

The Role of the European Union in a Non-Recognized Context. The Case of Somaliland (1991-2018)

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Abstract

Somaliland, the small enclave of the Horn of Africa, declared its independence unilaterally from Somalia in 1991. Since then the region has gone through a long local process of pacification, state reconstruction and democratization. These objectives had the purpose of achieving international recognition based on the idea that democratization and stabilization would attract the attention of major regional and international actors who would value the difference of Somaliland from the rest of Somalia, which was living in a context of chaos in the 1990s. Since its de facto independence, the country has not been recognized by any state in the world. Nevertheless, and although it may be contradictory, Somaliland maintain relations with different states, actors and internal institutions. The European Union, although it does not formally recognize Somaliland as an independent country, does maintains relations at different levels such as cooperation and development, military missions, promotion of democracy and good governance and even supports educational, health and gender programs in order to improve the living conditions of the region's population. This research analyses EU-Somaliland relations, the policies carried out by Brussels in the region and the situation regarding international recognition. To this end, an in-depth review of the bibliography has been carried out. Furthermore, official documentation, reports, press documents and elections results have been used for this study.

Keywords: *Somaliland; European Union; International Recognition; International Relations.*

1. Introduction

The History of Somaliland as an independent entity is rooted in the decolonization process initiated on June 26, 1960. On that date, Somaliland achieved independence from the United Kingdom but on July 1st it merged with the former Italian Somalia. The coexistence between the two regions worsened and in the 1980s the confrontation was total between the Somali National Movement (SNM) and the government of Siad Barre (Arconada Ledesma 2018a: pp. 98-99). Between 1988 and 1991 the conflict intensified

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and the army opted to attack different cities in the region. It is estimated that at least 200,000 people were killed and 95% of the cities were destroyed (Adan Ismail 2003: p. 275). Siad Barre finally had to flee in 1991 owing to the loss of control of the country. Different warlords, generals, clans and armed groups seized regions of the country, initiating a long process of territorial and state disintegration that was reflected in the cases of Somaliland -which opted for independence unilaterally in May 1991- and Puntland -self- proclaimed federal regional state in 1998 (Arconada Ledesma 2018b: p. 416).

Since its *de facto* independence, Somaliland has achieved a series of milestones that had allowed it to maintain a situation of remarkable stability, especially when compared to the context of the rest of Somalia. The Hargeisa government maintained relative peace, which allowed it to constitute a lasting system of government with an executive presidency, a Parliament elected at the polls, and an Upper House known as Guurti -which represents the different clans in the country and functions as a Senadologically constituted political parties and armed and police forces that have provided some order. In addition, Somaliland has organized several elections with a peaceful power transition (Omaar and Mohamoud 2015: p. 87). However, these processes have not been free of obstacles and have even resulted in the temporary suspension of press freedom, a clear attack on the democratic system. All of Somaliland's efforts over the past three decades have had only one goal: to achieve international recognition.

2. The Process of State Reconstruction of Somaliland After 1991

Somaliland's main political group, the Somali National Movement (SNM), largely composed of members of the Isaaq clan, was the main military force in the northwest of the country in 1991. In May of that year, the SNM held a conference (*xeer* in Somali) in the city of Burco with the participation of guerrilla group commanders, traditional authorities and clan representatives. This meeting addressed the possibility of Somaliland being separated from the rest of Somalia. Despite the fact that the SNM leadership was not in favor, the reminder of the devastation of the civil war and the rejection that the policies of Mogadishu had provoked ended up tilting the balance towards independence positions. Given the majority support of the traditional authorities, the SNM decided to declare the independence of the Republic of Somaliland on May 18, 1991. Although there were sectors that did not agree with this declaration, especially Somalis who belonged to clans other than the Isaaq, they ended up accepting it due to the unquestionable power of the SNM and to prevent the spreading in the north of the escalation of violence that was taking place in the south. Some authors, such as Markus Hoehne, point out that secession worked as a security measure because it created a political distance with the South and instituted an alternative government in the North that was determined to avoid any kind of violence (Hoehne 2010: p.179).

In addition, the secession was based on a series of arguments to legitimize the new status quo of Somaliland. On the one hand, it justified the existence of Somaliland as a geopolitical entity since 1897, when the British protectorate was founded. On the other hand, reference was made to the brief period of independence that took place between June 26 and July 1, 1960, until the merger with the former Italian colony of Somalia. Thus, it was argued that Burco's proclamation was not an act of secession, but a dissolution of an agreement between two sovereign states, based on the failure of the 1960 union (Bradbury, Yusuf Abokor and Ahmed Yusuf 2003: p. 457).

