war exists if all parties lust for power. But so too will a state of war exist if all states seek only to ensure their own safety* [...]."<sup>13</sup>

Hence, what prevails in inter-state relations is prudence (about the capabilities of others), self-help (since states can only rely on themselves for protection) and the inherent security dilemma, and survival (which represents states' most important interest). Power relations on the international scene are proportional to the distribution of capabilities (always measured in military terms, *i.e.* material forces).

Kenneth Waltz talked about the "permissive cause of war" in his book *Man, the State and, War* (from 1954) but, as Cynthia Weber keenly noted, in his *Theory of International Politics* (1979), "Waltz extends international anarchy from a cause of war into a systemic ordering principle of the international system, a move which gives birth to the tradition of (neo)realism"<sup>14</sup>, also called structural realism. For Waltz, then, anarchy and the distribution of capabilities are ordering principles of the international structure. States counter-balance each other (especially in a bipolar system) while at the same time trying to maximize their power (since this is the best and rational thing to do in an anarchical structure) and trying to cope with the security dilemma.

Cynthia Weber argued that there is something missing from the world as anarchic structure described by Waltz and that is *fear*, meaning that the security dilemma is attributable to the international anarchy *per se*,

University Press, 1989, pp. 43–44. Emphasis added.

<sup>14</sup> Cynthia Weber, *International Relations Theory. A critical introduction*, Second edition, London and New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War* quoted in Cynthia Weber, *International Relations Theory. A critical introduction*, Second edition, London and New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 16.

<sup>13</sup> Kenneth Waltz, "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory," in Robert I. Rotberg and Theodore K. Rabb (eds.), *The Origin and Prevention of Major War*, New York: Cambridge

when actually it is only when state-leaders are taken by fear that they see that conflicts emerge within the conditions of anarchy.<sup>15</sup> Cynthia Weber used the 1963 British movie *Lord of the Flies* (based on the homonymous novel written by William Golding) to indicate that anarchy alone does not lead to conflict (unless it is supplemented with fear among participants). C. Weber's point is to show that "anarchy does not create the fear that Waltz theorizes in *Theory of International Politics*. Rather, *fear creates the effects that Waltz attributes to anarchy – prioritizing survival, self-help over cooperation, and either conflict or competitive balancing.*"<sup>16</sup>

The end of the Cold War spurred an interesting and rich debate on whether (Neo)realism still offers valid assumptions about the new international system/order. Critical, constructivist, and liberal voices in IR tried to emphasize (Neo)realism's poverty. Kenneth Waltz, though, recharged the main tenets by rejecting, *inter alia*, the liberal peace thesis:

"Democracies may live at peace with democracies, but even if all states became democratic, the structure of international politics would remain anarchic. The structure of international politics is not transformed by changes internal to states, however widespread the changes may be. In the absence of an external authority, a state cannot be sure that today's friend will not be tomorrow's enemy." <sup>17</sup>

The arguments and work of Kenneth Waltz have been associated with *defensive realism* and other Neorealist scholars (such as John Mearsheimer) gained prominence under the banner of *offensive realism*.

According to Mearsheimer, "there is a limitless power struggle [...] but what drives it is not an appetite for power in the human animal, but a search for security that is forced by the anarchic structure of the international system." In this sense, Mearsheimer shares the idea of power-seeking behaviour with Hans Morgenthau, but, as a structural realist, he identifies a different cause for this, namely the anarchic condition of the international

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 32. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Weber, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Kenneth Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War", *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Summer 2000), p. 10.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Glenn H. Snyder, "Mearsheimer's World—Offensive Realism and the Struggle for Security. A Review Essay", *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 1, Summer 2002, p. 151.

system. The latter is also a shared understanding of states' behaviour on the international scene between Waltz and Mearsheimer, but the two neorealist scholars separate intellectually and analytically when the following question is addressed: how much power do states want?

"For defensive realists, the international structure provides states with little incentive to seek additional increments of power; instead it pushes them to maintain the existing balance of power. Preserving power, rather than increasing it, is the main goal of states. Offensive realists, on the other hand, believe that status quo powers are rarely found in world politics because the international system creates powerful incentives for states to look for opportunities to gain power at the expense of rivals and to take advantage of those situations when the benefits outweigh the costs. A state's ultimate goal is to be the hegemon in the system." <sup>19</sup>

