

Probing Ethiopian Foreign Policy towards Sudan and South Sudan Post-2011

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Abstract:

This paper was weighing the Ethiopian foreign policy towards Sudan and South Sudanese countries during the EPRDF regime and the current prosperity party. The findings are more of emphasized and analyzed qualitatively in light of primary and secondary sources gathered by interviewing of informants from different areas. On the other hand, secondary sources were used in order to address the basic objectives of the paper. In addition to this, the study used Descriptive survey research design for gathering relevant data which is necessary for the study. This paper was scrutinized the ancient relations of Ethiopia with the two Sudan's as the study pointed out the relations of the two countries more of conflictual due to religious fanaticism which Sudanese government followed, divergent interest on the Nile river including the riparian countries, movement of illegal and small weapons along the border, mass flow of refugees, all these impaired the relationships of the two countries. In addition to this the Ethio-Sudanees relations more of complicated especially post 2013 south Sudanese civil war. The relations mainly motivated by both bilateral interests, including mitigating the risk that the conflict would destabilize Ethiopian border areas and multilateral concerns, to ensure conflict in South Sudan would not draw in neighboring states into a destructive and protracted regional conflict. Similarly, inadequate border security and the mass influx of refugees also pose a big security threat along the border of these countries and a serious challenge for Ethiopian foreign policy and security.

Key Words: Foreign Policy, Constructive Diplomacy, National Interest

1. Introduction

Ethiopia located at the center of the horn of African regions and shared boundary with its neighbors including Sudan, Kenya, Somalia, Eritrea and shares cultural and historical communalities almost with all the countries of the region. Culturally, in terms of community way of life, most of the communities of the horn do share common socio-cultural practice. Irrespective of the mentioned in the above common shares among the neighbors states, could not been avoided the prolonged conflict within the regions (Hailu, 2011).

Over the last two decades, two of the major countries in the horn of Africa, Sudan and Ethiopia, underwent big transformations. In 1993, Eritrea became independent of Ethiopia and in 2011; Southern Sudan seceded from the North to

become the Republic of South Sudan. These transformations have changed the relations between existing capitals and have created new ones. Both secessions were the result of extensive armed conflicts. Since the 1970s were primarily driven by internal dynamics and amplified by a pattern of mutual intervention between states. Since 2000, the development trajectories of the different countries in the region have been markedly different. While Ethiopia managed to forge a path of economic growth and achieve certain stability, Sudan is still embroiled in conflict with its southern neighbor and is dealing with internal instability. These border and internal conflicts continue to hinder any effort to achieve security and stability of the Sudan's economy(Doop,2013).

Due to these reasons, Ethiopia developed their own foreign policy for its relationship with other countries in order to regulate favorable foreign relationships. Ethiopia is also considers these problems obliged to adopt its policy towards the Sudan, and counts a long period through different regimes. Among these régimes, the EPRDF government develops policy for its diplomacy, and promotes its common interest. This provoking article dominantly concerns on the Ethiopian foreign policy towards Sudan and South Sudan at the current EPRDF and prosperity party. Significantly the paper fascinatingly describes the historical relations and strategic policy of Ethio-Sudanese and South Sudan post 2011 and also explains the role of Ethiopia in maintaining peace and securities.

Historical Background of Ethio-Sudanese Relations

It is known that there is a long historical relationship with the Sudan starting from the time of the states of Axum and Merowe; there are also long-standing ties between the two peoples who have lived in one another's country over the years. It is evident that this relationship has had its own positive and negative features. In particular, since the end of World War II, when the Sudan became independent, the relationship has not developed in a positive manner as much as it should have.

One of the driving factors for skirmished relationship was religious extremism; such phenomena have also harmed the relationships between the two countries. Besides attempting to spread religious extremism in Ethiopia, there were different attempts supported by the Sudan that were planned to make the country a victim of terrorist attacks (MoI.2002).

To some extent in Ethiopia, there is a religious tolerance for a long period, and no political ground existed for extremism. The religiously motivated attempts from the Sudan should also have had little impact. The fact that religious equality had not

been, satisfactorily realized had exposed Ethiopia to imminent danger. In spite of the fact our endeavors, to fully implement all aspects of religious equality, to spread education and modern thinking, and to succeed in the war against poverty will certainly free Ethiopia from such dangers, we cannot say we have reached that level yet. It should be underscored therefore that there is a vulnerability that has substantially been reduced (Ibid).