2.1. First years of Independence: Pacification and Reconstruction

The newly acquired independence of Somaliland was not free of obstacles. Throughout the 1990s the authorities in Hargeisa had to deal with a very complex situation: half of the population lived in refugee camps in Ethiopia or as internally displaced persons; the main cities were totally razed to the ground; there were armed movements against the power of the SNM which was beginning to fragment in a struggle for the country's scarce resources; the economic situation was non-existent and there was no social welfare of any kind; finally, some clans living on the margins of the country began to oppose secession (Markus Hoehne 2018: p. 7).

Thus, it became necessary to organize a new *xeer* in Borame in 1993, which contributed to the restoration of peace and the resolution of conflicts between clans. After this conference both the government and the traditional authorities proposed a successful disarmament project integrating these groups into the national army and police (Mohamoud Barawani 2017). Similarly, the Borame conference helped convince minority clans to support the new state-building process. Thus, the *Gadabursi* and *Cisa*, who lived in the west, and the *Dhulbahante* and *Warsangali*, in the east, ended up integrating into the new structures of the country (Hoehne 2009: p. 259).

But how could Somaliland achieve the pacification of the country and the subsequent reconstruction without international support? Despite the fact that the government had no access to any international protection, humanitarian aid, or international credit, many authors have pointed out that Somaliland's success lies in the fact that it was a bottom-up process in which the entire nation, including the diaspora, participated (Bradbury, Akobor and Yusuf 2003; Hagmann and Hoehne 2009; Menkhaus 2007). It was not until 1998 that a total pacification of the country was achieved, thanks mainly to a part of the business elite and entrepreneurs who financed the new security forces, accelerating the disarmament. Peace was achieved by a mixed security system in which clan authorities maintained local order and the armed forces did so at the national level (Johnson and Smaker 2004: pp. 6-7).

2.2. Towards democratization

It is difficult to determine when democratization began in Somaliland, but it is clear that due to the critical situation in the region during the post-war period this process was postponed. Some authors have pointed out that large meetings such as the *xeer* in Borama represented the first milestones in the democratization of the country since it was agreed that a charter would be approved that would function as a provisional constitution. This document already provided for the separation of powers and the constitution of a bicameral Parliament with a House of Elders, known as *Guurti*, and a House of Representatives, called *Golaha Wakiilada*. This was a fundamental step for the subsequent democratic development of the country and generated a hybrid system that added the characteristics of the "traditional" local system and the "modern" model of government. Similarly, in Borama, the first President of Somaliland, Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal, was elected (Hoehne 2010: p. 180). This model of state has been called "ethnic democracy" and according to Hussein M. Adam democratic power sharing based on ethnicity or clan is facilitated if the groups involved have a common vision and share a common history, the various groups occupy more or less defined areas and share similar perspectives on external threats. None of the groups exercises hegemony; they are more or less equal (1994: p. 32).

This could partly explain the rapid democratic transformation of Somaliland's structures and its consolidated path. Furthermore, since 1999 Ibrahim Egal presented the transition to a multiparty democracy as a guarantee for international recognition since he argued that the international community would not recognize Somaliland as an independent state unless it adopted such a system. To this end, a referendum was held for the adoption of a new constitution in May 2001 (Bradbury, Yusuf Abokor and Ahmed Yusuf 2003: p. 473). It is clear that Egal's strategy was to make a comparison between the situation in Somaliland and the rest of Somalia. Somaliland in 2001 had managed to recover most of the state structures and was beginning a process of democratization that would make the country the only democracy in the Horn of Africa. Somalia was still in total chaos and there was no government with the capacity to control the situation (Arconada Ledesma 2018b: pp. 417-418).

As expected by the government, the Constitution was approved by an overwhelming majority. 1,149,000 people participated in the plebiscite and 97.10% of the votes were in favor of the National Constitution (African Election Database, 2001) This Charter protected basic rights of Somali citizens such as freedom of expression and assembly, supported the formation of political parties (up to three), and equaled the rights of men and women (Somaliland Constitution, 2001).