Ultimately, for Neorealists, the chief objective for states is security. In Waltz's defensive realism, states are able and ready to accept risks and "and more willing to live with only a modest amount of security" whereas in Mearsheimer's offensive realism, "security might be defined crudely as the probability that one's core interests will not be challenged or violated over some reasonable time span."<sup>20</sup> According to Mearsheimer, "it makes good strategic sense for states to gain as much power as possible and, if the circumstances are right, to pursue hegemony. The argument is not that conquest or domination is good in itself, but instead that having overwhelming power is the best way to ensure one's own survival."<sup>21</sup>

In previous articles, my main attempt was to underline that the (Neo)realist understanding of power and security does not capture a complex dynamic of violence, as is the case of most African new wars, which display state weakness, internal fragmentation, proliferation of militias, civil wars, and the spill-over effects of conflicts in neighbouring states. Hence, the materialist dimension built on the triangle security-weaponry-military strength neglects *ontological security* and the groups' and the individuals' security is not primarily addressed, since the state is the provider of internal

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2001, *apud Ibidem*, pp. 151-152.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Snyder, op. cit., p. 153.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Mearsheimer, Structural Realism, p. 72.

security.<sup>22</sup> In what follows, I will briefly introduce Human Security, distinguish the dynamic of insecurity in the Horn of Africa, and then try to show the merits of Human Security when discussing the concepts of power and security in the Horn.

### **Human Security**

In the 1990's, the extension of non-traditional, "widening" and "deepening" debate on security moved away the objectives of policy (and the essence of theorizing) from the military to economic, societal, environmental, and human security.<sup>23</sup> The focus of concern shifted from the *security of nations* to the *security of groups* and *individuals*. Hence, in 1994, the United Nations Development Programme issued the *Human Development Report* marking the transition "from nuclear security to human security," or to "the basic concept of human security" defined as safety from "such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression," and "protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions."<sup>24</sup>

In 1995, the International Commission on Global Governance vertically extended security by showing that "global security must be broadened from its traditional focus on the security of states to the security of people and the planet."<sup>25</sup> That same year the United Nations Secretary-General

.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Laura M. Herta, "Humanitarian Intervention and Human Security – Sociological, Critical, and Constructivist Approaches to (In)security in Africa", in Valentin Naumescu (ed.), *Democracy and Security in the 21st Century: Perspectives on a Changing World*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014, pp. 343-381; Laura M. Herta, "Intra-state violence in DR Congo and Human Security – Perspectives from International Relations Theories", in Wolfgang Benedek, Vanda A. Dias, Lisa M. Heschl, Matthias C. Kettemann, Reinmar Nindler, Kalkidan N. Obse, Stefan Salomon (eds.), *An African Spring? Human Rights and Security in Times of Change*, European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (ETC), Graz, 2014, pp. 186-218.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> The Copenhagen School and its leading scholars Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, Jaap de Wilde, Lene Hansen and Emma Rothschild revisited the concept of security by focusing on its broadening attributes. See Barry Buzan; Ole Waever; Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998 and Barry Buzan; Lene Hansen (eds.), *International Security* (volume III *Widening Security*), London, Sage Publications, 2007.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> *Human Development Report 1994*, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1994.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> The Commission on Global Governance, *Our Global Neighbourhood*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 78.

called for a "conceptual breakthrough" enhancing or protecting "the security of people in their homes, jobs and communities." And the Commission on Human Security has concentrated on "distinct but interrelated areas concerned with conflict and poverty, protecting people during violent conflict and in post-conflict situations, defending people who are forced to move, overcoming economic insecurities ..." 27

As emphasized elsewhere<sup>28</sup> as well, Edward Newman captured different approaches on human security. The first one, wherein "scholars of human security argue that for many people in the world [...] the greatest threats to 'security' come from internal conflicts, disease, hunger, environmental contamination or criminal violence". In this approach, the focus is on the individuals' confrontation with the threats which from their own state and not from an 'external' adversary. A second "approach to human security is narrower, and focuses on the human consequences of armed conflict and the dangers posed to civilians by repressive governments and situations of state failure"; in this understanding, the brutality of the modern armed conflicts indicates that civilians are deliberate targets and conflict is associated with refugees flows, humanitarian disasters, child soldiering, and human displacement. It follows then, that "conventional security analysis is woefully inadequate for describing and explaining the realities of armed conflict and its impact upon humanity."<sup>29</sup>

The United Nations presents Human Security as "practical policy framework for addressing widespread and cross-cutting threats" and emphasizes it core goals:

"Recognizing that threats to human security vary considerably across and within countries, and at different points in time, the application of human security calls for an assessment of human insecurities that is

