

## **PROBING ETHIOPIAN FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS SUDAN AND SOUTH SUDAN POST-2011.**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

With the core objective of assessing the Ethiopian foreign policy and its relations towards Sudan and south Sudan post 2011. Foreign policy is a routine espoused by countries to engage with other countries through dialogue and conciliation to advance their political, social, economic and military interests. Ethiopian foreign policy initially dominated by state to state relations that marginalized the participation of none state actors like Non-Governmental Organizations, individuals and other Multinational Corporations. The first official document of Ethiopian foreign policy was adopted by Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front government. The findings are more emphasized and analyzed qualitative research approach and narrative research design to attain the objective of the study. On the other hand secondary sources were used in order to address the basic objectives of the research. To this end the study used qualitative data analysis techniques for collecting data from different sources. The findings of this study indicate that Ethiopian foreign policy played paramount role for its relations with Sudan and south Sudan and challenged by different obstacles. As the findings show, Ethiopian government provide political, and military support for Sudan and south Sudan like military training and diplomatic support for resolving border conflict. It also played paramount role in peace-making and peace keeping role, this greatly contributed to regional stability for border security, people to people relations, increasing understanding on hydro politics etc. On the other

hand, Ethiopian foreign policy challenged by different obstacles such as, the prevalence of terrorism, the expansionist behavior of Sudan, the development of greedy interest on the Nile River by riparian states, the rise of nationalism, misuse of social media, border insecurity and extreme poverties are the main determinant of Ethiopia's foreign policy post- 2011. Finally, the study comes up with good relations continued until Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed come to power in 2018 but the coming of joint military civilian government in Sudan August 2019 the relations of these countries are once more uncertain.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

In contemporary period, growth and development of nation-states and increased relations and communications among them has led to the creation and formulation of foreign policy. A country without foreign policy is viewed as a football team playing the game without any master plan to post the goals, hence all the players of the team are directionless on what role and functions they are supposed to perform on the playground. Therefore, it can be asserted that foreign policy will continue to exist as far as sovereign countries exist and function in the world system. Foreign policy is conducted in an environment of multiple linkages between home and abroad in the forms of NGOs, MNCs, academics, political leaders, interventions of several foreign governments, as well as intense media scrutiny (Chong 2007).

Foreign policy is a method adopted by countries to engage with other countries through discussion and negotiation. It helps countries to engage politically, socially, economically and militarily with each other. The formation of modern Ethiopian empire ushered the foundation for genesis of the modern Ethiopia's foreign relations and foreign policy but initially it was dominated by state to state relations that marginalized the participation of none state actors though the foreign policy document of the country was not adopted till 1996 when the official document of Ethiopian foreign policy was adopted by EPRDF government (Keller, 1987).

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 (Cliffe, 1999). 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 (Mathis, 2013).

Due to these reasons, Ethiopia developed its own foreign policy in its relationship with other countries in order to create favorable environment. Ethiopia also considers these problems as a means that obliged it to adopt its current policy towards Sudan for the long period throughout different regimes. Among these régimes, the EPRDF government develops its own foreign policy in order to promote the national interest of Ethiopia and create people to people relations. This provoking article is dominantly concerned with the Ethiopian foreign policy towards Sudan

and South Sudan during the current EPRDF and prosperity party. Thus, the objective of this study is to assess' Ethiopian foreign policy towards Sudan and south Sudan post-2011. Methodologically, the study employed the qualitative research approach and narrative research design was hired to attain the objective of the study. Accordingly, the study used a secondary source of data; collected from books, journal articles, published and unpublished materials and archives. To triangulate the secondary data, primary data was also collected via key informant interviewed from some prominent government officials. Analytically, the collected data hired qualitative data analysis techniques.

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF ETHIO-SUDAN 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 of time, and no political ground existed for religious extremism. The religiously motivated attempts from the Sudan should also have had little impact, but it is clear that the previous, undemocratic systems in Ethiopia had exposed us to this danger. **This is incomplete** conditional statement, please complete it). The fact that religious equality had not been, satisfactorily realized had exposed Ethiopia to imminent danger (MoI, 2002). In spite of the fact that Ethiopia accomplished, 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 (MoI, 2002).

The other factor for the conflictual relations of Sudan concerns with use of the Nile waters. In this regard, the agreement that Sudan signed with Egypt in 1959 that excluded Ethiopia from the use of the river is an example above worth mentioning. Ethiopia is the main source of the Nile, but it does not adequately utilize the river for hydro -electric power and irrigation like Sudan and Egypt until 2011 declared to begin Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. In support to this Ethiopia is the source of the lion's share of Nile water, while Egypt is the region's largest consumer of the water (John, 2020). This indicate that, Sudan is the second biggest source of Nile river and it has a wide territory used for irrigation but the interest of Ethiopian restricted by the 1959 agreement but Sudan partially secure its interest by the 1959 agreement which is disproportional to Egypt(wuhibegezer et.al, 2014).