From that year on, the first free elections were organized at all levels. In December 2002, local elections were called and in April 2003 the second presidential elections were held, in which Dahir Riyale Kahin was elected for a five-year term. In addition, in 2002 the three national parties were formed: UDUB which could be translated as the Popular Democratic Party; Kulmiye, the Unity Party; and UCID which translates as the Justice Party (Jarle Hansen and Bradbury 2007: p. 465). Once the parties were constituted, the first call for elections to Parliament was made on September 29, 2005, which resulted in a fairly even result: UDUB won 33 seats and 39% of the vote; Kulmiye obtained 28 representatives and 34.06%; and UCID came in last place with 21 seats and 26.93% of the vote (African Election Database, 2005).

However, there were also anti-democratic episodes. In 2008, President Kahin's term was ending, but due to manipulations not fully clarified in the House of Elders and the claim of a "national emergency", the presidential term was extended until May 2010. Despite this delay, the 2010 presidential election proceeded normally and a new peaceful change of powers took place as Kulmiye's candidate, Mohamed Mohamud Silanyo, became the new President (Hoehne 2018: p. 9). Similarly, the second parliamentary elections, scheduled for 2010, were delayed for more than 5 years and although the elections were generally defined as free, cases of vote buying were recorded. Similarly, policies in favor of security and protection of citizens have been used on several occasions against the media, becoming a barrier to the development of a full democracy (Johnson and Smaker 2014: p. 10).

3. Europe and the Difficult International Recognition

So far, the international community has not legally recognized Somaliland, which has generated enormous disappointment among the local population. Although the region has been able to move forward for almost three decades, the situation seems to be stagnating largely due to the lack of access to international credit. However, Somaliland is a geostrategic enclave of enormous importance both for the African Union, as well as for the European Union and other regional powers such as Saudi Arabia, India or China, among others. Moreover, the United Nations (UN) is aware of the dangers that terrorism

would pose to gain a foothold in the area. This threat has generated a wave of international support from institutions such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Despite this support for development, security and humanitarian aid, the government has no access to international financial aid (Johnson and Smaker 2014: pp. 7-8).

Some actors and countries have taken an important step towards supporting and establishing relations with Somaliland. However, these relationships are indirect, which means that they cannot finance the government and support is focused on the development of particular projects. In fact, most of the services are supported by international institutions, private sector and NGOs (Omaar and Mohamoud 2015: pp. 91-93). As far as the UN is concerned, the global forum has been quite flexible with the Somaliland context. After the experience of Katanga, where the region declared its unilateral independence from the current Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 1960 and the UN led a military campaign in the period 1961-1963 to reintegrate this region into the Congo, the UN is limited to occasional support to the region, always within the framework of Somalia, to which it legally belongs (Adam 1994: p. 37).

3.1. Waiting for Africa's decision

The EU, as well as the other extra-continental actors, have marked a distance from the recognition of Somaliland, at least until the African regional actors and the neighbouring states make their statements. But what is the position in Africa with respect to Somaliland? Firstly, the AU has maintained a clear position on Somaliland's independence and recognition. The AU is, in the end, the heir to the OAU which, in its founding charter, advocated respect for the borders inherited during decolonization (Organization of African Unity, 1963).

Although there have been several successful cases of secession in Africa, the AU fears that allowing the secession of some territories will cause a contagion effect throughout the continent, generating great instability (Nasir 2013: pp. 340-341). In the specific case of the Horn of Africa, the AU faces the risk that the recognition of Hargeisa will lead to clashes between Somalia and Somaliland (Hoehne 2018: p. 7). Despite the AU's position against secession, the truth is that the case of Somaliland does not represent so much a secession as a dissolution between two constituted states, which is due to its particular context: Somaliland was already independent for a few days in 1960. In addition, there have been examples of confederations and state unions that have dissolved peacefully and both parties were recognized as independent entities. As Caplin points out, the cases of Ethiopia and Eritrea, Egypt and Syria, and Senegal and Mali may serve as a precedent for recognition. However, the cases previously mentioned were resolved with an agreement of both parties and in the case of Somaliland such an agreement did not take place, as the decision was taken unilaterally. Another actor against recognition is IGAD, as it fears that recognizing Somaliland will encourage other regions in East Africa to fight for their independence (Caplin 2009: p. 9). However, it does not seem that the fear of IGAD is a wave of independence, but rather that such independence will produce greater instability in the region, as has happened with the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, or the civil war in Southern Sudan.