The other factor for the conflictual relations of Sudan concerns with use of the Nile waters of the Nile. In this regard, the agreement that Sudan signed with Egypt in 1959 that excluded Ethiopia from the use of the river is an example worth mentioning. Ethiopia is the main source of the Nile, but it does not possess extensive lands like the Sudan to be developed through irrigation and the Sudan is the second biggest source and it has a wide territory that can be developed using irrigation in the Sudan, although, its share of the Nile is limited according to the agreement with Egypt . Egypt, on the contrary, is not a source at all. Ethiopia's opportunities to use the Nile for irrigation are limited. On the contrary, since the Sudan has expansive and fertile lands that can be irrigated, it is in a better position than Egypt and Ethiopia to gain maximum advantage.

Even if in accord with sound principle regarding the use of rivers for irrigation purposes, Egypt, which adds no volume to the Nile, has waters does not have enough land for irrigation. However, according to the 1959 agreement, it has appropriated the right to use the most substantial portion of the Nile's waters (Ibid).

Even in the, 1959 agreement the Sudanese national interest cannot be protected. Only the national interest of Sudan respected when there is equitable utilization of the Nile water between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia. If the Sudan cannot take, side to Egypt's and respects the interest of Ethiopia to the Nile water, this pave the way to improve the hostile relationship of Ethiopia and Sudan. Generally, the 1959, treaty is unfair but relatively good for Sudan, Ethiopia rejected because of it denied the right to make use of it and battled relationship is continued.

Third factors for weak relationships are the support of the Sudan provided to various opposing forces that aimed to disrupts the peace of Ethiopia. And on the other hand, Ethiopia was a major supporter of the Sudan people liberation army and gives violent response to an act of harm through the support of Sudanese opposition forces, especially in those Southern Sudan (MoI, 2002).

Ethiopia's Strategic Policy for Sudan and South Sudan, 1991-2019

Under both the Derg regime and the EPRDF coalition, Ethiopia held important interests in keeping Sudan unified. Ethiopian government strongly favored a unified Sudan, despite that the concept of self-determination, and so the possibility of a South Sudanese secession was put forward in the Declaration of Principles (DoP) by one of his own ministers. According to one observer, the concept of self-determination was included in the DoP for two particular and critical reasons: to assure a certain measure of governance in the south and, to prevent a smaller, more Islamic and embittered regime in Khartoum to seek closer ties with Ethiopia's nemesis.

In addition to this, during emperor Haile Sillasié, Ethiopia followed a policy of unconditional support of Sudanese regimes till late 1964. In January 1964, a Sudanese delegation came to Ethiopia and requested Sudanese troops undertake mopping up operations in the coming months, Ethiopia should close her borders with the Sudan along the Nasir-Pochalla line. In addition to this, Ethiopia sent the governor of Gambella, Col. Lemma Gebre-Maryam, to Khartoum.

In company with high-ranking Sudanese military officials, the colonel proceeded to the area of conflict and rendered his services in an advisory capacity in the mopping up operations undertaken by Sudanese troops (Belete, 2013).

The foreign policy objectives of Ethiopia, emphasizes the importance of security and the development of "rapid economic growth that will build our capacity to withstand internal and external threats". The Strategy seems very aware of the effects that certain foreign political developments can have on achieving domestic development goals, touching upon all regional countries and regional diplomatic forums. Considering the vast interests that Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia have in regional peace and the leverage they possess in terms of destabilizing the region(Dop,2013).

Politically speaking, there relationships between Ethiopia and Sudan were characterized by both peaceful and conflictual relationship (Hailu, 2011).The government of the two countries provide training, arming and supporting rebel groups of the two countries in all directions accused to each other for a long years and mobilizing its military for war in order to weaken each other. Ethiopia's foreign policy following the outbreak of conflict was motivated by both bilateral interests, including mitigating the risk that the conflict would destabilize Ethiopian border areas and multilateral concerns, to ensure conflict in South Sudan would not draw in neighboring states into a destructive and protracted regional conflict.