<sup>29</sup> Edward Newman, "Critical human security studies", *Review of International Studies*, 2010, 36, pp. 80-81.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "Let's get together to halt the unravelling of society" quoted in Emma Rothschild, "What is security?", in Barry Buzan; Lene Hansen (eds.), *International Security* (volume III *Widening Security*), London, Sage Publications, 2007, p. 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Commission on Human Security, *Human Security Now*, Commission on Human Security, New York, 2003.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Herta, Humanitarian Intervention and Human Security, p. 367.

people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and preventive. Such an approach helps focus attention on current and emerging threats to the security and well-being of individuals and communities."<sup>30</sup>

Basically, the idea behind human security is to explore and remedy individuals' insecurities. This approach was triggered by the re-configuration of international politics in the aftermath of the Cold War and by the globalization of world politics. As such, there was a need to formulate policies and design strategies for addressing global threats, like HIV, pollution, global warming (which singular states cannot solve), but also a need to pinpoint to particularities of insecurity in certain regions. Another development during the last decades was the decrease in inter-state warfare, but at the same time the proliferation of intra-state armed conflicts affecting huge numbers of civilians. Therefore, Human Security emerged as both a response to such new threats (mostly affecting the individuals, hence it's people-centred stance) and as a conceptual breakthrough in International Relations and Security Studies.

## The Horn of Africa and (in)security

When attempting to address the region called the Horn of Africa, two approaches are found. The narrowest geographical delimitation includes Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia in the Horn.<sup>31</sup> According to some, the "proper Horn" comprises Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, Sudan and, since 1991, Eritrea.<sup>32</sup> Another approach refers to the Greater Horn of Africa and hence to a broader geographical delimitation. Martin R. Rupiya and Alfred G. Nhema mention the Horn as comprising the seven states of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Sudan, Somalia, Uganda and Kenya, while for Samson S. Wasara "originally,

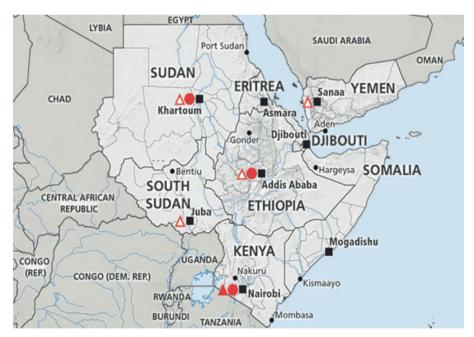
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> United Nations, United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, *Human Security Approach*, [http://www.un.org/humansecurity/human-security-unit/human-security-approach], accessed July 2015.

<sup>31 [</sup>www.ifrc.org], accessed May 2015.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Martin R. Rupiya; Alfred G. Nhema, "A Regional Security Perspective from and for the Horn of Africa", in Hans Günter Brauch; Úrsula Oswald Spring; Czeslaw Mesjasz; John Grin, Pál Dunay; Navnita Chadha Behera; Béchir Chourou; Patricia Kameri-Mbote; P. H. Liotta (eds.), Globalization and Environmental Challenges. Reconceptualizing Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, New York, Berlin, Heidelberg: Spinger, 2008, p. 801.

the Horn was composed of Djibouti, Ethiopia and Somalia"<sup>33</sup>, but "the Horn is an expanding region that includes Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda, through belonging to Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD)."<sup>34</sup> In delineating the Horn, Berouk Mesfin points to the inter-related patterns and interactions among several states pertaining to the Horn of Africa:

"Uganda [...] and Yemen, Libya and Egypt are no less involved in the issues and processes of the region and certainly have an impact on power balances and developments. All these states share social and cultural values emanating from a centuries-old tradition of interrelationships, common religious practices and economic linkages. Furthermore, the political fate of each state in the region has always been inextricably intertwined with that of neighbouring states." <sup>35</sup>



Source: Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) [www.eda.admin.ch]

<sup>33</sup> Thidem

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Samson S. Wasara, "Conflict and State Security in the Horn of Africa: Militarization of Civilian Groups", *African Journal of Political Science*, 2002, vol.7, no. 2, p. 43.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Berouk Mesfin, "The Horn of Africa security complex", in Roba Sharamo; Berouk Mesfin (eds.), Regional Security in the post-Cold War Horn of Africa, Monograph 178, 2011, p. 3.