Ethiopia, although it has not recognized the status of Somaliland, has become the main guarantor of the Hargeisa government. In fact, both entities established relations in 1993, under the administration of Ibrahim Egal, since the Addis Ababa government had strategic interests in the region (Nasir 2011: p. 3). However, Ethiopia has not proceeded to recognize Somaliland because it wants to avoid being accused of disintegrating Somalia.

On the other hand, relations with Djibouti have been quite tense. Although, in the last decade they have collaborated with the objective of pacifying the border and fighting terrorism. These two countries - along with Kenya, South Africa, South Sudan, the United Arab Emirates, as well as Belgium and the United Kingdom - do recognize and allow the use of the Somali passport (Arconada Ledesma 2018c: p. 21). Similarly, South Africa has strengthened ties with Hargeisa and even sent observers to the 2002 and 2003 elections (Bradbury, Yusuf Abokor and Ahmed Yusuf 2003: p. 459). It seems, moreover, that the Somaliland government is expanding its options, targeting other countries such as Uganda (The Observer, 2018).

3.2. The position of European countries and the European Union regarding recognition

The EU has many interests in Somaliland, especially due to its geostrategic position in the Horn of Africa and as a key player in the fight against terrorism, piracy and illegal trafficking networks. However, as with other international actors, the EU has not addressed the debate on the recognition of Somaliland, mainly because it is waiting for the AU and the States of the region to make a decision. Why is this immobility? According to Tristan McConnell and Narayan Mahon (2010: p. 152) no non-African state is willing to recognize Somaliland until some African state does, as they could be accused of neo-colonialism.

While waiting for the AU to make a final decision, the EU has a number of relations with Somaliland. In fact, the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Durão Barroso, declared in 2008 the strong support of Brussels to the election processes in Somaliland. The relations established with Brussels were also referred to by Ali Aden Awale, head of Somaliland's delegation in the UK: "the European Union is working extensively to help Somaliland on economic issues, but they are a bit negative when it comes to helping in the political field". Despite this decision not to address the issue in Brussels, we must mention that there are opposing views on this matter among its members. Although no European country has recognized Somaliland, some are more open to that possibility. Somaliland has official representatives in several European countries such as Belgium, France, United Kingdom, Norway and Sweden (Africaye, 2016).

It was precisely the latter country the one that initiated the parliamentary debate in 2017 on whether or not his country should recognize Somaliland as an independent state. A commission was set up to analyze the situation and issue a decision that would be voted on in Parliament. This commission has been supported by the Somaliland Committee in Sweden, formed by the Somaliland diaspora that has been pressing for years for Stockholm to step in and recognize their country (The National Somaliland, 2017). The other great supporter of Somaliland's cause is the United Kingdom. It is clear that their common past with this enclave, which was part of their empire, has generated a closeness between both parties. The United Kingdom has extensive geostrategic and commercial interests in the region and although it has not recognized independence, it does support the country economically (Caspersen 2015: pp. 400-401). Other countries such as Denmark or the Netherlands have tried to mediate between Somaliland and Somalia to make them settle down for negotiations, since they consider that before any recognition, there must be a firm agreement between both parties (The National Somaliland, 2018). There is no point in acknowledging Somaliland if it can provoke tensions in the Horn of Africa. Thus, the debate on the recognition of Somaliland in Europe is still rather stuck. Only some of its

members have shown some closeness to Somaliland but that does not mean, by any chance, that they are willing to recognize it as an independent state.

4. European Union Policies towards Somaliland

Although the EU does not recognize Somaliland and has no intention of initiating such a debate in Parliament, this has not prevented it from developing a whole series of relations with the small enclave. The EU's interests in the region are focused on the fight against terrorism, piracy, the protection of the commercial flow that crosses the Red Sea and links Europe with the Indian Ocean, and the extension of the democratic model and good government. All of this has led Brussels to project a series of policies that could take the form of a certain level of military collaboration, humanitarian aid and development cooperation, support for the process of democratization and aid for specific policies in education and health. These actions are part of the traditional relations that the European Economic Community (EEC) developed after the African independences. Since the beginning of the EEC development policies, this has been one of its main objectives. Indeed, after the period of independence would come a new step in relations as it was to reach agreements between independent countries to achieve stability in the fragile political and economic organization that emerged in each of them (García Andrés 2020: p. 163).

