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Ethiopian – Eritrean Conflict: Security Implications for the Horn of Africa

by

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14. ABSTRACT

The Horn of Africa is a region in which neighboring countries have been uncomfortable with each other. Since 1960, most of the countries in the region question the validity of each other's boundaries established by the former colonial powers. Eritrean and Ethiopian boundaries are also part of this problem. Since its independence Eritrea has used military force against Yemen, Djibouti, and Ethiopia following unresolved border claims. However, the use of borders as a pretext for economic and political problems is common in Eritrea. One example of this is the war conducted from 1998 to 2000 between Ethiopia and Eritrea that affects the security of the entire region. It was one of the most dangerous wars in the Horn of Africa with high spillover effect to neighboring countries. Based on the principle of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" Eritrea has supported dissenting and armed opposition groups in the region as indirect continuity of the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to look at how the conflict of Ethiopian- Eritrean has worsened the security situation of the Horn of Africa and created fertile environments for terrorist groups in the region.

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ABSTRACT

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The Horn of Africa is a region in which neighboring countries have been uncomfortable with each other. Since 1960, most of the countries in the region question the validity of each other's boundaries established by the former colonial powers. Eritrean and Ethiopian boundaries are also part of this problem. Since its independence Eritrea has used military force against Yemen, Djibouti, and Ethiopia following unresolved border claims. However, the use of borders as a pretext for economic and political problems is common in Eritrea. One example of this is the war conducted from 1998 to 2000 between Ethiopia and Eritrea that affects the security of the entire region. It was one of the most dangerous wars in the Horn of Africa with high spillover effect to neighboring countries. Based on the principle of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" Eritrea has supported dissenting and armed opposition groups in the region as indirect continuity of the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to look at how the conflict of Ethiopian- Eritrean has worsened the security situation of the Horn of Africa and created fertile environments for terrorist groups in the region.

ETHIOPIAN – ERITREAN CONFLICT:

SECURITY IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HORN OF AFRICA

Figure 1. Map of the Horn of Africa.

Overview of the Horn of Africa

The countries usually considered to constitute the Horn of Africa are Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, and Djibouti. Some include Sudan, Kenya and Uganda. However, this paper will focus on the first four countries which are core countries in the Horn and look at how the conflict of Ethiopian- Eritrean has affected the security of these countries.

The challenges and the threats of the Horn are interlinked to a greater extent than is the case in most other regions of Africa. A strategy or policy that does not take into account the implications for its neighboring countries is probably fated to fail because, the countries in the region are highly interrelated economically, socially, culturally, and geographically.[1]

The Horn of Africa covers approximately an area of 2,000,000 km² (770,000 sq mi) and is inhabited by about roughly 98 million people (Ethiopia: 83 million, Somalia: 9.3 million, Eritrea: 5.2 million, and Djibouti: 0.88 million).[2] The term the "Horn of Africa" is used to refer to the greater region of adjacent countries located at northeastern Africa which are bounded by the strategic Gulf of Aden, Red Sea, and Indian Ocean.

The Horn of Africa is one of the most important and strategic locations for African as well as world economies. It is a link between Africa and the Middle East, as well as an entrance to the oil fields of the Persian Gulf. The Horn is culturally and historically rich with huge potential of natural resources; such as international rivers, lakes, hydro-power, livestock, forests and agricultural potential, unexploited potential of oil, natural gas, gold, and salt. It is also a region where two of the world's major religions, Islam and Christianity, have lived peacefully for generations.[3]

Italian, French, and British colonizers divided the countries of the Horn of Africa among themselves, with the exception of Ethiopia, and imposed their rule on an unequal basis. The European colonial powers were the first to fully engage in the politics of the region during the nineteenth century. Administrative boundaries of these countries intentionally cut across existing African political and ethnic boundaries in order to divide and weaken potentially powerful indigenous (native) groups. Within the Horn of