Scholars and analysts refer to the Horn of Africa as "virtually synonymous with crisis" and emphasize the marginalized position the region has in world affairs, which "has created a vacuum increasingly filled by regional rivals engaged in destabilizing proxy wars." Also, the postcolonial legacy and institutional deficiencies in weak state structures are described as follows: "it is also a region in which postcolonial boundaries and state institutions themselves are coming under increasing strain, and may or may not survive in their present form long into the twenty-first century." 37

In this region, features of warfare and conflict-related patterns of insecurity are "deeply rooted in economic underdevelopment, environmental hazards, repressive political systems, and competition over natural resources and external linkages."<sup>38</sup> The region is associated with a "complex web of insecurity"<sup>39</sup> and the following causes could be synthesized:

- Power struggles, ethnic, religious or clan-based discrimination<sup>40</sup>,
   African "strongmen"
- Persistence of inter-state wars, proxy wars, and military interference in neighbouring countries
- Intra-state warfare, warlords, civilian militarization
- Civilian displacement, poverty, famine, food insecurity

Samson Wasara underlined that "political exclusion, economic marginalization, and social discrimination threaten the security of citizens and often the state is perceived as the primary threat to their survival." The persistence and long incumbency of African strongmen (such as Idi Amin

<sup>38</sup> Wasara, op. cit., p. 43.

-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Ken Menkhaus; John Prendergast, "Conflict and crisis in the Greater Horn of Africa", *Current History*; May 1999; 98, 628, p. 213.

<sup>37</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> John Siebert, "Human Security: Setting the Agenda for the Horn of Africa", *The Ploughshares Monitor* Summer 2009 Volume 30, Issue 2,

<sup>[</sup>http://ploughshares.ca/pl\_publications/human-security-setting-the-agenda-for-the-horn-of-africa/], accessed May 10, 2015.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> See details in Endalcachew Bayeh, "Human security in the Horn of Africa: Trends and Challenges", *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, 2014; 1(7), pp. 344-345.

<sup>41</sup> Wasara, op. cit., p. 46.

Dada, Mengistu, Nimeiri or Siad Barre) have led to political exclusion and the separation between domestic politics and citizens demands (by allocating power and control to certain groups and discriminating and marginalizing the others). Often, the removal of such strongmen produced power vacuum at the centre and led such states to the verge of collapse.<sup>42</sup>

Both types of warfare are present in the Horn. On the one hand, there is a constant persistence of inter-state warfare (Ethiopia *versus* Somalia, Ethiopia *versus* Eritrea, Sudan *versus* South Sudan<sup>43</sup>) and, as observed by Berouk Mesfin, the proxy wars in the Horn of Africa represent a "logic of subversion".<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, intra-state violence and internal armed conflicts also pervade the lives of civilians, amounting to civil wars that threaten the very existence of states in the region. The immediate consequence for the region is massive human displacement, refugee flows, and internally displaced people (IDPs).

The apparent cause for inter-state wars in the Horn is that the "region's states will continue to try to survive as cohesive and united entities and to defend their territorial integrity"<sup>45</sup> but in fact most of the military strategy does not serve the interest of the state, but the particularistic objectives of state leaders and their ambition to hold on to power. As Berouk Mesfin has formulated it, "regional security is intimately linked to the survival and interests of regimes in place as well as of rebel movements, which actually all gain from conflict and are respectively a part and manifestation of the problem rather than part of the solution."<sup>46</sup> According to Eboe Hutchful, "popular security has been sought through ethnicity, vigilantism and other primordial and non-formal institutions, away from (and often against) the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> This was amply described and analyzed by William Zartman, (ed.), *Collapsed States: The Humanitarian Challenge to the United Nations*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> See details in Wasara, op. cit., pp. 48-51.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Mesfin, *op. cit.*, p. 16. The author summarizes other analyses on this issue as follows: "Mengistu engaged Barre in a proxy guerrilla war in which they each supported the other's insurgent. The Christian fundamentalist Lord's

Resistance Army received support from Islamist Sudan in retaliation for Uganda's support for the Sudan People's Liberation Army. Sudan's support for the Eritrean Islamic Jihad invited Eritrean support for the Sudan People's Liberation Army and the National Democratic Alliance, which was even allowed to occupy the Sudanese embassy premises in Asmara."

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem, p. 22

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem, p. 21

state."<sup>47</sup> Hence, shifting the focus from state leaders' interests and the logic of state security to the actual victims of warfare, namely civilians, we could argue that a different conceptual framework offers more insights on the insecurity of the citizens. Therefore, a human security approach and a non-Western account of African state formation and institution building provide a coherent view on how humanitarian crises could be solved and human suffering and insecurity could be ended.

