Ethiopia's Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy: The Case for a Paradigm Shift

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A good place to start a constructive critique is to look at the logical foundation of the Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy (FANSPS) of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and subject it to the tests of consistency, coherence, and soundness. The FANSPS is premised on the proposition that "security policy is a matter of ensuring national survival. The alpha and omega of security is the ensuring of national survival. Other national security issues may be raised only if national existence is ensured. Foreign affairs and security policy must be formulated first and foremost to ensure national security. Issues of prosperity, sustainable peace, and stability and other related concerns then follow."[i] Thus, the FANSPS's primary focus is on potential and actual threats to its territorial integrity. It aimed primarily at protecting its sovereign frontiers against external aggression. Such being the logical foundation of the FANSPS, it becomes clear that non-military aspects of security are relegated to a secondary place. This is not surprising given that securing its independence and territorial integrity has been the preoccupation of Ethiopian foreign and national security policy for millennia.

In view of the foregoing, it is no wonder that The Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) numbers about 200,000 personnel, which makes it one of the largest militaries in Africa. During the 1998-2000 border war with Eritrea, the ENDF mobilized strength reached about 350,000.[ii] The ENDF has its roots in the peasant-based EPRDF guerrilla army and is still in the process of being transformed into an all-volunteer professional military organization with the aid of the United States. The ENDF received training in peacekeeping operations, professional military education, military training management, counter-terrorism operations, military medicine, and unspecified military training funds from the United States.[iii]

The ENDF is one of the largest military forces in Africa along with Egypt and Morocco, 29th largest in the world of 132 in terms of armed forces growth, and 11th out of 166 countries in terms of personnel. Military expenditure for the year 2005 amounts to $800,000,000.00 and this places her on 56th position of 170.[iv] The military expenditure was 3% of its GDP for 2006 and 49th in the world[v]. Just about the time Ethiopia went to war with the UIC in Somalia, it imported heavy weapons such as tanks and other armored vehicles from Russia (worth US$12 million) and China ($3 million) in 2006 and from North Korea ($3 million) and the Czech Republic ($1 million) in 2005. Ethiopia also imported military weapons from China ($11.5 million) in 2006 and Israel ($1.2 million) in 2005. Besides, during

2005 and 2006, Ethiopia had acquired a large range of small arms, light weapons and parts mainly from North Korea, China and Russia.[vi]

On 13 April 2007 the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a press statement,[vii] in response to an article[viii] that was published in the *New York Times* which alleged that the US administration had allowed Ethiopia to import arms from North Korea, in violation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1718 (2006),[ix] to support Ethiopia's military operations in Somalia. The Ethiopian government acknowledged that a cargo shipment from North Korea to Ethiopia had taken place on 22 January 2007, but denied that the content of the cargo violated UN Security Council Resolution 1718 imposing a partial embargo on the trade in arms with North Korea. The Ethiopian government said that the shipment contained spare parts for machinery and engineering equipment and raw materials for the making of assorted ammunition for small arms, and was made on the basis of four contractual agreements which were signed between 12 and 22 June 2006 for the purchase of various items required by the military industry in Ethiopia. Furthermore "irrevocable Letters of Credit were issued between 30 June and 30 September 2006. This means that all payments for the cargo were effected before the adoption of Resolution 1718."[x]

The statement also stated that the US Embassy in Addis Ababa might have been aware of Ethiopia's importation of said cargo from North Korea but the assertion that "the United States allowed the arms delivery to go through in January in part because Ethiopia was in the midst of a military offensive against Islamic militias inside Somalia" is wrong "since the contractual agreements were signed and all payments made before the ICU extremists in Somalia took control of Mogadishu and declared jihad on Ethiopia".[xi]

Against this backdrop, a cursory look at the Human Development Index (HDI) for Ethiopia reveals an irony in contemporary Ethiopian political life. Although it is noteworthy that between 1995 and 2007 Ethiopia's HDI rose by 3.13% annually from 0.308 to 0.414, the HDI for Ethiopia for the year 2007 is 0.414, which gives the country a rank of 171[st]out of 182 countries with data.[xii]

Military Expenditure of Ethiopia

In local currency (m. birr)