Africa, the British established their presence in the northern part of Somalia (also known as British Somaliland). The Italians for their part, occupied Eritrea and southern Somalia (referred to as Italian Somalia) while the French had a throttlehold on Djibouti. After World War II, Italy, Great Britain, and France gradually withdrew from the region. In 1952, Eritrea confederated with Ethiopia; Somalia gained its independence in 1960 after a merge of the British Somaliland colony and Italian Somaliland. Djibouti, which retains a significant French military presence, gained its independence from France in 1977. [4]

The colonial intervention in the region has been – and remains an important factor contributing to the conflicts within the region. Current conflicts and instability in the Horn of Africa still find their roots in the colonial period. This proved to be the case during the Ethiopian-Somali conflict of 1977-78 and the current Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict. [5]

After the countries in the Horn gained their independence, the leadership styles of governments in the Horn introduced a new aspect of political instability. Successive oppressive regimes pursued self interest goals while they were guided by radical political ideologies which took center-stage in the events of the region. Many countries in the Horn have faced ethnic, border conflict and clan rivalries negatively impacting on the security of the region.[6]

In addition, the Horn of Africa has been affected by years of famine, disease, population explosion, and climate change. Most countries in the Horn are faced with low economic development, weak governance, corruption, insufficient and poor social services. These problems are accelerated by high level of ethnic conflict and natural disasters which lead to a growing number of refugees and internally displaced people

(IDPs). The consequences of these problems have been very costly for the region in both human and economic terms, as reflected by key economic and social indicators. According to the 2010 World Bank report, per capita of the countries in the Horn shows Ethiopia $390, Eritrea $340, Somalia $150, Djibouti $1,270.[7] Except for Djibouti, all countries fall in the category of lower income countries with higher level of poverty.

The primary cause of poverty in these countries, which are rich in natural resource potential, is weak governance that produces conflicts, wars, and misguided economic policies. It is also a problem of collaboration among the political leaders of the countries, to promote peace and establish democratic institutions of governance and conflict resolution mechanisms in the region. Currently, the failure to resolve the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea is increasing the risk of a return to war. Such a development would not only be a disaster for the two countries, but also have a major impact on the peacemaking efforts in the region; specifically Somalia. This impact could also be felt in the future for Djibouti, as the economies of Djibouti and Ethiopian have become increasingly interrelated since the Eritrean - Ethiopian war. Beside the economic impact of the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict, hostilities between the two countries have led to huge difficulties in relations between and among Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somalia. As Nyongo states, the civil wars and conflicts have affected the most vulnerable people of the continent, making it difficult for them to develop their economy. In general it is a region in which neighboring countries have been uncomfortable with each other since the early 1960s, many of the countries in the region question the validity of each other's boundaries established by the colonial powers.[8]

The Background of the Ethiopia and Eritrea Conflict

The 1991 fall of the Mengistu regime in Ethiopia was a joint venture between two rebel forces, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) from the Ethiopian side and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) from the Eritrean side. Immediately following the victory, the EPRDF joined with other parties to form the Transitional Government of Ethiopia, while the EPLF took control of Eritrea and established a provisional government. The provisional government independently administered Eritrea until Eritreans voted for independence under a UN-monitored referendum in1993.[9] After independence, the international community in general, and Western leaders and diplomats in particular, looked at the two leaders of the rebel forces as models and offering new hope for the whole of the African continent. However, this hope did not last long with confrontation between these countries starting within a few years of Eritrea independence.

Differences between Ethiopia and Eritrea started over concerns including access to Eritrean ports, the relationship of the Eritrean currency to the Ethiopian currency, the exact location of their poorly demarcated border, and other trade and citizenship related polices. These issues created tensions that pushed both regimes to reject constructive negotiation on these and other vital issues.[10]

The thirty years war with the Mengistu regime cost tens of-thousands of lives and destroyed the infrastructure of both countries. No one expected these countries to once again get involved in another war that cost them more than they had already paid to overthrow the Mengistu regime. After Eritrean independence in 1993, it seemed that peace had at last been achieved and there was hope for a brighter future for both countries. However, despite this, war started between the two countries in May 1998. It

was one of the most dangerous and deadly wars in the Horn of Africa with high spillover effect on neighbor countries.

