

Institution: SOAS
Unit of Assessment: 30 History
Title of case study: ‘Understand the history – act more appropriately in the present’: The Influence of Horn of Africa Scholarship on Contemporary Governmental and Non-governmental Actors (Richard Reid)
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>In 2011, Eritrea was the world’s ninth largest source country of refugees just after Somalia. Fleeing a repressive regime whose human rights violations include indefinite conscription, religious persecution and widespread detention and torture, thousands of Eritrean refugees apply for asylum each year. Professor Richard Reid’s research on the historical and current political dynamics in Eritrea and the Horn of Africa, in addition to influencing government policy, has proved indispensable to human rights advocates working in the region, and to those in Europe, North America and beyond, making daily decisions relating to the asylum claims of ethnic Eritreans.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Professor Richard Reid completed his PhD at SOAS on themes in Ugandan history in 1996, after which he taught at the University of Asmara (Eritrea) for several years and at Durham University, before returning to SOAS as a lecturer in 2007. His work focuses in the main on the history of warfare and militarism in Africa, notably eastern and northeast Africa, including Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania, and he has published numerous books and articles on this subject.</p> <p>Much of Reid’s research has focused on Northeast Africa as a historical zone of interconnected conflict, demonstrating that the roots of modern violence in the region can be traced to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Reid’s work shows that, in the course of the last two hundred years, the region of present-day Ethiopia and Eritrea has witnessed the emergence of a series of frontier zones which have been characterised by a violent creativity (output a). Out of this context, the modern states of Ethiopia and Eritrea have evolved. The impacts described herein are related specifically to Reid’s work on Eritrea, written during his time at SOAS, but heavily informed by his time in Asmara, which coincided with the period of the Eritrean-Ethiopian War of May 1998-June 2000. At war’s end, working together with an Eritrean journalist, Reid conducted a series of interviews through which he became acutely aware of the increasing militarism of the country, coupled with primary archival research undertaken at the Research and Documentation Centre in Asmara where he was often the first person to access material.</p> <p>Present-day Eritrea was a frontier zone characterised by fierce competition in the nineteenth century, a situation which was perpetuated by Italian colonial rule between the 1890s and the 1940s. Eritrea’s incorporation into the Ethiopian empire in the 1950s led to a new explosion of violence on the northern frontier, yet Reid’s research shows that the wars of liberation fought in Eritrea from the early 1960s were in many ways rooted in the violence of the previous century. Moreover, Reid’s work demonstrates that these wars have had profound implications for the nature of the independent Eritrean state from 1991 onward: modern Eritrea is highly militarised, authoritarian and isolationist, making study of the country particularly fraught. Output c of 2009 was the first publication to examine both Eritrea’s worldview and the internal culture of paranoia and intolerance to opposition that shape Eritrea’s relationships with its neighbours and internationally, and the ways in which they contribute to regional instability and on-going conflict.</p> <p>Output b, which has elicited much criticism in Eritrea and praise internationally, provides a detailed study and analysis of the last decade of militarism in Eritrea, and is very much influenced by Reid’s own fieldwork in the country. It flags problems and makes numerous recommendations, some highly contentious, in relation to international responses to Eritrea’s many breaches of civil liberties and human rights, including imprisonment without trial, torture and indefinite conscription. A consequence of this publication, and a mark of its impact, is Reid’s prohibition from ever returning</p>

to Eritrea.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- a. *Frontiers of Violence in North-East Africa: Genealogies of Conflict since c. 1800*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- b. *Eritrea: The Siege State*. New York: International Crisis Group, 2010.
- c. *Eritrea's External Relations*. London: Chatham House, 2009.
- d. *War in Pre-Colonial Eastern Africa. The Patterns and Meanings of State-Level Conflict in the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford: British Institute in Eastern Africa, in association with James Currey, 2007.
- e. "Violence and its Sources: European witnesses to the Military Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Eastern Africa." In *The Power of Doubt: Essays in Honor of David Henige*, edited by Paul Landau, 41-59. Madison: Parallel Press / University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries, 2011.