Year	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Value	[1,095]	[716]	[819]	813	754	803	1,512	3,263	5,589	5,075	2,959	2,476	2,397	2,686	2,965	3,007	3,253	3,750

In constant (2005) US$ m.																		
Year	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Value	[235]	[139]	[153]	141	119	134	246	518	821	741	471	388	319	346	342	309	285	262

As percentage of gross domestic product																	
Year	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Value	[5.3]	[2.7]	[2.9]	2.4	2	1.8	3.4	6.7	10.7	9.6	4.7	3.6	2.9	2.8	2.5	2.1	1.7

The figure for 1999 includes an allocation of 1 billion birr in addition to the original defense budget

Source: SIPRI, 2009.

Although the FANSPS explicitly fixes the country's maximum military expenditure at 2% of its GDP, it leaves a leeway for a flexible implementation of the 2% ceiling "depending on the level of threat" during a given fiscal year. According to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Ethiopia's military expenditure under EPRDF has been well over 2% of its GDP, except for the years 1995, 1996 and 2007.[xiii] The Central Intelligence Agency raises SIPRI's data for 2006 from 2.1 to 3%.[xiv]

Despite that, one of the most striking features of FDRE's FANSPS, at least on the face of it, is its emphasis on democratization and development. It also tells us about the threat to national security posed by human rights abuses. In the words of the FANSPS: "In the absence of a democratic order, national and religious divisions will invariably intensify, the abuse of human rights would result in strife, and poverty would spread further - a recipe for disintegration and destruction." Nevertheless, the Government's bad human rights track record attests to the contrary. The thrust of my argument is that the central purpose of Ethiopia's foreign and security policy has remained the same, in spite of the shift in orientation. A change in discourse has not brought about a change in practice. Human security should have been made to constitute the basis of the FANSPS. Moreover, the Government should work aggressively to get a critical mass of women into leadership positions in the foreign affairs and security sector.

In the received discourse of international affairs, the term "security" connotes the protection of territorial integrity and dignity of the state. This is not surprising given the fact that hitherto, international relations

has been more "state-centric" than "people-centric." Nevertheless, with the cessation of the Cold War and the advent of globalization in the international arena, the concept of security is expanding to focus more on people than on the state. Security, in its classical sense, refers to the security of the state from external aggression. It is about how states use force to counter threats to their territorial integrity, their autonomy, and their domestic political system, primarily from other states.[xv] The classical formulation restricts the scope of security to *military* threats from other states. Nevertheless, in its modern conception, security is equated with the "security of individuals, not just security of their nations" or, put differently, "security of people, not just security of territory."[xvi] The modern formulation gives primacy to the safety and well-being of "all the people everywhere – in their homes, in their jobs, in their streets, in their communities, in their environment",[xvii] whilst the classical conception of security emphasizes territorial integrity and national independence as the primary values that need to be protected. The latter has been related more to nation-states than to people."[xviii] What this conception overlooked was "the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who sought security in their daily lives."[xix]

Human security also encompasses a sense of personal choice and surety about the future and of personal efficacy and opportunity. Thus, in drawing attention to the difference between human security and its cognate, human development, the Report argues that the latter is a "broader concept" and refers to "a process of widening the range of people's choices," while the former implies that "people can exercise these choices safely and freely – and that they can be relatively confident that the opportunities they have today are not totally lost tomorrow".[xx] Along with a sense of choice and surety about the future, people should be efficacious and empowered enough to be "able to take care of themselves: all people should have the opportunity to meet their most essential needs and to earn their own living."[xxi]The Report lists seven aspects of human security: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security. Furthermore, the concept of human security helps us understand that basic human rights, as stated in the international human rights instruments, are indivisible and inter-related. Sometimes, human rights are overridden or ignored for the sake of state security. Human security puts people first, emphasizing that human rights are central to state security. Human security complements human rights law by drawing attention to international humanitarian law in the context of armed conflict.

However, the hitherto emphasis on sovereignty a la the classical approach to security neglected other no less important aspects of security such as ecological security, energy security, economic security, food security, and health security. There has been a host of complex threats to the security of the Ethiopian polity for so long including, but not limited to, poverty, widespread malnutrition, population explosion, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, degradation of the environment, loss of faith in institutions, uncontrolled

urbanization/ rural-urban migration, insecurity of employment, brain drain, alienation of the youth, inflation and other economic disruptions.