At that time, Ethiopia was unprepared to prevent Eritrea's invasion. There had been no expectation that Eritrea would enter by force through the Ethiopian border considering the mutual benefits of peace and friendly relations between the two brother's countries. Between 1993 and 1997, relations were focused mainly on trade, citizenship issues and regional security policy. Even if they expressed differences over border, trade, currency, and other policy issues that need to be solved by negotiation there was no expectation that the explosion of a minor border dispute into a major war took both countries by surprise.

As Paul Henze states in his book "Eritrea's War" in May 1998, Eritrean armed forces occupied the border town of Badme, a use of military force that Ethiopia regarded as an illegal territorial invasion.[11] This event generated a small skirmish with the Eritrean local security forces based in the town and Ethiopia Armed Forces. Before this skirmish escalated into full-scale war, third parties offered their assistance to solve the conflict peacefully. As a result, Ethiopia and Eritrea accepted a diplomatic team from the United States and Rwanda to discuss and prevent the war from being pushed to its logical conclusion. A joint US/Rwanda peace proposal recommended that the two countries withdraw to positions held before the eruption of conflict and look for a neutral ruling on the location of the boundary that they would both accept. However, this proved impossible as Eritrea did not agree on the terms of the withdrawal. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) also recommended a similar peace proposal which was also

rejected. Ethiopia accepted these peace proposals and Eritrea rejected them, as a result, intensive fighting was launched in a few days.

Following the 1999 round of fighting, Eritrea moved to accept both the US/Rwanda and OAU proposals sensing that they had nothing to lose as the demanded withdrawal had been achieved by force. However, Ethiopia took this as a tactical move to save time and prepare for another round of fighting. As a result, Ethiopia opened a major offensive action to secure the border and force Eritrea to pull its troops back to pre-May 1998 positions. After three rounds of war In December 2000, assisted by mediators from the U.S., the European Union (EU), and the OAU, both parties signed an agreement in Algiers to solve their problem based on international border conflict resolution law. Under this agreement, a 25-kilometer-wide Temporary Security Zone (TSZ) - was established inside Eritrea to be observed by United Nations peacekeeping forces, until the disputed border marked by the international Boundary Commission could be approved by both Ethiopia and Eritrea.[12]

Due to the failure to implement significant elements of the Algiers agreement, lasting peace was not achieved. The situation today is like “no war, no peace.” Cross-border tensions remain high and both parties have huge military forces in the border area that may cause another war in the future. In addition to this, the border conflict has caused extended and costly effects, with regional and international impacts.

Based on the principle of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend,” Eritrea has sought to continue the conflict by supporting dissenting and armed opposition groups in the region. This situation has worsened the security situation in the Horn of Africa and created a fertile environment for terrorist groups. It also complicated the American

struggle against terrorism in the region. As a 2011report of the U.N. Security Council states, Eritrea supports groups involved in destabilizing activities in the region. "in violation of Security Council resolution 1907 (2009), Eritrean involvement in Somalia reflects a broader pattern of intelligence and special operations activity, including training, financial and logistical support to armed opposition groups in Djibouti, Ethiopia, the Sudan and possibly Uganda."[13]

Why are the Two Brothers Fighting?

The current Ethiopian and Eritrean government leaders were once brothers-in-arms in the struggle against the Soviet-backed dictatorship of Mengistu Haile Mariam. The victories were the result of strong cooperation between the two movements that had led these struggles - the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). So why are these brothers fighting each other? What do they hope to gain from this course of action?

After a 1993 referendum, Eritrea became an independent country and Ethiopia was the first country to recognize Eritrea as a self-governing country. For a while, the two countries appeared to get on fairly well. However, relations began to deteriorate and escalated into a war causing more than 75,000 military deaths, the mobilization of 800,000 troops, the displacement of 600,000 people, and huge damage to the economy of both sides according to conservative estimates.[14]

The description of… "Two bald men fighting over a comb" explains very well the nature of the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The two countries are very poor as a result of thirty years of fighting against the previous regime. At least for five years both countries benefited from people to people relations and economic cooperation. However, since the1998 conflict Ethiopia has been forced away from its development

path to balance a militaristic and aggressive Eritrea. Both countries spend a significant amount of money for military equipment and have large standing armies. The race to win the war and influence geopolitics in the Horn of Africa was just a zero-sum game.