Another source of insecurity in the Horn of Africa is represented by droughts, famines, disruption of pastoralists' lives, which triggered environmental degradation, scarcity of resources, food insecurity, poverty, famine<sup>48</sup>, and human insecurity. Berouk Mesfin indicated that "the Horn of Africa can be characterised as the most deprived and poorest region in Africa, if not in the world" where "droughts result in food deficits each year, thereby making the Horn of Africa one of the regions with the greatest food insecurity in the world." In 2011, for example, the International Committee of the Red Cross "provided emergency food rations to more than 1.2 million people, emergency water rations to 347,000 people and shelter materials to 561,060 IDPs" in Somalia.<sup>50</sup>

After what was called the warlords armed conflicts in the early and mid-1990s in Somalia, in recent years another threat is posed by piracy and terrorism<sup>51</sup> and hence the region was considered a hot spot in the war against terrorism, but Mesfin has contended that

"[...] the diffusion of modern military technologies and state-of-the-art techniques of organisation, which the US approach entailed, went beyond the modernisation of the military or the transfer of weapons. It led to the institutionalised surveillance of entire populations and the blind, wholesale suppression of all political opponents, leading in effect to the diffusion of ideas, such as Islamist fundamentalism, with resultant security problems, particularly in Somalia."52

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Eboe Hutchful, "Africa: Rethinking Security", African Journal of Political Science, volume 3, number 1, June, 1998, p. 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> See Bayeh, op. cit., p. 345 and Rupiya; Alfred G. Nhema, op. cit., pp. 803-804.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Mesfin, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> ICRC Annual Report 2011, Somalia, p. 150, [http://www.icrc.org/].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Bayeh, op. cit., p. 344.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Mesfin, op. cit., p. 20.

## Do Realist and Neorealist postulates apply to the Horn of Africa?

In this section, the goal is to test the validity of certain (Neo)realist assumptions in the case of behaviours, strategies, and actions pursued by states in The Horn of Africa. Also, the aim is to prove its limited applicability for states in this region and to argue that human-centric approaches could be more relevant in addressing local particularities and in apprehending the meaning of state power.

As mentioned previously, in Mearsheimer's offensive realism, "security might be defined crudely as the probability that one's core interests will not be challenged or violated over some reasonable time span."53 When applied to the case of two states in the Horn, which are considered wouldbe regional hegemons, the following questions are raised: does Sudan, does Ethiopia attain this through militarization? Are they able to reach this state of security, wherein their interests are not threatened? No, in fact, instead of expansion (through acquiring new territories), they actually lost parts of their territories. Eritrea broke away from Ethiopia in 1993 whereas South Sudan gained independence from Sudan in 2011. Moreover, "security moves in the offensive realist scenario are moves of territorial expansion, which involve actually taking something from others, rather than merely preparing to do so, as with arms procurement or alliance formation."54 The two countries are competing for regional hegemony (not only between themselves, but also against Kenya), and still they were not able to eliminate the challenges of weaker states in the region (like Somalia or Eritrea), and they used much of their power (at times in vain) to counteract internal threats.

As Snyder indicated, "the security dilemma, in most formulations [...], emphasizes how power and security competition can occur between states that want nothing more than to preserve the status quo."<sup>55</sup> In the Horn of Africa, though, the two countries were not able to preserve the status quo, since new countries emerged on the world scene (Eritrea, in 1993, and South Sudan, in 2011). But, maintaining the status quo is the rationale

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Snyder, op. cit., p. 153.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 156.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 155.

behind states' actions in neorealist terms. And yet, two would-be regional hegemons, relying on power and the military sector, failed in this respect.

According to postulates of offensive realism, "states should maximize power, and their ultimate goal should be hegemony, because that is the best way to guarantee survival." In Mearsheimer's analysis, "hegemony is applied both globally and regionally." As explained by Peter Toft, Mearsheimer believes that the main "strategy for gaining power is war and conquest", because "a successful war may oust the rival from the ranks of the great powers thereby making the aggressor safer." One cannot say that this was the case with Sudan and Ethiopia. In materialist terms, security maximization occurred in the Horn of Africa through arms procurement, counter-balancing, deterrence, buck-passing, but security was not attained. Somalia has been on the verge of collapse for years, Sudan and Ethiopia have waged unsuccessful wars and also have lost parts of their territories, not conquered others. In this case, aggressive behaviour did not bring safety.

One of Mearsheimer's main assumptions is "that the main goal of states is survival. States seek to maintain their territorial integrity and the autonomy of their domestic political order. They can pursue other goals like prosperity and protecting human rights, but those aims must always take a back seat to survival, because if a state does not survive, it cannot pursue those other goals."59 I now try to build an argument which indicates that the opposite would ensure the power of states in the Horn of Africa. Here I would like to draw the attention to the difference between highly militarized states (hence powerful in material terms), on the one hand, and weak states, on the other. In fact, both are attributes of many states in the Horn, they are highly militarized, prone to waging wars against neighbours, and committed to arms procurement and alliance building to secure realist state interests. But, at the same time, they have impoverished populations, scarcity of resources, precarious health systems, debilitated economies, and frail institutions. In this sense, states seem powerful (in material or military terms) but are often considered as part of the poorest and region in the world.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Mearsheimer, Structural Realism, p. 75.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Peter Toft, *John J. Mearsheimer. An Offensive Realist between Geopolitics and Power*, Institut for Statskundskab, 2003, p. 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Mearsheimer, Structural Realism, p. 74.

