

Full Length Research Paper

Internal Security threats in contemporary Ethiopia

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Abstract

The objective of this article is to discuss the internal security threats of contemporary Ethiopia from the perspective of third world security theory- subaltern realism-concept. To attain this objective, the article employed secondary source of data. Secondary data were obtained through a critical review of related literature and documents. The main finding of the article show that currently Ethiopia is facing internal security threats namely, ethnic conflicts and lack of coherent idea of national identity, income inequality and uneven development, insurgence group, environmental problems and natural disasters and lack of good governance. The study further found that intra-Party Struggle within the ruling party (EPRDF), religious fundamentalism and weak democratic institutions challenges Ethiopia's security. The article concludes that unless these domestic security challenges are not handled in a diplomatic way they would have opened the door for external security challenge and lead to disintegration of the state. Finally, the article concludes by providing recommendations for intervention.

Keywords: Internal Security, Realism, Ethiopia, Subaltern.

INTRODUCTION

The question of security in general and internal security in particular has long since preoccupied the field of International relation and security studies (Habtamu, 2013). The field of security studies for long period represents the center of the international relations, mainly concerned about the issues of peace and conflict. The realist understanding of security, which view state as the main referent has been up for debate? For long, the traditional conception of security put the idea of security to a mere synonym for power. This concept could be seen as relevant during the period of the World Wars, where states seemed to be in a fierce struggle for power. However, after 1990s, with the growing complexity of actors in international relations' agenda and emergence of the new security concerns, the concept of security has become much more multifaceted (Marianne, 2009, Vladimir, 2010).

However, since 1990s a scholar like Barry Buzan has challenged the traditional (state centered) conception of

security by making security studies agenda more wide and deep. Buzan (cited in Veladimir, 2010) note that since 1990s the conception of security has expanded from narrowly military centered onto political, economic, societal and environmental sectors and he suggests that the altered security concept should also be open to referent objects like individuals, social groups and humanity as a whole. For Wolfers (cited in Daved, 1997), security is like 'value', from which a state can get more or less and which it can seek ambitiously to have in greater or lesser measure. Nations and other social actors have many 'values' like economic welfare, safety, psychological well-being, and so on.

The idea of state security has conventionally contained territorial integrity and political independence as values to be protected; but based on contexts and conditions other values are sometimes added (Daved, 1997). Security also has many dimensions. In terms of internal security, terrorist threats or major crime may pose a life-threatening

danger. Other risks can likewise threaten the functioning of society or parts of a society.

For the past ten years, Ethiopia is experiencing rapid Economic transformation and population growth. Ethiopia has been among Africa`s most impressive performers over the past decades averaging 10% annual growth. IMF ranks Ethiopia as among the five fastest growing economy in the world. However Ethiopia has faced with both dimension of security threats, external and internal, which put strong challenge on the legitimacy of the state and regime. Due to this, the issue of security and insecurity are high concern both in connection to these wave of change and to the risks of violence and instability pose for the process of economic growth and poverty reduction.

New approach to security- Subaltern realism

The end of cold war marked the development of new dynamics in the field of international relation in general and security studies in particular. During this time the long existed traditional international relation concept (realism and neo-liberalism) faces many challenges from post-cold war authors in the field security studies. They started to question about the need of redefining security, its meaning, changing its reference object and so on (Nadiio, 2009). These scholars (Ayob, Holistic and Steven) also agree that the traditional theories are not relevant to explain third world because of their Eurocentric nature.

Mohammed Ayob (1984), in this regard note that the concept of national security in western states is not applicable to third world because the major characteristics of security notion are absent in third world states. Holist (1998) also points out that most of conflict in third world take place within a state, that`s why traditional international relation theory can little understanding of conflict taking place in third world states. Steven (Cited in Nadiio, 2009) also expressed that realism is not able to explain internal wars because its main assumption is that anarchy exist in relation between the states while inside state there is an order. Basing on criticisms towards traditional approach to security from the third world perspective, the scholars propose new theoretical lens, which can help to understand better third world security.

In this respect Mohamed Ayob proposed theoretical perspective of subaltern realism, based on three main assumptions of realism i.e. state, survival and self-help (Ayob, 2002). Ayob formulate subaltern realism with the assumption that, domestic and international orders are extremely interconnected, especially in the area of conflict. He also note that the issue of domestic order must be given analytical priority and domestic order are subject to international influencer and the linkage between internal and external variables is able to explain the connection between intrastate and interstate conflict

(Ayob, 1984 & Nadiio, 2009). Ayob (1995) in his other work points out that in contrast to the western understanding of security, which based on external linkage, the third world security threats come mainly from inside the state. Thus Steven (Cited in Nadiio, 2009) stress that the need to look inside state and take domestic factors since only in such a way it`s possible to understand third world security problem.

Internal security is a highly controversial concept of security and relatively in famous area within the discipline of security studies. For Ayob (1984) it is mainly focus on the protection of territorial, sovereignty, institution and government elite of a state from threats posed by domestic issues. Any threat that threatens the above referent object is security threat for the survival of that state. For the advocators of subaltern realism security theory, number of developing counties in today world is vulnerable to threats posed by domestic issues rather than international security issues. In this states the issue of security or insecurity is seen in relation to vulnerabilities, both internal and external, that poses a danger to, or have the possibility to, bring down or consequentially weaken state structures, both territorial and institutional (Ayob, 2002).