It is not new for two adjacent countries to have territorial disputes especially, in Africa. Most African countries were under colonial power until the middle of the twentieth century. There is no adequate justification for these countries to resort to war instead of resolving the conflict through cooperation and negotiation. There are several international and regional organizations for conflict resolution in the United Nations system. There is also the option of taking their case to the International Court of Justice. However, by ignoring these peaceful options Eritrea and Ethiopia would resort to war. As Henze states, without any doubt, both Ethiopia and Eritrea would be better off if this war had not happened, but it happened because Eritrea invaded Ethiopia.[15] Why did Eritrea chose to do this?

It is difficult to get an exact answer to this complex question. However, it is important to look at the issue beyond a border dispute. This research paper does not believe that the Ethiopian-Eritrean war was genuinely a border issue. The disputed border served as no more than a pretext for the real problem of the conflict. For the last thirteen years, the focus of all regional and international mediators has been on the border issue and in particular on in the symbolic location of Badme. This focus is based on this perception that all attempts of settling the conflict constructively did not bring resolution to the situation of the Ethiopian- Eritrean conflict. Therefore, the international community effort towards the real problems is important for lasting peace of the conflict. In my view, the real cause of the conflict is the existence of significant economic and

political differences between the two countries. Without addressing the underlying political and economic differences, resolving the demarcation of the border alone will not solve the crisis between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The intent of this research paper is not to look in detail at the causes of the conflict, rather to look at its security implication within Ethiopian and Eritrean and in the Horn of Africa.

Eritrean president Isaias Afwerki believes that, his country is different, and therefore it could pursue a different economic and development strategy than that of Ethiopia. In most of his interviews he mentions Singapore as a growth model for his country. While using Singapore as a model for their growth is not a problem by itself, the problem is with the means to achieving this ambition. The Eritrean leadership shapes its defense policy to dominate the economic market of neighboring countries by military force. As the Inter Africa Group Research Center states “Eritrea's failure to solve conflicts with its neighbors without reverting to armed conflicts of varying degrees of intensity, including all-out war with Ethiopia during 1998-2000 in which tens of thousands of people died on both sides, and has jeopardized many promising developments.”[16] This statement tells us of Eritrea’s propensity towards solving conflict by force is high. As part of this behavior Eritrea has tried to implement its economic policy by force over Ethiopia.

Eritrea’s economic policy considered Ethiopia to be a main market for the export of industrial goods and services, and supplier of inputs (raw material and labor) for its manufacturing sector. Ninety percent of its trade targeted Ethiopia as a satisfier of Eritrean economic ambition.[17] Within the Economic Agreement of September 1993, Ethiopia and Eritrea signed an agreement to eliminate trade barriers (such as tariff,

taxes), provide for the free movement of goods and services for domestic consumption and the management of their customs policies. The resulting trade balance favored Eritrea: over 65% of its exports were sent to Ethiopia while Eritrea took only 9% of Ethiopian exports before the conflict in 1998.[18] Three years before the war broke out, problems of interpretation over various requirements in the trade agreement such as currency, re-export arrangements and taxation brought about trade disputes. However, the problem rose sharply when Eritrea introduced its own currency, the Nakfa, in1997. Thereafter, Ethiopia had to revise all its trade policies with Eritrea and also demanded that trade with Eritrea be conducted in hard currency.[19] The introduction by Eritrea of its own currency was necessary to implement its own monetary policy, and the logical continuation of Eritrea's progress as an independent country. However, the demand of Eritrea to exchange their currency on an equal basis and ignoring the use of hard currency between two independent countries was not fair. Methods of exchange in hard currency became the norm, as is the cases between all other trading nations. The Eritrean president declared this as unacceptable. In addition to this, Ethiopia also started shifting some of its export and import trade from Eritrea to Djibouti to search for a cheaper alternative of port services. These changes worsened Eritrean - Ethiopia relations eventually leading to a war using as a pretext the issue of the common border.