Economically, the trade relationships between Sudan and Ethiopia could be further strengthened by better use of the deep-sea port of Sudan. This port is an important potential point of access to the sea for the northern areas of Ethiopia. Since the road network in Ethiopia is currently still in a very poor condition, imports destined for Addis Ababa are being imported over the sea and railroad via Djibouti (Dop, 2013). The previous prime minister of Ethiopia, Melles Zenawi was quite aware of the regional political dynamics and the threats that other countries could pose to him. The threat that these quarrels posed to Ethiopian access to the sea and the development of its water resources, were in fact threats against the economic development of the country. Ethiopian foreign policy focused primarily on economic development and all foreign policy was put around that agenda. Ethiopia's foreign policy strategy plays down the role that its poor neighboring countries can play in the economic development of the country. Despite the fact that the Strategy also plays down their role in this respect, it does mention a number of areas where the two countries' geographies and industries can complement each other.

The Protagonist of Ethiopia in Maintaining Peace and Securities in Sudan and South Sudan

Ethiopia was already well placed to take up a role in resolving the issues in HOA in general and south Sudan diplomatically in particular. One could say that Ethiopia under Meles Zenawi continued the earlier role as mediator started by the emperor who had negotiated the 1972 Addis Ababa. Previously under the initiative of Haile Selassie in 1963, the Organization for African Unity (OAU), the precursor to the African Union, had established its headquarters in Addis Ababa.

From the establishment of OAU Ethiopia understood the significance living with different neighboring brother African countries is played paramount role for all people of Africa. The successive Ethiopia's government understood the problem of its neighbors and they played paramount role in peace-making role in Sudan and South Sudan for the sake of regional stability. From its effort Ethiopia obtained a lot of benefit from its role like border security, trade, people to people relations, hydro politics and build image of modernity in front of the world community. This all showed its strong capacity of leadership in realizing peace and order environment in Sudan and South Sudan that the world country unable to solve it.

Through IGADD which established in 1986, Ethiopia was played a mediator role in peace deal process in Sudan and South Sudan for many times, without appearing to be interfering unilaterally (Dop, 2013). For instance during 2015 peace deal process

Ethiopia is mainly contributed as peacekeepers to the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei along the Sudan-South Sudan border. In addition to this, Ethiopia during two years stay in UN security council she contributed for peace of Sudan and south Sudan and create an opportunity to create smooth relations with the HOA in general .

In an official mediation attempt between northern and Southern Sudan took place under the auspices of IGADD. Ethiopia's support for talks between these parties makes it a critical partner in supporting inclusivity in Juba. For this to take place, the RPF must deploy and demonstrate its worth. The RPF provides a direct link to Ethiopia and other IGAD leaders in their oversight of ARCSS and efforts to form a more inclusive government. In addition to this, Ethiopia supports the principle of self-determination for Southern Sudan. It obligated the parties to make "unity of Sudan" a priority, but conditional on the introduction of secularism and equal wealth sharing within the whole of Sudan. This seemed a distant prospect as the NIF- government in Khartoum was fighting its ever more zealous war with the South.

Under the late Prime Minister of Melles Zenawi Ethiopia held strong personal ties with both president Al-Bashir of Sudan, and John Garang of the SPLA, Ethiopia could be an effective and powerful broker between the two opponents. Though the SPLA accepted the proposal, the NIF did not, and in the absence of any other credible alternative, the DoP remained unsigned on the table (Doop, 2013). In addition to this, the late Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn in his visit of Juba, the leaders assured that they would not support rebels in either country. And also Ethiopia share border with South Sudan hosts cross-border communities that experience multiple, overlapping communal tensions that can lead to violence.

Prime Minister of Ethiopia Dr. Abiy Ahmed has arrived in Juba, South Sudan, for an official visit October 14, 2019 and he plays a vital role at reconciling the Sudanese Transitional Government and the Sudanese Armed Groups. The discussion which was held between armed movements in Sudan and the new government resulted in a way forward on pending security arrangements issues. ¹In the same talked Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said Ethiopia will continue its effort to the peace and stability of South Sudan in particular and Africa in general. He also discussed with South Sudan President SalvaKiir Mayardit on the ways of effectively implement the newly signed peace deal, and issues of bilateral ties. Further he pressured South Sudanese political elites including the leaders, and the armed opposition leader in order to meet, negotiate, and aversely accede to multiple agreements to end conflict and

¹ Ezega.com and get Ethiopian News updates regularly.

enforced to introduce different political reforms which is mainly focused on agreements which was signed in August 2015.