Output a is submitted to REF 2.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Reid's research on Eritrea and the Horn of Africa has had a significant influence on UK foreign policy and on international organisations such as the World Bank. His work has been cited in House of Commons reports used for briefing parliamentarians (1, below) and in World Bank reports (2). Reid has had extended and direct collaboration with Chatham House, and Sally Healy, formerly an Associate Fellow there, has spoken very positively of his contribution, particularly its Horn of Africa Project, intended to deepen policy-makers understanding of the region and its political context. She writes:

"Richard's first-hand experience of Eritrea, and the network of Eritrean scholars he introduced to Chatham House, helped to bring a balance and depth to discussion about the region and its wars that is often lacking. In these discussions Richard himself brought historical depth to contemporary political debates, helping the Chatham House policy audiences to understand the "back story" and to contextualise Eritrea's apparent belligerence. I see this as a very helpful antidote to the personalisation of politics and the banality of good guy vs. bad guy analysis." (3)

The impacts of Reid's research that are most frequently and deeply felt, however, relate to their significance to human rights advocacy and refugee decision support. His thorough-going unveiling of the historical roots of and justifications for the styles of power, militarism, distrust and intolerance that engender human rights abuses in Eritrea and the Horn of Africa have proved crucial to the work of Human Rights Watch, which endeavours to militate against human rights abuses in Eritrea. Ben Rawlence, Senior Researcher, Africa Division at Human Rights Watch, has lauded Reid's immovable adherence to his views, unswayed by the exigencies of short-termist government policies: "He is also the only one [academic working on Eritrea] who's [sic] public work is undifferentiated from his private beliefs and private consultancy work: therefore, independent and reliable." (5) More than this, Reid's publications and particularly his book *Eritrea's External Relations* of 2009 — the only book that treats the subject — has significantly informed the strategic approach of Human Rights Watch in the Horn of Africa:

"His work on Eritrea's foreign policy has been particularly useful as we have tried to influence the government there and other governments on how to approach the country. The overall background analysis of the Tigray conflict as the driver of current human rights problems in both Eritrea, Ethiopia and to the extent both countries have been intervening in Somalia is central to HRW's understanding and to our strategic approach to the region." (5, 6, 7)

Impact case study (REF3b)

Perhaps, the most potentially life-changing impacts of Reid's work are evidenced in the inclusion of his commended and widely-disseminated report *Eritrea: The Siege State* of 2010 in the two most important and trusted online global resources supporting refugee decision support, RefWorld and The European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI.Net) (8, 9, 10). Both resources are freely available and used by immigration officials, lawyers and refugee advocate organisations throughout Europe, the Anglophone World and beyond. Refworld is the world's leading repository of carefully selected reports and papers relating to the general background, the legal contexts, and the human rights and international protection considerations regarding populations in the most common source countries of refugees. It is provided and vetted by the United Nations Human Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Not only is Reid's work cited in many of the documents available on Refworld relating to the situation in Eritrea and that of ethnic Eritreans in Ethiopia and the region more broadly, including in the UNHCR's own *Guidelines for Assessing International Protection Needs of Asylum Seekers from Eritrea* (8), Reid's anonymously written *Eritrea: The Siege State* of 2009 appears in full. It is also featured as one of 27 reports available on ECOI.Net, a resource, managed by the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, a division of the Austrian Red Cross (10). Given the numbers of Eritrean refugees who have lodged asylum applications in the world's 44 industrial countries since the publication of *Eritrea: the Siege State*, which total according to the UNHCR 8,521 in 2010, 10,935 in 2011 and 4,831 in the first half of 2012, it can be assumed that Reid's research has been called upon and mobilised in potentially thousands of asylum cases.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Citations in House of Commons reports:
<http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons/lib/research/rp2008/RP08-086.pdf> [Most recently accessed 25.11.13].
2. Citation in World Bank Report: http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/2012/04/25/000158349_20120425083258/Rendered/PDF/WPS6051.pdf [Most recently accessed 25.11.13].
3. Sally Healy, formerly of Chatham House.
4. Example citation in a Chatham House report:
<http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Africa/0608hornafrica.pdf>
[Most recently accessed 25.11.13].
5. Ben Rawlence, Human Rights Watch
6. Human Rights Watch *Service for Life: State Repression and Indefinite Conscription in Eritrea*, 2009 <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2009/04/16/service-life-0> [Most recently accessed 25.11.13].
7. Human Rights Watch *Ten Long Years: A Briefing on Eritrea's Missing Political Prisoners*, 2011:
<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/eritrea0911WebForUpload.pdf> [Most recently accessed 25.11.13].
8. Citations in United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR) reports and websites:
<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4d4afe0ec2.html> [Most recently accessed 25.11.13].
9. UNHRC report: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4ea7b3f327.pdf> [Most recently accessed 25.11.13].
10. Citation in ECOI.Net: http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1285238514_163-eritrea-the-siege-

[state.pdf](#) [Most recently accessed 25.11.13].