The Nature of the Conflict after the Termination of the Major War in 2000

Following the Algiers Peace Agreement in December 2000, the conflict of 1998 to 2000 was terminated and the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission was appointed by United Nations to demarcate the dispute border. Both countries agreed that the decision of the Commission would be final and binding to settle their problem peacefully.[20] However, the Algiers Peace Agreement has remained largely ineffective in

terms of bringing a lasting peace between the two countries as its focus is only in one component of the problem which is the border issue, while failing to address the economic driving forces of Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict. For sure, this agreement has come down the hot war. However, the situation “no war no peace” which is no less harmful than an active hostility has prevailed between the two countries for the last eleven years. Today, in spite of international and regional organizations diplomatic efforts to solve the problem, both countries have taken up hostile and aggressive positions in every possible discussion with different organizations such as the Boundary Commission, UN Security Council, and Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), and African Union (AU), replacement for the former Organization of African Unity (OAU). Both countries also engage in supporting the opposition parties of the other side. Many political and military analysts have shown how the war between the two countries has fuelled other conflicts in the region. The most dangerous parts of their continuing antagonism, however, are engaged in a proxy war in Somalia.[21]

The conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea is now not limited in their own countries, it has also worsened the security situation of the Horn of Africa and created fertile environments for terrorist groups in the region. It is also makes difficult the American struggle against terrorism in the region. As the Security Council 2011 report indicated, Eritrea supports groups involved in destabilizing activities within the region continues. The report states “Eritrean involvement in Somalia reflects a broader pattern of intelligence and special operations activity, including training, financial and logistical support to armed opposition groups in Djibouti, Ethiopia, the Sudan and possibly Uganda in violation of Security Council resolution 1907 (2009).”[22] The report also

mentioned Eritrea's support for such groups as prolonging its border conflict with Ethiopia.[23]

Currently, Eritrea is actively involving in neighboring states to destabilization the region through insurgency. It is clear that the Eritrean strategy of projecting influence through non-state proxies has over-reached, but the Eritreans will see their reversal in Somalia as only a tactical setback. It is most unlikely that their strategy will change. The region and the international community must develop a mechanism to control Eritrea and prevent its sponsorship from destabilizing of the Horn of Africa. The challenge is that no-body can talk to Eritrea as Eritrea is isolated from all regional and international institutions. Heintz, supports this realty in his article's on Eritrea and Al Shabaab by saying, "Eritrea is isolated from the African Union (AU), the UN and the United States, and has driven the country into alignment with destabilizing regional forces for which it has no pre-ordained cultural affinity. Principal among Eritrea's unlikely allies is *Al Shabaab*, the al Qaeda-affiliated militia prosecuting the Islamist insurgency in Somalia and an expanding terror campaign in greater Africa."[24]

Security Implication of Ethiopian – Eritrean Conflict for Somalia

The United States has been concerned that the Horn of Africa becomes a safe haven for terrorist groups. Even if there are local hostilities and regionally based dynamic conflicts it is first the hostility between Ethiopia and Eritrea, that should be considered as an essential factor in the state of peace and conflict within the Horn of Africa.[25]

After Somali President Siad Barre was driven out by a national rebellion in early 1991, the country remained without central government for more than a decade. This created an environment favorable to the foundation of many armed factions as well as a

safe haven for terrorist groups. Unlike in other countries where the removal of dictator regime would lead in peace, liberty and brightness, the Somalia case was quite the opposite from the beginning. Following this event in 1992, the United Nations, the United States and other members of the international community intervened in the country to remedy the situation and deliver food relief. Despite the intervention, inter-clan wars and factional fighting have continued to occur, accompanied by increased starvation and poverty.[26] Even after the establishment of Transitional Federal Government in 2004, different clans resisted these efforts, which in turned led to the rise of indigenous jihadist groups in Somalia. The presence of jihadist groups and ongoing insecurity gave al-Qaida a fresh opportunity to recruit and train new members within Somalia. In addition, support by the Eritrean Government to al Shabaab has made the situation more complex.