ETHIOPIA`S INTERNAL SECURITY THREATS

Ethnic Conflicts and Lack of Coherent Idea of national identity

Ethiopia is a country of many nation, nationalities and peoples, each speaking a dialect of many languages. The country hosts more than 80 ethnic groups amounting to about 90 million people in 2015 (CSA). The Oromo (34.5%), Amhara (26.9%), Somali (6.2%), Tigray (6.1%), Sidama (4.0%), Gurage (2.5%), ethnic group`s accounts for 80.2% of the total population. The majority (56 ethnic group) lives in Southern Ethiopia, from which Wolaita (2.3%), Silte (2.0%), Afar (1.7%), Hadiya (1.7%), Gamo (1.5%), Gedeo (1.2%), Kaffacho (1.13%), and Kambatta (0.94%) account more than one percent of the total population of the country. In terms of religious affiliation, the majority of Ethiopian people are Orthodox Christians (43.5%). In addition the country is home for Muslims (33.9%) and Protestants (18.6%). The Catholics and others account for 4% (Habtamu, 2013).

Since 1991, EPRDF introduced administrative polices, that are designed to give ethnic group sense that they are closer to the government and are more in control of public affairs than any other point in history. In efforts to democratize the multi-ethnic and poor country the country is divided into nine ethnic-linguistically regions and two city administrations. However, there have been disputes between ethnic groups, within or among the regions and other social groups in the past two decades which would affect the security of the state. As the research show, in

the past two decades, there have been fierce conflicts in the borders of Afar and Isaa, Garre and Borana, Oromia and Gumuz, Guji and Gedeo, Agnwa and Nuer, Sidama and Guji, Oromia and Somali. The driving causes for the conflicts are struggle for power, misjudgment, and competition over natural resources, misconceptions, development inequality, blood feuds, lack of well-defined borders, marginalization and discrimination (Habtamu, 2013). Studies by Institutes for Peace and Security (2010, 2011, 2012), also note that demand for greater share of various resources (political, economic and natural) seem to be the major pushing factor for inter-ethnic conflicts.

Ethnic conflict could be worse by hatreds and resentments, which could be traced from ancestral, or/and owing to a recent clash of interest-that are attached to the markers themselves (Joan, 2012:05). This feeling open the door, implicitly or explicitly, for marginalization, Prejudice, discrimination, and stereotyping. As have seen in the world, including Ethiopia, Putting people into groups and categories is a normal cognitive process (Habtamu, 2013) . What makes the situation wrest is the perception of the people about national identity, Ethiopia. The difference mainly related with the way elites interpret the historical road to modern Ethiopia and the key they provide for countries contemporary challenges. Thus ethnic conflicts continue to pose a threat to security of the state. It is constantly aggravated by mass poverty, abuse of human rights, limited access to resources, and weak idea of national integration and identity.

Income inequality and uneven development

Due to its double digit economic growth Ethiopia has attracted global attention. It made significant effort in reducing poverty, improving life expectancy, and rising per capita income. However, this gain has come with rising income inequality and inflation. As Ayob (1995) notes that economic vulnerability become threat of security only if they become acute enough to take on overtly political dimensions and challenge the most important tenets of state- boundaries, institutions and/or regime survival. In Ethiopia case income inequality also poses a serious threat to state internal security, especially to the extent that it breeds and abets rebellion, crime and dissidence. Despite the fact that the country is registering economic growth, urban Ethiopian families nationwide are affected by poverty. Consequently, the distribution of wealth has been skewed in favor of a wealthy minority. As certain segment of the society benefit from the economic growth before others, the resulting income inequality produces great tension between social classes.

The rise of domestic unrest might be fruitfully examined from the perspective of developmental

economics .In the initial stage of economic expansion, traditional form of production (e.g. subsistence agriculture) are disclosed by the process of industrialization and migration to urban centers .As certain segment of the society benefit from the economic growth before others ,the resulting income inequality produce great tension between social class .More sever this form of internal security threat create favorable condition for insurgence group and external enemy to challenge the incumbent regime (Janson and E.Strakes,2009:7).

Insurgence Group

Currently Various secessionist and ethnic faction group have raised arms and fighting the central government like, ONLF (Ogaden National Liberation Front), OLF (Oromo Liberation Front), Arebengce Genbar and following 2005 election Ginbot 7 insurgence organization and others form Oromia, Afar, Somalia, Gambela and Benishangul Gumeze regional states. The main internal security threat arises from these insurgency groups which, in open rebellion against the government, some of them have the objective of creating an independent nation.

The resentment against the government and risen militancy among this insurgency group will likely fuel conflict for many years to come. In state building of third world, insurgency group are created, and they pose much greater, and more immediate, challenge to the security of the large majority of nation than do external adversaries. The external adversaries are, however, likely in many cases to take advantage of internal strife. (Ayob, 1995).While the Ethiopian government has open the door for constructive negotiations with some of insurgence groups, the armed struggle of the group continue to be a source of serious concern.