According to other accounts, "in the Horn of Africa, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Sudan are all plausible hegemons but each is hampered by having interests in other regions (Kenya, Sudan) or by internal or regional conflict (Sudan, Ethiopia)."<sup>60</sup> Most states in the Horn seem prepared militarily to fence off external threats and counteract regional rivals/enemies, but in fact they wage devastating and exhausting wars against rebel movements and parts of their societies. In this cycle, another action is worth mentioning: the more regional states are challenged from within by rebellions and insurgencies, the more the states in the Horn spend money to support similar sub-state groups operating in their rival neighbouring countries with the apparent purpose of destabilizing and weakening them. The chief interest should rather be to gather the support of their own population, thus gaining also control over internal territories and preserving the status quo (like neorealist thinking suggests).

"The Horn of Africa experiences conflicts that set states against states and communities against communities resulting in political turbulence and human tragedy. This situation is connected with the inability of states to pursue rational policies that call for social cohesion. Governments and dissident political movements induce civilians to become accomplices of senseless wars. Thus, conversion of civilian populations into military and paramilitary groups is a common feature of this region."<sup>61</sup>

According to Richard Ashley's lucid critique, "Neorealism is bound to the state [...] Thus, for purposes of theory, the state must be treated as an unproblematic unity: an entity whose existence, boundaries, identifying structures, constituencies, legitimations, interests, and capacities to make self-regarding decisions can be treated as given, independent of transnational class and human interests and undisputed, (except perhaps by other states)."62 The state is, then, seen as "singular actor with a unified set of objectives in the name of the collective good."63 Such a description does not fit to states

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> Terrence Lyons, Gilbert M. Khadiagala (eds.), Conflict Management and African Politics: Ripeness, Bargaining, and Mediation, New York: Routledge, 2008, p. 88.

<sup>61</sup> Wasara, op. cit. p. 39.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> Richard Ashley, "The Poverty of Neorealism", in Robert O. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and its Critics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, p. 268.

<sup>63</sup> Ibidem, p. 270.

in the Horn of Africa, but also, according to this understanding, in our globalized world (wherein threats seldom come from regional rivals, but become rather global or internal), many world countries would be excluded from the register of "unproblematic unity".

As explained by critical constructivist David Campbell, Michel Foulcault has already talked about a "society of security" and argued that this entails "practices of *national security* and practices of *social security* [which] structure intensive and extensive power relations, and constitute the ethical boundaries and territorial borders of inside/outside, normal/pathological, civilized/barbaric."<sup>64</sup> At the same time, Campbell noted, "while traditional analyses of power are often economistic and negative, Foucault's understanding of power emphasises its productive and enabling nature."<sup>65</sup> The actions pursued by states in the Horn are consistent with the (Neo)realist power-seeking behaviour, but do not achieve the goals prescribed. The issue here is centred on the state and its inner weaknesses previously underlined, since major parts of the populations are not empowered, and the *enabling* nature of security is absent. Another scholar eloquently expressed it like this:

"The ability to project 'security', then, as a common good ('equal protection under the law'), is one of the crucial achievements of the modern state, requiring in turn the ability to engineer perceptions and (to some degree) illusions, of which, surely, the notion of 'security forces' has to be one of the best contemporary examples. For most Africans, however, the reality has been that of force (or worse, violence); Africans have too often seen the 'force', and hardly ever the 'security', in 'security forces'."66

Two perceptions of security could be tackled in countries of the Horn: the first one is formulated by state leaders, it aims at military external threats, and is based on strategies of disproportionate militarisation (in relation to resources and economic realities) in order to deter and to offset the rivals/enemies. The other one is embedded in communities and populations whose sense of insecurity targets primarily the state itself in which they live. Samson Wasara described how "dissident groups launch recruitment

66 Hutchful, op. cit., p. 5. Emphasis added.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> David Campbell, Writing Security. United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992, p. 255.