Donald Levine, in a recent talk, pointed out rapid population growth, poverty, food insecurity, energy, environment, women's rights, health, and quality of education, rather than ethnicity, as the chief challenges facing Ethiopians of diverse background today. [xxii] He also emphasized the need for green technology as a means of ensuring the country's energy and ecological security at the same time. According to John Podesta and Peter Ogden, climate change will likely create large fluctuations in the amount of rainfall in East Africa during the next 30 years; a 5–20 % increase in rainfall during the winter months will cause flooding and soil erosion, while a 5–10 % decrease in the summer months will cause severe droughts. This will jeopardize the livelihoods of millions of people and the economic capacity of the region, as agriculture constitutes some 40 percent of East Africa's gross domestic product (GDP) and 80 percent of the population earns a living from agriculture. [xxiii]

The conceptual distinction that Johan Galtung drew between negative and positive peace can and must be allowed to inform and shape the formulation of a state's national security policy. Once framed a la Galtung, the objectives of the security policy have to go beyond achieving a state of absence of war (negative peace) to encompass the pursuit of democracy, sustainable economic development, social justice and protection of the environment (positive peace). Although the use of military force is a legitimate means of defense against external aggression, it is not an acceptable means of conducting foreign policy and settling disputes. Such a security framework also recognizes that states can mitigate the security dilemma and promote regional stability by adopting a defensive, if not an "aggression-neutralizing", to borrow an expression from Donald Levine's Conflict and Aikido Theory, rather than an offensive military doctrine and posture. Thus, the security policy should pay greater attention to such sources of internal instability as the problem of human rights violations, population growth, poverty, food insecurity, energy, environment, women's rights, health, child abuse, trafficking in women and children, smuggling in persons, and the physical and psychological security of tens of thousands of women migrant workers in the Middle East that have largely been ignored by state agencies.

In international affairs, Ethiopia is to be found in a state-of-neither-peace-nor-war with Eritrea following the brutal 1998-2000 border war in which tens of thousands died on both sides. Ethiopia, upon invitation from the UN-recognized Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia, also entered into Somalia to fight against the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC), an Islamist group vying for control of Somalia. Between late 2006 and January 2009, Ethiopia maintained a presence of several thousand troops in

Somalia. On the other hand, Ethiopia has recently entered into a loose tripartite (nonmilitary) cooperation with Sudan and Yemen. The Saudi-East Africa Forum, in which Ethiopia is an active member, is also another noteworthy international economic partnership. It has also had very good relations with the United States and the West, especially in responding to regional instability and supporting war on terrorism and, increasingly, through economic involvement. Nevertheless, there are indications that the hitherto rather warm diplomatic relationship Ethiopia has been enjoying with the US would seem to begin to cool under Barrack Obama's administration, because of US revulsion at the Government's human rights abuses and the de-securitization of the problem of terrorism in Somalia. It is hard to tell if the relations might further deteriorate and lead to a legislative restrictions on assistance to Ethiopia other than humanitarian assistance.[xxiv] Although, as Ambassador David Shin observes, "[p]utting pressure on Ethiopia will become increasingly difficult for the United States and other western countries as Ethiopia continues to strengthen its relations with countries such as China and Russia."[xxv]

In order to understand how de-securitizing external factors brings about a shift in Ethiopia's national security agenda, let's take a look at Somalia. What accounts for Ethiopia's incursion into Somalia is its securitization calculus, albeit not based on paranoia as one might tend to think, that Somalia would set the stage for a proxy war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. De-securitizing the problem in Somalia, including the terrorist factor brings about a radical shift in Ethiopia's traditional approach to security. The shift in approach from state security to human security will not only pave the way for regional stability via cessation of hostilities, but also create conditions conducive to domestic security in the fullest sense of the term.