The U.N. Security Council placed additional sanctions on Eritrea on 5 December 2011, which state "Eritrea has continued to providing political, financial, training and logistical support to armed opposition groups, including Al-Shabaab, engaged in undermining peace, security and stability in Somalia and the region."[27] The Resolution also mentioned the planned terrorist attack of January 2011 coordinated by Eritrea to disrupt the African Union meeting as it organized and directed a failed plan to disrupt the meeting by bombing a series of civilian and governmental targets in Ethiopia.[28] To mitigate this situation, the United States has to put up the pressure and said "Eritrea, you must stop this assistance you're providing to these groups that the United States regards as terrorists groups in the Horn of Africa."[29] Without this the current efforts of the

United States and its allies in fighting al-Qaeda and its affiliate al Shabaab cannot achieve its objective.

From the United States standpoint, the most significant national interest in this complex context is to prevent al-Qaeda from gaining a new base and opening a new front in its war against United States and its allies. This is certainly the threat posed by Eritrea's sponsorship of anti-Ethiopian forces which include elements clearly linked to al-Qaeda and other jihadist movements. Therefore, peace and stability in the Horn became dependent on the resolution of the Ethiopian and Eritrean conflict, and achievement of sustainable peace.

In 2006, the Ethiopian government took self-defensive actions and began counterattacking over the antagonistic forces of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) and foreign terrorist groups in Somalia. The intervention of Ethiopia in Somalia without a formal request to the United Nations Security Council or the African Union opened a debate among the international community, political analyst, and academician. However, the Ethiopia military intervention was based on its right to self defense which is clearly included in the UN charter under Article 51: “Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defense shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.”[30]

Apart from acting in self-defense, the Ethiopian intervention was allowed by the internationally recognized Transitional Federal Government of Somalia.

Related to this issue, some military and political analysts have passed an incorrect and misleading message to the international community suggesting that Ethiopia has an interest in colonizing Somalia. Ethiopia cannot have a realistic colonial agenda toward any countries. By any standard, it does not meet all the basic conditions needed for a nation with a colonial agenda. As Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the world and a victim of continued drought, her struggle is to mitigate this situation by focusing on development agendas. However, if things divert her from these development agendas and affect its own national interest like the Eritrean backed attack from al Shabaab in 2006, there is no reason to quit and compromise with anti-Ethiopian terrorist groups. It was part of this history that Ethiopia intervention in Somalia in 2006.

This intervention opened opportunities to the Transitional Federal Government to shift fully from Kenya to Somalia and establish its governmental functions. It has also opened a fertile environment for the United Nations and the African Union to setup a peacekeeping mission in Somalia to support the Transitional Government's effort to bring different clan and opposition parts to peace talks. However, the joint effort of Ethiopia, and the Somalia Transitional Government military forces have not achieved success in terms of weakening the key leadership of al Shabaab. Most of their leadership lived in exile in Eritrea until Ethiopian forces withdrew from Somalia. This reality tells us that without addressing the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea it would be difficult to settle the issue of Somalia peacefully.

Therefore, regional and international efforts in Somalia must be fitted within a broader strategy to promote overall Horn of Africa stability: The Somali crisis is deeply entangled in a broader regional dynamic, including the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflicts. In addition to this, taking measurable actions and imposing sanctions for countries plays a destructive role in the peace process. It is important for Somalia to exploit the opportunity to establish a legitimate government. A window of opportunity is opening in Somalia and must not be missed due to lack of support from regional, and international organizations, and power full countries like the United States.