4.1. European Union military missions in Somaliland

The EU has developed an active role in the reconstruction and stabilization of Somalia since 2008. The enormous threat that piracy posed to the EU's commercial interests and the danger posed by the materialized terrorism of the al-Shabaab group convinced Brussels of the need to act. Since that year, the EU has been creating specific missions in the Horn of Africa: in 2008 it launched the European Union Naval Force Operation Atalanta, in 2010 the European Union Mission Training in Somalia (EUMT-Somalia) and in 2012 the European Union Capacity Building Mission in Somalia (EUCAP-Somalia). Despite the exceptional situation of Somaliland, which is in legal limbo, the EU decided to deploy two of its missions with the collaboration of Hargeisa.

4.1.1. Maritime collaboration in Somaliland: EU-Navfor Atalanta

The Eu-Navfor Atalanta was an EU response to the lack of control in the surrounding waters of Somalia and the continuous attacks by pirates. EU Resolution 2008/851/CFSP specified that the operation was intended to contribute to the "deterrence, prevention and repression of acts of piracy and armed robbery off the Somali coast" (Arconada Ledesma 2018b: p. 425). This mission has also been deployed in Somaliland. Although it may seem contradictory given that the EU does not recognize this territory, the truth is that Brussels acts and collaborates with Somaliland considering it an autonomous entity, that is, with its own decision-making capacity but within the framework of Somalia. Although there is a clear legal vacuum, the magnitude of the threat in the waters of the Indian Ocean eventually convinced Brussels of the need to include maritime cooperation with Hargeisa.

The EU-Navfor mission deployed in Somaliland, which is based in Berbera, collaborates closely with other missions, such as EUCAP-Somalia, and other institutions and agencies such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Since the waters of the Gulf of Aden have not seen a high number of pirate attacks, the role of this mission has focused on cooperation through practical and theoretical training of Somaliland's coast guards. Thus, maritime training has been conducted over several days

in which Somaliland's maritime forces, on board Atalanta's ships, received maritime training, first aid, including treatment of burns, smoke inhalation and fractures, as well as training in firefighting and damage control. Atalanta has also focused on navigation and engine maintenance training, (EU-Navfor, 2015), radar training in which UNODC has collaborated intensely, and attendance at security seminars such as the Joint Maritime Security Seminar (European Union External Action, 2016).

4.1.2. EUCAP-Somalia and regional cooperation

EUCAP-Somalia was launched in 2012 and is not considered a military mission, but has a civilian character. Although its headquarters are located in Nairobi, it has a continuous presence in Mogadishu, Hargeisa and Garowe as it seeks to develop an ongoing relationship not only with central authorities but also with regional administrations. Its activities focus on supporting the development and implementation of regulatory, legislative and institutional frameworks related to civil maritime law enforcement, and on promoting training activities for civil maritime law enforcement agencies, the judiciary and prosecutors. The main Somali counterparts are the Somali Maritime Police Unit in Mogadishu, the Somaliland Coast Guard and the Bosasso Port Police, as well as the Ministries of Interior, Justice and Fisheries, the Attorney General's Offices, the police and judges (European Union External Action, 2018).

The main objective of this mission in Somaliland is to develop maritime security in the region and to this end the government of Hargeisa has been key, especially for its role in the fight against piracy on land - where European missions cannot act - and at sea. In order to increase this security, EUCAP-Somalia has focused above all on training both the Somaliland Coast Guard and other security bodies. The main measure has been to strengthen relations between European police, maritime and legal experts and their counterparts in the region, so that training and advice programs are developed (EU-Navfor, 2013). This mission has provided material support, such as land vehicles, and has focused on training in the fight against crime and specifically on the rights of detainees, in a clear commitment to the defence of human rights (EU-Navfor, 2013). Finally, EUCAP has also focused on training in Automatic Identification Systems (AIS), the use of navigation radars, radio communication and visits to the Bebera operations centre (EU-Navfor, 2016).

4.2. Development cooperation

As it has already been seen, Somaliland took its first steps without any help from the major international agencies. In fact, the missions that the UN launched in Somalia between 1991-1995 (UNOSOM I and II) and the US mission (UNITAF) were not deployed in the northern territory. Today, international agencies do act and provide support when catastrophes such as droughts, famines or floods occur. In fact, the UN allocated some \$2.7 million in aid to deal with the terrible floods that struck Somaliland in May 2018 (UN News, 2018).