Only the full 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 would pave the way to improve the hostile relationship of Ethiopia and Sudan. Furthermore, since from 1946-91 relations between Sudan and Ethiopia were tarnished by the support they provided to each other's armed opposition groups (John, 2020). Generally, the 1959, treaty is unfair but relatively good for Sudan. Ethiopia rejected it because the agreement denied its right to make use of its natural potential. The cause for the continual embattled relationships of the riparian country mainly for Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt.

The third factor for weak relationships is related to the support they provided to each other's military opposition groups. The Ethiopian led regional assault on Sudan in the wake of the 1995 attempted assassination of Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa led the al-Bashir regime to conclude that Ethiopia, and not Egypt, was the primary threat to its existence, and this necessitated reconciliation (African Studies Center, 1995)

### **ETHIOPIA'S STRATEGIC POLICY TOWARDS 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. The concept of self-determination was included in the declaration of principle 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 (Mathis, 2013).

In addition to this, during emperor Haile Sillasié, Ethiopia followed a policy of unconditional support of Sudanese regimes till late 1964 (Belete, 2013). In January 1964, a Sudanese delegation came to Ethiopia and requested Sudanese troops undertook 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, emphasized on 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 (Doop, 2013).

Politically speaking, the relationships between Ethiopia and Sudan previously, 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 south Sudan conflict motivated

by 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 (Doop, 2013). The prime minister of Ethiopia, Melles Zenawi was quite aware of the regional political dynamics and the threats that other countries could pose to Ethiopia (Doop, 2013). 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. Ethiopia under Meles Zenawi continued the earlier role as mediator started by the emperor who had negotiated the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement. In the process of establishing the OAU, Ethiopia understood the significance of African brotherhood in the struggle against colonialism and the need for African unity earlier than the OAU. In line with this according to Mehari et,al (2018) in the early 1960s, Ethiopia protracted giant political and military support for numerous anti-colonial and anti-apartheid struggles in Africa like military training and diplomatic support for liberation movements in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia.

Furthermore, Addis Ababa served as the seat of various many-sided foreign missions, delegations and institutions, is the unchallenged diplomatic hub of Africa. From this one can understand that, Successive Ethiopian governments understood the problem of its neighbors. They played paramount role in peace-making and peace keeping role in the Sudan and South Sudan, this greatly contributed to regional stability. Furthermore, such involvement improved border security, trade, people to people relations, increasing understanding on hydro politics and build Ethiopia's image in the international community.<sup>1</sup> This all showed Ethiopia's strong capacity of leadership in realizing peace and order through its mediating role, peace keeping effort in the Sudan and South Sudan. Those were even a challenge to the international community to resolve in an amicable manner.

Through IGADD which was established in 1986, Ethiopia played a mediator role in peace deal process both in Sudan and South Sudan without appearing to be interfering unilaterally and

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with expert from foreign affairs, Oct, 2020

with outside taking (Doop, 2013). For instance during 2015 peace deal process, Ethiopia 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 contributed for peace of Sudan and south Sudan and the HOA in general.

The official mediation 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 (Morgan, 2018). The Regional Protection Force (RPF) provides a direct link to Ethiopia and other IGAD leaders in their oversight of Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS) and efforts to form a more inclusive government. In line with this, Ethiopia has shown strong leadership and a level of direct involvement in peace efforts in Sudan and South Sudan collaboration with UN peace keeping force (Rashid, 2017). Furthermore, Ethiopia supports the principle of self-determination for Southern Sudan (Morgan, 2018). 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 National Islamic Front government in Khartoum was fighting a zealous war with the South (International crisis group, 2013).

The late Prime Minister Melles Zenawi of Ethiopia had strong personal ties with both president Al-Bashir of Sudan, and the late John Garang of the SPLA. As a result of which Ethiopia could have been 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). But later during the Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn's visit to Juba, the leaders assured that they would not support rebels in either country, agreed to hosts the displaced people and made critical restatement of a mutual understanding between the two countries (Rashid, 2017).

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia has arrived in Juba, South Sudan, for an official visit on October 14, 2019 and he played a vital role at reconciling the Sudanese Transitional Government and the Sudanese Armed Groups (Shi Yinglun, 2020). The discussion which was held between armed movements in Sudan and the new government resulted in a way forward on pending security arrangements issues. During the time, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed said Ethiopia would continue its effort to the peace and stability of South Sudan in particular and Africa in general<sup>2</sup> Shi (2020) added that South Sudan President Salva Kiir Mayardit on the ways of effectively implementing 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. That enforced to introduce different political reforms which is mainly focused on agreements which was signed in August 2015 and Abiy visit to Juba provided an additional force for implementing the 2015 agreement.