Security Implication of Ethiopian – Eritrean Conflict for Djibouti

The Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict has grave implications for the conflicts in the Horn of Africa. One of these conflicts is the Eritrea-Djibouti conflict of 2008. Like the Ethiopian-Eritrean border dispute, Eritrea has made claim to Northern Djibouti territory based on Italian colonial maps of territorial expansion.[31] In April 1996, Eritrea and Djibouti almost went to war when the Djiboutian government accused Eritrea of shelling Ras Doumeirah, which is a border village of Djibouti. Since 1996, the border conflict has been on and off. However, the latest conflict and most grave one emerged in 2008 as a result of Eritrea's entry into the territory of Djibouti. The two countries were briefly involved in a military confrontation that led to a number of casualties for both parties.[32]

The war between Ethiopia and Eritrea posed both a threat and an opportunity for Djibouti. The loss of access to Eritrea's ports at Assab and Massawa brought all Ethiopia's import and export trade to the port of Djibouti. Income from Ethiopian trade now accounts for 70 percent of Djibouti's revenue.[33]

Djibouti wants to strengthen its overall relationship with the larger and expanding economy of landlocked Ethiopia which is of great importance for it, both politically and

economically. After Ethiopian export and import trade was shifted to Djibouti, the country is in a better position than other countries of the Horn of Africa and is investing huge amounts of money to expand and improve the port of Djibouti. On the other hand, Eritrea lost hundreds of millions of dollars in annual revenue, and the future does not seem promising to Eritrea. Even if the relationship between Eritrea and Ethiopia improves and Ethiopia starts using the ports of Eritrea, which it had used extensively before the conflict, the competition between the ports of Eritrea and Djibouti is going to be intense and could easily deteriorate the security situation of the horn of Africa if the countries in the region do not engage in healthy economic cooperation among themselves.[34]

Since, Djibouti is geographically positioned in a strategic waterway on the Red Sea, the country is an important transshipment location for goods and services entering and leaving the East Africa highlands. Djibouti can take advantage of this position to improve its regional and international trade. Djibouti may also explore the possibility of building a strong alliance with Ethiopia both economically, diplomatically and militarily to be secure from any threat posed from external actors like Eritrea.[35]

Eritrea helps Djibouti's opposition rebels, and supplies them with weapons including landmines. This worries both Ethiopia and Djibouti as the opposition parties have targeted Ethiopian export and import lines. As a result, in 1999 Ethiopia and Djibouti signed a military cooperation protocol to secure their mutual benefits. Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi said that Ethiopia is "prepared to secure its vital trade route" with Djibouti, in the case Eritrea-Djibouti border breaks out.[36]

If the political, economic, and security environment of Djibouti falls, the use of the port by Ethiopia may be hampered by instability. This fact affects the interest of Ethiopia directly; therefore this threat may invite Ethiopia to collaborate with Djibouti to secure her interests which are vital for her subsistence. Due to this, future potential conflict in the Horn of Africa is high if the current Ethiopian- Eritrean conflict is not addressed.

Conclusion

The Horn of Africa is a culturally and historically rich region of the world with huge potential natural resources. However, instead of using this opportunity to change the lives of their people, the countries are engaged in a competition to build up their military capability by putting every effort into them at the expense of economic development. Based on the presented facts, the regional security dilemma between Eritrea and Ethiopia is at the heart of Eritrea's foreign and defense policies.

This paper shows that the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea has been inter twined with other conflicts in the region, therefore international efforts in Somalia must be fitted within a broader strategy to promote the Horn of Africa stability: The Somali crisis is deeply entangled in a broader regional dynamic, including Ethiopian-Eritrean conflicts. The threat posed by Eritrea's sponsorship of anti-Ethiopian forces which include elements clearly linked to al-Qaeda and other jihadist movements make the campaign in the Horn of Africa against terrorism difficult. This directly affects the interests of the United States. Therefore, America should look seriously at the security implications of Eritrea's lawlessness in the region.

Eritrea's isolation from regional and international organizations leads the country towards becoming a militarized regime. The United Nations, African Union, Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), and the United States should help

Eritrea solve its problem diplomatically; otherwise Eritrea may completely close its door as did North Korea. In addition to this, these organizations must make every effort to insure that Eritrea's people have access to humanitarian assistance.

From the Ethiopian side, Ethiopia should be encouraged to hold bilateral talks with Eritrea instead of making the situation more complex. This includes solving the differences in border demarcation through face to face discussion.

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