The EU, although actively involved in sending humanitarian aid to the region, is developing a key role in relation to development cooperation. This cooperation is aimed at infrastructure projects, but also at agriculture, education and health. One of the major projects, still in gestation, is the construction of the Berbera corridor in which the United Arab Emirates actively participates and which aims to be an economic and commercial axis linking the port of Berbera with Hargeisa and the Ethiopian border (The National Somaliland, 2018). Although the European participation has not yet been decided, the

interest it has generated in the agencies of the Union seems evident (Somaliland Press, 2018). Likewise, the EU has financed the rehabilitation of basic infrastructures such as the expansion of equipment for running water with more than EUR 19 million (Le partenariat Afrique-UE, 2011).

Apart from infrastructure, the EU has financed different plans related mainly to agricultural development. Thus, it is estimated that more than 6,500 farmers, shepherds, farmers and fishermen have benefited from improved market access, services and investments thanks to the improvement of almost 90 infrastructures; support has been given to some 67 associations and cooperatives that have promoted small-scale enterprises and businesses; some regulatory frameworks related to the veterinary code, livestock policy and business laws have been given a boost; access to cold storage for fishermen has been facilitated, as well as the production of ice; and more than 20 tons of cereal seeds have been distributed among farmers to increase their productivity (European Union External Action, 2018). In addition, European development cooperation has focused on reducing unemployment –especially youth unemployment– in urban areas with small-scale contract job creation projects and in medium-size enterprises, and energizing the private sector in areas such as energy and water utilities (Le partenariat Afrique-UE, 2011).

4.3. Defending Democracy and Good Governance

One of the main policies promoted by Brussels in Somalia is support for democracy, where no elections by universal suffrage have been held since 1969, with the exception of Somaliland. The EU's interest in the Somaliland democratization process began after the 2001 constitutional referendum, in the midst of the transition from a traditional system of government to a liberal democratic model (Somaliland Law, 2002). To underpin this process, the EU contributed EUR 450,000, to which was added the individual support of Denmark with EUR 125,000, the United Kingdom with GBP 60,000, the Netherlands with EUR 50,000 and Finland with EUR 10,000. It was agreed that for the 2002 local elections, 50% of the election costs would be paid before the elections were held. The EU report on the 2002 elections highlighted the police presence, the calm in the polling stations and the correct arrangement of the ballots. The report also highlighted the high participation of women in voting and a moderate presence at polling stations, where 20% were involved in the organisation of these elections.

Along with the role of the EU, the United Kingdom has been key to all the electoral processes, both presidential (2003, 2010, 2017), parliamentary (2005, 2017) and local (2012). Through the Democratization Program (which counted with EUR 3.4 million) the EU supported the electoral process for the presidency in June 2010 (Le partenariat Afrique-UE, 2011). The role of Brussels and London has focused on organising observation missions in cooperation with local organisations and civil society (Report Elections Somaliland, 2017). But without a doubt, the main support for the electoral processes in the region is financial support. Thus, Hoehne (2018: p. 10) indicated that about 75% of the electoral budget came from the EU and its members. The main European countries that have supported this process are Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom (EU Delegation in Somalia, 2017).

In addition to the electoral processes, the EU, together with the UN and in collaboration with central and local governments, has supported –through the programme on local governance and decentralised service delivery– the decentralisation of the region

that was already laid down in the 2001 Constitution (UNDP, 2017). Similarly, Brussels, together with the Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa (AWEPA), provides training and seminars for Somali parliamentarians and officials with the aim of creating an environment that supports electoral processes. This program, with a cost of EUR 1.26 million, has actively supported legislative institutions since 2004 (Le partenariat Afrique-UE, 2011).

4.4. Education and health policy

The EU has reiterated its interest in promoting projects that consolidate access to education and health. With regard to education, the EU has promoted the improvement of basic infrastructures, has fought to increase the number of students in classrooms and continues to work to improve the quality of the education provided. Its role is not insignificant, as it is estimated that education in Somaliland has increased from 450 students per year in 1999 to 50,000 during 2011 (European Law Monitor, 2013). Between 2008 and 2013, the Education Sector Development Program was launched in Somalia. Despite this, the program has had a very important development in Somaliland and has improved primary and secondary education, technical and vocational training and higher education, as well as teacher training in specific areas. This project allowed the construction of 31 new schools, 194 toilets and 30 spaces adapted for girls and 167 classes have been rehabilitated in the region (European Commission International Cooperation and Development).