<sup>65</sup> Ibidem.

campaigns among disenchanted civilian groups while governments go for forced conscription" and indicated that "experience from Sudan, Kenya and Uganda shows those cattle rustlers and armed bandits take the advantage of civil wars or interstate wars to acquire modern assault rifles for their criminal motives." This scenario shows that weaponry is actually de-statized and is no longer controlled by the government (in a unitary military strategy confronting external threats) and that the state is weakened from within. The state is highly militarized from an outsider perspective, but in fact the state is weak because it is eroded from inside. And civilians are completely disenchanted with the state's actions and military spending while at the same time trying to survive the ensuing violent conditions.

A Human Security approach on this region would point to a different set of states' actions and development: "rather than achieving security through armaments, human security would be achieved through sustainable human development" because in such a conceptual individualcentred framework "the focus [is] on the safety and security of the individual rather than the defence of borders and survival and security of states and regimes."68 Human-centred approaches lead to apprehending the weakness of states' institutions in the Horn of Africa, but also to understanding the weakness of civil societies in rebounding and rallying around certain stable leaders. Accordingly, human-security perspectives indicate solutions for enabling the citizens, but would also strengthen the state on the long run and would redress the gruesome features of states in the Horn, as explained by Wasara: "the decline of the role of state as guarantor of protection and human security is serious in the region. Thus, countries in the Horn of Africa are more vulnerable to internal insecurity than from neighbouring countries as it appears on the surface."69

Up to now, though, "in order to hold on to power, hold the state together and defend it against the claims and attacks of other states and rebel movements" the irrational ambition of governments was to "build and

-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Wasara, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>68</sup> John Siebert, "Human Security: Setting the Agenda for the Horn of Africa", 2009, *The Ploughshares Monitor*, Summer 2009 Volume 30 Issue 2, 2009,

<sup>[</sup>http://ploughshares.ca/pl\_publications/human-security-setting-the-agenda-for-the-horn-of-africa/], consulted May 10, 2015.

<sup>69</sup> Wasara, op. cit., p. 47.

maintain military forces of large dimension" which, as shown by Mesfin, leads to scarcity or resources since "excessive militarisation entails an increased burden" and "[is] wasteful, resulting in social projects in education or health remaining stagnant or even non-existent." My analysis tried to underline that states' security in the Horn of Africa should come from within, from the *enabling of citizens*, meaning bottom-up participatory initiatives meant to strengthen states' institutions.

#### Conclusion

The combination of strongmen with military spending in order to strengthen the state has not proven a viable solution in the Horn of Africa. The militarization of the state does not match the immediate threats and impoverishes the society, producing human insecurity and the crippling of states' institutions.

Traditional conceptions of security, based on states' militarization (meant to counteract external threats) have proven ineffective in the case of the Horn of Africa, since it has not produced the safety/security of states through counter-balancing configurations and territorial gains, or by engaging in aggressive and offensive behaviour. Security maximization occurred in the Horn of Africa through arms procurement, counter-balancing, deterrence, buck-passing, but security was not attained. Somalia has been on the verge of collapse for years, Sudan and Ethiopia have waged unsuccessful wars and also have lost parts of their territories, not conquered others. In this case, aggressive behaviour did not bring safety. Even though highly militarized and pursuing military offensive strategies, states in the Horn of Africa are more vulnerable to internal insecurity than from neighbouring rivals/enemies.

A human-centred "reading" of the scenarios in this region leads to broadly understanding the sources of insecurity, the weakness of states' institutions in the Horn of Africa, and the local vulnerabilities. Accordingly, human-security perspectives indicate solutions for enabling the citizens which would also strengthen the states from within on the long run.

\_

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> Berouk Mesfin, op. cit. p. 13.

### **Bibliography**

- Bayeh, Endalcachew (2014), "Human security in the Horn of Africa: Trends and Challenges", *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development*, 2014; 1(7), 341-346
- Buzan Barry; Hansen, Lene (2009), *The Evolution of International Security Studies*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
- Campbell, David (1992), Writing Security. United States Foreign Policy and the *Politics of Identity*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- Commission on Global Governance (1995), Our Global Neighbourhood, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Commission on Human Security (2003), *Human Security Now*, Commission on Human Security, New York
- Herta, Laura M. (2014), "Humanitarian Intervention and Human Security Sociological, Critical, and Constructivist Approaches to (In)security in Africa", in Valentin Naumescu (ed.), *Democracy and Security in the 21st Century: Perspectives on a Changing World*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 343-381
- Herta, Laura M. (2014), "Intra-state violence in DR Congo and Human Security Perspectives from International Relations Theories", in Wolfgang Benedek, Vanda A. Dias, Lisa M. Heschl, Matthias C. Kettemann, Reinmar Nindler, Kalkidan N. Obse, Stefan Salomon (eds.), An African Spring? Human Rights and Security in Times of Change, European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (ETC), Graz, 186-218
- Human Development Report 1994 (1994), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press
- Hutchful, Eboe (1998), "Africa: Rethinking Security", *African Journal of Political Science*, volume 3, number 1, June
- ICRC Annual Report 2011 (2011), Somalia, [http://www.icrc.org/], consulted in September 2013
- Keohane, Robert O. (ed.) (1986), *Neorealism and its Critics*, New York: Columbia University Press