South Sudanese warring factions have signed the revitalized agreement to end five years of civil war. This is the result of Ethiopia's contribution for the peace and stability of south Sudan. The agreements pave the way for a number of refugees to return to their home from Gambella

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<sup>2</sup> Interview with government officials at foreign affairs head office, Oct, 2020

refugee camp of Ethiopia. Over the past years more than half a million people were displaced from South Sudan due to the prolonged conflict (Endalkachew, 2016).

Efforts have been made over the past years to end the conflict in the country with no fruit but now, constructive diplomatic approach make the peace deal fruitful as all neighboring countries took their share in resolving the conflict.

Positive progress has been made in the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan and motivated the member states to doing their best to bring stability to Sudan, and this is encouraging. In addition to this, Ambassador Morgan South Sudan ambassador to Ethiopia also mentioned the uncountable role of Ethiopia playing in the reconciliation process in Sudan and south Sudan through chairing the IGAD secretariats. That role of Ethiopia facilitated the environment to all groups to come in from the cold and join in nation-building and constructive solutions. The Ambassador recommends the faction groups to come to support the reconciliation process in South Sudan (Shi Yinglun, 2020). 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 (Aly, 2017).

Abiy deeply understand geopolitics of its neighboring countries and developed the philosophy of synergy or Medemer to financially, politically and socially collaborate with the countries of the Horn. This is evidenced by his role of Eritrea peacemaking with Ethiopia and peace deal of north Sudan conflict between the oppositions.<sup>3</sup> His role of facilitation of the environment for south Sudan between Salvakir and Rek Machar to solve their problem by itself, this is one of the outcomes the philosophy of Medemer<sup>4</sup> or synergy which is developed by pm Abiy. , This paves the way for the enhancement of Ethiopian foreign policy and national interest. Further, the philosophy of medemer successfully managed to resolve the decades old rift between Eritrea and Ethiopia there by bringing the two countries into strong cooperation (Abyi, 2018).

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 neighboring countries of south Sudan, Eritrea and Somalia in particular and the horn of Africa in general to the minimal the idea help Ethiopia to strengthen its cooperation with the above mentioned country mainly with Eritrea which has hostile relations for two decades (Abyi, 2018). 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.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with political science instructors from Mettu, Woldia and Madda Walabu university

<sup>4</sup> *Medemer is an idea that seeks to address the deficit in a new social, political, economic and foreign relations orientations*

<sup>5</sup> Interview with experts from south Sudan in Ethiopia, Dec 2020

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. Ethiopia has shown strong leadership and a level of direct involvement in peace efforts in Sudan and South Sudan.

### **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 Horn of Africa 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 the rise of nationalism, misuse of social media prevalence of corruption; the absence of constitutional accountability and the violation of human rights; and extreme poverties are the main determinant of Ethiopia's foreign policy (Mehari, 2017).

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 (Aly, 2017).

Ethiopian foreign policy has been seriously challenged since the first Sudanese civil war of 1955-1972 which paved the way for the influx of large number of Sudanese refugees to Gambella region of Ethiopia. In 2003, refugee camps in Ethiopia were at the center of receiving large-scale migration. The Gambella refugee camp with a population of about 160, 000 was one of the largest to receive those immigrant from South Sudan. That created demographic change due to influx from South Sudan complicating even domestic politics under the Gambella regional state level. <sup>6</sup>

The other challenge is, it 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 of 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

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with south Sudan refugees at pugnido refugee , Sep 2020

inter-communal conflict in Gambella, which was exacerbated by the large numbers of refugees in the region.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the Violence and displacement, the insecurity has been 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 neighbouring 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 (Mehari, 2013).

The other challenge of Ethiopian foreign policy is the proliferation of small arms and cattle rustling (Endalkachew, 2016). 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 neighboring 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 neighboring counties took their share in resolving the conflict and advanced its foreign policy to some extent.<sup>8</sup>

## **CONCLUSION:**

Ethiopia evidently understands the importance of relationship with other countries to achieve sustainable development, good governance and democracy, by creating political, economic and security linkage with neighboring countries. The major enforcing force for Ethiopian foreign policy visa vise north and South Sudan have been continuing to advance its national interest, regional peace and stability and harmonized people to people relations. The Ethiopian government dedicated to transform their economy, and put the country on the roads of development without heartrending the national interest of the Sudan and south Sudan. Ethiopia's relations with the Sudan and South Sudan is assertively formulated to enrich its own interest based on mutual respect and understanding. Ethiopia has been paying a cost for Sudan and South Sudan for sake of maintaining their peace and stability at different time and presents a sort of option in order to minimize their differences. 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 Ethiopia played a good role for their economic, political,

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<sup>7</sup> Interview with political science instructors from Mettu, Woldia and Madda Walabu university, Jan 2021

<sup>8</sup> Interview with experts from south Sudan in Ethiopia, Dec 2020

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 Sudan and south Sudan.

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