Ethiopia's incursion into Somalia is a clear indication of its strategy of conducting foreign policy through war, albeit war had to be kept to the minimal. Ethiopia should embrace what Owen Harries calls the "prudential ethic" as a signpost to international relations. According to Harries, the just war theory, given that it accepts that it is futile to assume that war can be abolished, provides one such important ethic. The aim of the theory is two-fold: on the one hand, it prohibits an unjust war, by laying down rules for the determination of the legitimacy of use of force (*jus ad bellum)*, and makes war less savage, by establishing rules of conduct (*jus in bello*), on the other. Hence, a resort to force must have a just cause, in that it is resorted to in response to injustice, is authorized by a competent authority, and is motivated by right intention. It must meet four prudential tests in that it must be expected to produce a preponderance of good over evil, have a reasonable chance of success, be a last resort and be expected to result in a state of peace. The requirements of *jus in bello* are that when force is resorted to, it must be discriminate and proportional.[xxvi] Leaving the issue of legitimacy aside, (not least because it was invited

by the TFG) Ethiopia's incursion into Somalia hardly passes the four prudential tests. At least, we have every reason to doubt that the military intervention was a last resort and was expected to result in a state of peace. With the benefit of hindsight, it has become crystal-clear that Ethiopia's resort to force failed to bring about a state of peace in Somalia. Besides, reports that Ethiopia violated the requirements of *jus in bello* abound. For instance, in March and April 2007 Ethiopian soldiers violated international humanitarian law by using heavy artillery and rockets to fight an insurgency in Mogadishu, killing hundreds of civilians and displacing up to 400,000 people.[xxvii] Though Ethiopian troops have since withdrawn from Somalia, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi stated in June 2009 that the country has not ruled out a future redeployment.[xxviii] According to David Shin, "both the United States and Ethiopia followed a misguided policy in Somalia."[xxix]

To illustrate how others' perception of Ethiopia's vulnerability, or miscalculation, led to aggression, the FANSPS invokes Somalia and Eritrea under the leaderships of Siad Barre and Isaias Afeworki respectively. In the words of the FANSPS, "Some time ago the Siad Barre regime in Somalia launched an attack on Ethiopia on the presumption that Ethiopia was unable to offer a united resistance and that it would break up under military pressure. The regime in Eritrea (the Shabia) similarly launched an aggression against Ethiopia thinking along the same lines. Both regimes were soundly defeated because of their misguided and misconceived perceptions." In this regard, it is interesting to note the continuity in foreign and security policy, despite the change in regimes. Somalia has never been removed from Ethiopia's security agenda.

The FANSPS has also failed miserably to recognize the role of women in peace-making, peace-building, and security. The Government should demonstrate its commitment to the principles enshrined in the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (UNSC 1325). The Foreign Ministry must come up with a workable action plan for the implementation of UNSC 1325. Consequently, it should recruit more women to the diplomatic services; nominate more women to international diplomatic assignments, specifically to senior positions (UN special representatives, peace commissions, fact-finding missions, etc.); increase the percentage of women in delegations to national, regional and international meetings concerned with peace and security, as well as in formal peace negotiations; and include women in all reconciliation, peacekeeping, peace-enforcement, peace building, and conflict preventive posts. In this connection, it is important to recall that women were entirely excluded from the peace processes concerning the Ethio-Eritrean conflict.

Finally, the quality of foreign policy of a country is determined by many factors of which the role-played by top notch, well-groomed, and seasoned personnel, the degree of participation and the method of policy decision-making cannot be over-stated. Thus, the Ministry should open up a definite career path to diplomacy for qualified professionals, whether women or men, if it is to enhance its capacity through professional staffing. The hitherto practice of staffing its foreign services as well as the head office with mediocre party functionaries did not pay. To recap, Ethiopia's FANSPS has to give recognition and full effect to the paradigm shift in the approach to security from state-centricism to people-centricism (human security) as well as from non-inclusive security to what Ambassador Swanee Hunt calls "inclusive security".

