

The Security Issue Behind the Ethiopian Involvement in Somalia

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Between December 2006 and January 2009, the Ethiopian troops were deployed in Somalia's territory. The explanation for this military operation given by the Ethiopian government was the fight against terrorism, in order to face the Jihad declared by the UIC towards Ethiopia in 2006. Somehow, this showed that the stability of the region can be precarious given the difficulties of some of its states, but simultaneously this intervention seemed to reflect why Ethiopia is often pointed by the international community as the core regional country on which the equilibrium of the Horn of Africa depends.

Nevertheless, different factors suggest that it may be necessary to look farther to understand the regional setting in 2006. Some researchers have pointed that the connections of the Somalia radicals with the international terrorist networks is not self evident (MARCHAL, 2007), while at the same time the assumed involvement of some actors (especially the United States) is not so evident; these reasons, among others, suggests a more complex scenario than the one that appears at first sight.

Given the implication of multiple actors in the conflict in Somalia whose interests affect the Ethiopian politics, and the delicate local and international context, the aim of this work is to understand how different political issues and areas may be intertwined and affected the decision to realize the operation. The involvement of Ethiopia in Somalia in 2006 has to be considered from a broader perspective, in time and space, in order to understand how the threats coming from Somalia were appreciated by the Ethiopian as compelling, and motivated their military deployment, labelled sometimes as a peacekeeping operation.

This work is part of the research project "Monitoring Conflicts in Horn of Africa" of the Centro de Estudos Africanos (CEA-ISCTE) of Lisbon. A first fieldwork has already been realized in Addis Abeba, and a second fieldwork is planned in the second half of 2011. The aim of this paper is to expose the current state of the research and to receive feedback for this second fieldwork and further investigation.