South Sudanese warring factions have signed the revitalized agreement to end five years of civil war. This results Ethiopia contributes for the peace and stability of south Sudan and pave the way for a number of refugees return back to their home from Gambella refugee camp of Ethiopia. Over the past years more than half a million people were displaced from South Sudan due to the prolonged conflict. Efforts have been carried out over the past years to end the conflict in the country but now, constructive diplomatic approach make the peace deal fruitful as all neighboring counties took their share in resolving the conflict.

In addition to this, the Prime Minister Abiy talks to the Sudan government and the militaries to solve their problems peacefully. Positive progress has been pragmatic in the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and motivated the member states are doing their best to bring stability to Sudan, and this is encouraging. In addition to this, Ambassador Morgan also mentioned the uncountable role of Ethiopia playing in the reconciliation process in Sudan and south Sudan through chairing the IGAD secretariats facilitate the environment to all groups to come in from the cold and join in nation-building and constructive solutions and recommend the faction groups support to the reconciliation process in Sudan. Ethiopia is understandably worried about both developments. However, for its foreign policy to be coherent and maximize its overall state interests Addis Ababa needs to weigh the significance of these dimensions versus its other bilateral and regional interests vis-à-vis South Sudan.

Abiy deeply understand geopolitical of its neighboring countries and developed the philosophy of *synergy* or *Medemerto* financially, politically and socially collaborate with the countries of the horn, this evidenced by his role of Eritrea peacemaking with Ethiopia and peace deal of north Sudan conflict between the opposition and ruling government and facilitate the environ for south Sudan between Salvakir and Rek Machar to solve their problem by itself, this one of the outcome the philosophy of *Medemer* or *synergy* which developed by pm Abiy, this pave the way for the enhancement of Ethiopian foreign policy and national interest.

Among the efforts of the philosophy of *Medemer* for neighboring countries are as follows, avoiding conflict, attracting financial support, coordinating efforts on security matters, promoting capacity-building and knowledge exchange, and

enhancing Ethiopia's international profile with countries of the horn in particular and with the world in general. The country plays a critical role in African Union's peacekeeping operations in south Sudan and contributes a lion share to the UN peacekeeping operations in the world that appeals to peaceful co-existence, equal partnership, and equitable sharing of benefits and burdens rather than muscular diplomacy and coercive force.

From this one can understand that Ethiopia takes lion share in bringing two opposition leaders of south Sudan and mediates the rival parties for lasting peace. This could be considered as part of Ethiopia's contribution in ensuring peace and stability in the Horn of Africa in particular and Africa in general. Ethiopia's commitment to peace-making in South Sudan has been critical for regional stability. It has much to gain from continuing this engagement, including a secure border and trade with a stable neighbor. But achieving lasting peace after South Sudan's two-year-long civil war is a long-term undertaking. Ethiopia has shown strong leadership and a level of direct involvement in peace efforts in Sudan and South Sudan that few countries can match.

Challenges to Ethiopian Foreign Policy

Ethiopian foreign policy historically challenged by both internal and external factors. Externally affected by the prevalence of terrorism in the HoA and the expansionist behavior of neighboring states, the development of greedy interest on the Nile River by riparian states continually affected Ethiopian foreign policy and its security. Internally a grave democratic deficit; sectarian politics; corruption; the absence of constitutional accountability, judicial review and parliamentary oversight; the violation of human rights; and extreme poverty, these are the main determinant of Ethiopia's foreign policy (Mehari, 2017).

Cognizant to this Ethiopia's foreign relations with South Sudan increasingly complicated since South Sudan's descent into civil war in late 2013. Although Ethiopia's policy following the outbreak of conflict was motivated by both bilateral interests, including mitigating the risk that the conflict would destabilize Ethiopian border areas and multilateral concerns, to ensure conflict in South Sudan would not draw in neighbouring states into a destructive and protracted regional conflict. Ethiopian policy today has insufficiently prioritized and calibrated its various interests in South Sudan.