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i The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy, http://www.mofa.gov.et, accessed on 10 November 2009

ii US State Department, http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2859.htm, accessed on 14 November 2009

iii Id

iv http://www.nationmaster.com/country/et-ethiopia/mil-military, accessed on 14 2009

v The CIA World Fact Book, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html, accessed on 15 November 2009

vi UN Commodity Trade Statistics, 2005 and 2006, accessed on 15 November 2009

vii "Ethiopia acted in full compliance with Security Council Resolutions 1718 (2006)" Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Press Release, 13 April 2007, accessed on 15 November 2009
http://mfa.gov.et/Press_Section/publication.php?Main_Page_Number=3556

viii "North Koreans Arm Ethiopians as U.S. Assents", *New York Times*, 8 April 2007.

ix Security Council Resolution 1718 prohibited (1) the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer to the DPRK of (a) any battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large calibre artillery systems, combat aircraft, attack helicopters, warships, missiles or missile systems as defined for the purpose of the United Nations Register on Conventional Arms, or related materiel including spare parts, or items as determined by the Security Council or the Committee [§8.a.i], (b) all items, materials, equipment, goods and technology which could contribute to DPRK's nuclear related, ballistic missile-related or other weapons of mass destruction related programmes [§8.a.ii]; (2) the procurement of said items of paragraphs [§8.a.i] and [§8.a.ii] from the DPRK. See S/RES/1718 (2006); S/2006/814; S/2006/815; S/2006/816; and S/2006/853.

x Supra note vii.

xi Id

xii Human Development Report 2009, http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_ETH.html, accessed on 15 November 2009

xiii Information from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), http://milexdata.sipri.org/result.php4, accessed on 16 November 2009

xiv The CIA World Fact Book, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html, accessed on 16 November 2009

xv Kanti Bajpai, Human Security: Concept and Measurement, Kroc Institute Occasional Paper #19:OP:1, August 2000, p.3

xvi Mahbub ul Haq, Cited in Bajpai, Id, p. 10

xvii Mahbub ul Haq, "New Imperatives of Human Security," RGICS Paper No. 17, Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies (RGICS), Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, New Delhi, 1994, p. 1.

xviii UNDP, "Redefining Security," p. 229.

xix Id

xx Id, p. 230.

[xxi] Id

[xxii] Donald Levine, Challenges Facing the Coming Generation of Ethiopian Intellectuals, Institute of Ethiopian Studies, June 2009, Addis Ababa

[xxiii] John Podesta and Peter Ogden, The Security Implications of Climate Change, The Washington Quarterly, Winter 2007-08, The Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 31:1 pp. 115–138

[xxiv] Recall that The International Security and Development Act of 1985 prohibited all U.S. economic assistance to Ethiopia with the exception of humanitarian disaster and emergency relief. Besides, the two recent legislative drafts, HR-2003 authored by Don Payne(NJ-D) and Chris Smith(R-NJ) and S 3457 introduced by Russ Feingold (D-WI) and Patrick Leahy(D-VT), purported to impose much similar restrictions on US assistance to Ethiopia. For more on US policy in the Horn see, Terrence Lyons, Avoiding Conflict in the Horn of Africa – US Policy Toward Ethiopia and Eritrea, *Council on Foreign Relation*s, CRS No. 21, December 2006; Somalia : Expanding Crisis in the Horn of Africa, Remarks by Jendayi E, Frazer, Assistant Secretary-General for African Affairs, *to the Sub-committe on Africa, Global Human Rights & International Operations and the Sub-committee on International Terrorirsm and Non-proliferation*, Washington DC, 29 June, 2006 ; Evaluating U.S. Policy Objectives and Options on the Horn of Africa, Testimony by Thomas A. Dempsey, Colonel, U.S. Army (ret.) to the Sub-committee on African Affairs, The Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, 11 March, 2008; John Prendergast and Colin Thomas-Jensen, Blowing the Horn, Foreign Affairs , *Volume 86, No. 2,pp 59-74.*

[xxv] David Shin (Adjunct Professor, Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University; former US Ambassador to Ethiopia), Horn of Africa: Priorities and Recommendations, Hearing before the House Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations, Committee on Appropriations, 12 March 2009.

[xxvi] Owen Harries, "Power and Morals", in Prospect, Issue 109, April 17, 2005, http://prospectmagazine.co.uk/article_details.php?id=6807.

[xxvii] Human Rights Watch, "World Report 2008: Ethiopia," http://hrw.org/englishwr2k8/docs/2008/01/31/ethiop17755.htm, accessed on 16 November 2009.

[xxviii] Tsegaye Tadesse and Barry Malone, "Ethiopia not ruling out troops return to Somalia," Reuters, June 25, 2009, http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSLP935, accessed on 16 November 2009.

[xxix] Supra at note xxv.