Through the "Education Programme" the EU seeks to contribute to the development of sustainable education that enables young people to access jobs. Although in Somaliland almost 80% of the population is illiterate, it is estimated that with the support of the EU more than 180,000 students were trained until 2011. The total budget of this program amounted to EUR 36 million for a period of six years. The main sector that has benefited has been that of marginalized and impoverished communities, to which the Primary Education Support Program has been allocated, with a budget of EUR 2.1 million and which has facilitated access to primary education among girls. Between 2004 and 2010 this program has managed to train some 13,000 primary education teachers, 100 schools were rehabilitated and 75,000 students gained access to basic education with a ratio of four students per 10 students (Le partenariat Afrique-UE, 2011).

In terms of health policies, Brussels has launched the *Somaliland Durable Solutions consortium (SDSC)* which aims to increase access to basic health care and has helped 30,000 people at risk of exclusion. In fact, this program has focused on vulnerable people, internally displaced persons, refugees and people with special needs (The National Somaliland, 2017).

One of the specific policies of the EU has been directed towards welfare during maternity in urban spaces such as Hargeisa where 972 mothers were able to give birth safely in health centres supported by the EU-funded Health Poverty Action (HPA) project. This is an extraordinary achievement in a context where more than half of pregnant women give birth without the presence of a trained health worker and face the risk of death or disability due to pregnancy-related complications. A maternity support program that includes free transportation and health services for indigent mothers has been established in Hargeisa and has helped more than 2,800 mothers since its inception. Equally important has been the support for local training of health professionals carried out by the Tropical Health and Education Trust with a budget provided entirely by the EU and amounting to EUR 585,000. This project has enabled the training of more than 30

medical students and allowed more than 500 people to enrol in the 2010-2011 academic year (Le partenariat Afrique-UE, 2011).

5. Conclusions

It is clear that Somaliland –despite not having the standards of a recognized independent state –has an enormous autonomy that has allowed it to promote a state reconstruction unparalleled with the rest of Somalia. This self-government has also made it possible to generate a successful process of democratization.

Despite this success, Hargeisa has not achieved international recognition from any actor. This has been a hard blow to his secessionist aspirations, since the idea put forward by former President Ibrahim Egal was that once these two processes were completed, international recognition would come. In this context, the EU is awaiting the reaction of the AU and regional countries, since the colonial past of some of its members weighs too heavily and they could fall into the error of interfering in the internal affairs of the Horn of Africa, with the risk that this would pose to their status.

Although the EU cannot at the moment recognize Somaliland as an independent state, this has not hindered the maintenance of bilateral relations with this enclave. These links, which are mainly focused on the establishment of military missions, development cooperation, democratization of the country and the promotion of education and health, reflect the EU's interests in Somaliland. But what has been the balance of these policies? First of all, it is obvious that the deployment of the EU-Navfor Atalanta and EUCAP-Somalia missions has achieved a greater cooperation with Somaliland's security forces, securing the waters against any pirate threat. Secondly, development cooperation has enabled the creation of new infrastructure, jobs and improved working conditions that contribute to social stability. Thirdly, there is no doubt that EU support for the democratization of the country has allowed the consolidation of a multi-party system and the organization of free elections. Finally, Brussels is aware that education and health are two basic pillars for the well-being of the population and the strengthening of its state structures.

But why this EU interest in Somaliland? It is obvious that the geostrategic situation of Somaliland is key for the protection of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean trade routes, as well as for the role played by Hargeisa in the fight against terrorism, so military coordination is essential. Furthermore, the EU maintains the hope that the Somaliland model of democratization and stability can be exported to the rest of Somalia, whose situation is marked by instability. In fact, to support the stability of Somaliland, Brussels – together with other international actors– has deployed a very important financial support for development, education and health projects

However, EU-Somaliland relations are at a crossroads since, despite the support, the non-recognition of Somaliland prevents it from accessing international aid that would allow the country a significant development and underpin its economic growth and stability. These relations are taking place in an ambiguous framework: the EU does not recognize Somaliland as an independent state, but it does maintain relations with its authorities. Although it is contradictory, Brussels argues that it collaborates with regional authorities that are part of a single country, Somalia, and not with an independent government.

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