Ethiopian foreign policy seriously challenged since from the first Sudanese civil war, this paved the way for the influx of large number of Sudanese refugees. In 2003, refugee camps in Ethiopia were at the center of violent conflict due to the impact of

large-scale migration on the regional state of Gambella with a population of about 160, 000. In Ethiopia's federal system, regional administrative power is allocated in direct proportion to the population of the country's ethno-cultural communities. Prior to 2003 changes in Gambella, an outcome of such demographic change due to influx from South Sudan has been the creation of what has been termed by one of the writers the 'minority in power but majority in number' situation.

The other challenge is inadequate border security also poses a big security threat on the host communities of Gambella region. Insecurity is widely spread among the refugee population, which obviously had a significant spill over effect on the host communities. There are cases of refugees coming with arms and army uniform to the area. Sometimes there is inter-ethnic tensions which are being witnessed and many clashes have left a number of people dead and injured. Movements and presences of illegal weapons have been observed in and out of camps, with shooting incidents being witnessed in different areas. With the vulnerability of porous borders, and the natural mobility of the Nuer in gaining access to the neighbouring regions of Ethiopia, the consequences the crisis will not be limited to South Sudan. A large Murle raid from South Sudan into the Gambella region required the Ethiopian army's temporary deployment into South Sudan to secure the return of abducted children and to monitor both sides of the border. This took place during a separate period of inter-communal conflict in Gambella, which was exacerbated by the large numbers of refugees in the region.

Further to this violence and displacement are detrimental to the mutually beneficial cross-border trade that was growing fast before South Sudan's civil war started in 2013. Stability and security can enable development rather than humanitarian crisis in the impoverished border regions. The stability of South Sudan is also important for Ethiopia and other neighboring countries, which fear a new flare up of the conflict could flood them with refugees. The secession of South Sudan also hit Khartoum's economy hard, taking with it most of the region's oil reserves. The region has seen a series of stunning rapprochements over the past months, including reconciliation between Ethiopia and Eritrea. An additional diplomatic burden for Ethiopia remains the usual balancing role it plays within IGAD and the divergent interests of its member states, particularly Sudan and Uganda, who might lend support to different factions in this crisis. Here close assistance by the AU and the UN will be critical to ensure unison of messages to the warring factions, and their external supporters.

The other challenge of Ethiopian foreign policy is the proliferation of small arms and cattle rustling. According to the host communities which was collected from the host communities of Gambella, the Southern Sudanese refugees has, small and medium size arms in the possession of refugees were used, but it was for self-protection' against their coworker refugee enemies. Even some refugees often consider each other belonging to different warring factions or political groupings back in their home countries based on the conflict that provoked their mass departure. The instabilities of South Sudan and Sudan are very difficult for neighbouring countries along the border of the different HOA countries. Efforts have been carried out to end the conflict in the country but now, constructive diplomatic approach make the peace deal fruitful as all neighbouring counties took their share in resolving the conflict and advanced its foreign policy to some extent.

Conclusion

Since Ethiopia understands, the importance of relationship with other countries to achieve development, good governance and democracy, unless it realizes, it is difficult without creating linkage. The major pulling force for Ethiopian foreign policy visa vise north and South Sudan have been continuing to its best advance. The Ethiopian government needs to transform their economy, and put the country on the roads of development without affecting the national interest of the two Sudan. Ethiopia with the Sudan and South Sudan is assertively formulated to enrich its own strategy to run their common interest in order to forward the country one-step to the future, based on mutual assistance. Ethiopia has been paying a cost for Sudan and South Sudan for sake of maintaining their unity and presents a sort of option by Ethiopian government in order to minimize their differences.

Ethiopia has more costs than benefits from its relation. Conflicts at the border area with Ethiopia paves the way for regional and border instability, this directly or indirectly affects the Ethiopian potential to growth. However, the leaders still are reluctant to solve their problem through round table discussion. Relatively at the moment times, Ethiopia played a good role for their economic, political, territorial integrity and their national security around the border in eradicating their common problems by following constructive diplomatic relations in realizing win-win approach to the whole members of the horn of African countries.

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