Religious Fundamentalism

Attached with the political turmoil, fundamentalism is a global concern .The let PM Meles Zenawi in mid-1990`S commented that the most significant long term threat to Ethiopia security is fundamentalism particularly emanate from Somalia and Sudan. However after normalizing the relation with Sudan, Islamic radicalism from Somali and some Arab countries is considered as major security threat for Ethiopia. Ethiopian is known for religious tolerance mainly between Muslim and Christians. But now a day both Islamic and Christian fundamentalism is becoming the country`s security threat. Now a day Islam is becoming a political, economic and social force. The conception of Ethiopia as `Christian state` to be source of insecurity (Erlach, 2007). Many fundamentalist groups, funded by some Arab countries, are participating in activities that threat the state and its people security. This

group has agenda to apply sharia law, expand Islam in illegal manner, and weaken Christianity.

On the Christian side there is a tendency of considering Ethiopia as high land of Christianity, which rejects the existence of different religions. The government said that it would take all necessary measures to stop fundamentalists from taking a foothold in Ethiopia, which is a threat to security.

Natural disasters and environmental issues

Concern for Natural disasters and environmental issues continue to dominate the global security agenda. Human activities like resource consumption, population growth, urbanization, industrialization, desertification pollution, and deforestation will highly impact on climate and patterns of weather, ecosystems, and create pressure on health and welfare support systems. Currently due to severe climate change, Ethiopia is facing serious food shortages which cause hunger, disease and deprivation for more than 18 million people. Over the past decades, the disaster impost stands at Billion worth of property destroyed.

Lack of good governance and weak democratic institutions

Lack of good governance and weak democratic institutions has become another challenge to Ethiopia's national security. By virtue of the huge scale by which it saps public resources, Lack of good governance and weak democratic institutions undermines the morale of the civil service and affects the delivery of quality basic services. It has also become a challenge to investment. Even though the government has taken a campaign to reduce challenges for good governance at all levels the problem is still harsh which reduce public trust.

In addition to the above threats now the government is faced with the question regarding slow economic growth, feeding millions in drought-stricken regions, dealing with political unrest in Oromia region and Gondar in Amhara region and international pressure regarding political prisoners,

Intra-Party Struggle Within EPRDF

When EPRDF won the civil war in 1991 it was predominantly Tigreyan organization. One method that EPRDF used to broaden its ethnic representation was to establish 'friendly' coalitions parties (OPDO, ANDM, SEPDM) drawing representatives from each ethnic group (Sanda & Thomas, 1991). Currently Ethiopia is experiencing de-facto one party structure (Merera, 2002). This structure, which emphasized on centralized control could be source of vulnerable (CSIS, 2011). Comparative case in one party regions show that most

lose power as a result of internal division often brought into the open during a crisis over leadership (ibid). Currently, EPRDF is in process of internal realignment and changing of guard. The party stated that it plan to rotate its entire leadership to new generation within the party. It is conceivable that during this ongoing leadership rotation, fissures could open up within the party and it inherently raises question of relative power and has the potential to generate internal competition and conflict in the party (CSIS, 2011).

A question of powerful position in the party and government highlights structural challenges. A Promoting another TPLF as the next prime minister will make very difficult to the case that EPRDF is in fact a multiethnic party rather than a tool of TPLF elite. Selecting Amhara from ANDM, will generate resistance from those in historical marginalized south. While OPDO's leaders insist it's their turn to lead the country, EPRDF is moving top OPDO leaders from power without the consent of OPDO's top official. The SEPDM, from south has had its members promoted, but party is so diverse that it is so difficult base from which to launch a new national leader. The question of power transfer is therefore likely to generate interethnic revival and potentially create a significant conflict and protracted uncertainty (Merera, 2013). If EPRDF stumble due to internal power struggle, then the key power broker with influence in ethnically defines party and region may seek greater autonomy. Competition within the ruling party could break out and shatter the coalition and convergence of multiple crises could overwhelm the EPRDF and trigger violent and instability. If the EPRDF ability, to the central organization authority is challenged, it may generate instability and potential violence as constituents tide to EPRDF scramble to protect their interest (CSIS, 2011:13). In the Third World the more a regime face challenges the high in secure the state will be (Ayoob, 1997).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1). The ruling party (EPRDF) should be more inclusive and create a structure to bring the other supporting parties from the regions of Ethiopian Somale, Afar, Gambela, Benshangul Gumze and Harere.
- 2). EPRDF should transfer itself from 'front' created by coalition of four regional parties to one single party.
- 3). The party should focus on merit rather than political commitment in appointing officials in different government position.
- 4). The government should provide conditions for national consensus
- 5). The political atmosphere should be open to all parties in the country.
- 6). Freedom of expression and media should be respect as per the constitution.

- 7). The government should focus on human security.
- 8). The government needs to promote democratic Ethiopianism and national unity in regard to history; politics and economic development based on equality, commonly shared historical and cultural value, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

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