- Lyons, Terrence; Khadiagala, Gilbert M. (eds.) (2008), Conflict Management and African Politics: Ripeness, Bargaining, and Mediation, New York: Routledge
- Mearsheimer, John J. (1995), "The False Promise of International Institutions", International Security, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Winter, 1994-1995), 5-49
- Mearsheimer, John J. (2006), "Structural Realism," in Tim Dunne; Milja Kurki; Steve Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 71-88
- Médecins sans Frontières, Assisting the Somali Population affected by the humanitarian crisis of 2011, [http://www.msf.org/], consulted in September 2013
- Menkhaus, Ken; Prendergast, John (1999), "Conflict and crisis in the Greater Horn of Africa", Current History; May 1999; 98, 628, 213-217
- Mesfin Berouk (2011), "The Horn of Africa security complex", in Roba Sharamo; Berouk Mesfin (eds.), *Regional Security in the post-Cold War Horn of Africa*, Monograph 178, 1-30
- Mouritzen, Hans (2005), "Kenneth Waltz: a critical rationalist between international politics and foreign policy", in Iver B.Neumann; Ole Wæver, *The Future of International Relations. Masters in the Making?*, London and New York: Routledge, 71-95
- Newman, Edward (2010), "Critical human security studies", Review of International Studies, 2010, 36, 77-94
- Rothschild, Emma (2007), "What is security?", in Barry Buzan; Lene Hansen (eds.), *International Security* (volume III *Widening Security*), London, Sage Publications
- Rudloff, Peter (2013), "Offensive Realism, Defensive Realism, and the Role of Constraints", *The Midsouth Political Science Review*, Volume 14, December 2013, 45-77
- Rupiya, Martin R.; Nhema, Alfred G. (2008), "A Regional Security Perspective from and for the Horn of Africa", in Hans Günter Brauch; Úrsula Oswald Spring; Czeslaw Mesjasz; John Grin; Pál Dunay; Navnita Chadha Behera; Béchir Chourou; Patricia Kameri-Mbote; P. H. Liotta (eds.), Globalization and Environmental Challenges. Reconceptualizing Security in the 21st Century, New York, Berlin, Heidelberg: Spinger, 801-810

- Siebert, John (2009), "Human Security: Setting the Agenda for the Horn of Africa", 2009, *The Ploughshares Monitor*, Summer 2009 Volume 30 Issue 2, [http://ploughshares.ca/pl\_publications/human-security-setting-the-agenda-for-the-horn-of-africa/], consulted May 10, 2015.
- Snyder, Glenn H. (2002), "Mearsheimer's World—Offensive Realism and the Struggle for Security. A Review Essay", *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 1, Summer 2002, 149–173
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) [www.eda.admin.ch], consulted May 4, 2015.
- Toft, Peter (2003), John J. Mearsheimer. An Offensive Realist between Geopolitics and Power, Institut for Statskundskab
- United Nations, United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, *Human Security Approach*, [http://www.un.org/humansecurity/humansecurity-unit/human-security-approach], accessed July 2015
- Walt, Stephan (1991), "The Renaissance of Security Studies", *International Studies Quarterly*, 35 (2), 211-139
- Waltz, Kenneth (1979), Theory of International Politics, Reading: Addison Wesley
- Waltz, Kenneth (2000), "Structural Realism after the Cold War", *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Summer 2000), 5–41
- Wasara, Samson S. (2002), "Conflict and State Security in the Horn of Africa: Militarization of Civilian Groups", *African Journal of Political Science*, vol.7, no. 2, 39-60
- Weber, Cynthia (2006), *International Relations Theory*. A critical introduction, Second edition, London and New York: Routledge
- Wendt, Alexander (1999), Social Theory of International Politics, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- XXX, "Roundtable: The Battle Rages On. John J. Mearsheimer *versus* Paul Rogers, Richard Little, Christopher Hill, Chris Brown and Ken Booth", in *International Relations*, 19(3), 2005, 337–360, [http://mearsheimer.uchicago.edu/pdfs/A0036.pdf], consulted in May 2015
- Zartman, William, (ed.) (1995), Collapsed States: The Humanitarian Challenge to the United Nations, Boulder: Lynne Rienner