Modern Conflict and Ethiopia

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Ethiopia can and should overcome the current challenge by applying relevant diagnosis and administering effective panacea. If Ethiopia has successfully adopted best development practices to its economic problem, it can also successfully adopt best conflict resolution practices to its political problems. There are robust theories/analyses, and a vast array of case studies lending best practices and pointing avoidable mistakes. I will briefly state my assessment.

The current situation is part of a general evolution of conflict worldwide. The two old wars, i.e., conventional war among states and those waged by guerrilla forces are gone. The strategies and tactics that accompany them, i.e., total wars waged since Napoleon (analyzed by Clausewitz, Von Moltke, etc.) and guerrilla warfare waged and interpreted by Mao, Che, and Giap have become obsolete. This transition begun after the end of the Second World War in decolonized states, fully matured after the Cold War ended and became dominant after 9/11.

Modern day conflicts take place on a different battlefield, i.e., within the population and in weakly governed rural and urban territories (often contested, abdicated, far, crowded, and homogeneous). The days where violence takes place in the name of political ideology or liberation have gone. Instead, we see a scenario where a superficial political cause is a façade for criminal (looting) activities and identity-based (religious and ethnicity) violence. Globalization, i.e., increased connectivity at the physical, virtual, institutional, and normative levels have exacerbated these conflicts.

The modern perpetrators' superficial political goal (lack of authentic political solutions) rule out total war as a modus operandi that is, after all, waged to replace existing political order completely. Their realistically achievable goal is rendering territories ungovernable, not a total victory. The criminal aspect gives incentive for controlling resource-rich, economically lucrative, and strategically profitable territories (e.g., diamond/timber in Liberia/Sierra Leone, oil and drug in the Middle East/Afghanistan/Guinea Bissau, etc.). The identity (ethnicity and religious) aspect makes civilians targets of violence- causing untold massacre and large internal displacement as witnessed in Rwanda, ex-Yugoslavia, Somalia, Darfur, South Sudan, DRC, Libya, Syria, etc.

The four major aspects of contemporary connectivity (physical, virtual, institutional, and normative)-often called globalization exacerbate the three aspects of modern day war (superficial political goal, criminality, and identity-based violence). Physical connectivity nationalizes and internationalizes the conflict. Infrastructural development spreads the conflict beyond local level through contagion. Geographical connectivity (location and cheap travel) internationalizes conflict by enabling external actors (state and non-state) to send troops and ammunition. The role of the diaspora in local politics has increased worldwide. Internet connectivity empowers individuals and organizations to stir violence covertly. Institutional connectivity allows multilateral and non-governmental organizations and interest groups to advocate their cause. The proliferation of post-conflict intervention in Somalia, Darfur, Iraq, and Afghanistan, etc. by the international conflict often gives rogue actors the legitimacy, financial support, power-sharing opportunity and time to thrive-rendering conflict intractable. And, finally, normative connectivity bestows perpetrators space and legal protection to recruit, radicalize, mobilize, and deploy followers in the name of democracy. There are mosques in Europe that openly advocate,

spread terrorist propaganda and travel to the Middle East to conduct jihad due to Western democratic principles like speech, privacy, and movement.

The new warriors don't declare war, choose a fighting season or location, wear a uniform or bear arms. Instead, they are cowardly content with the ungovernability of territories because it satisfies their criminal and fundamentalist (narrow religious/ethnic) appetite. They are cognizant that their political rationale is afflicted with drawbacks. Some retrieve obsolete political goals that can't work today (e.g., restore an Islamic or another ancient empire). Others pose as copycats of Western democracy parties-adopting the name/form than the essence of democracy (e.g., every thug calling itself the democratic party of people X). The remaining advocate the interest of a specific identity group above others (e.g., secession for a minority group or domination for a majority group). Lacking legitimate political cause, they ignore conventional or guerilla warfare and resort to forming clandestine physical/virtual networks ranging from the Interahamwe gang to Al-Qaida cells and improvised weapons ranging from Improvised Explosives (IEDs) and machetes/stones to provocative posts on virtual platforms (text, twitter, Facebook posts, etc.).

The complexity of new wars is great but not overwhelming primarily because others have studied them. An effective strategy begins with a paradigm shift that contemporary conflict has evolved in the manner explained above. The second step is to understand that perpetrators of the new war don't serving global interest because they target civilian population, hence must be defeated at any cost. The third step is to understand their modus operandi. The new warriors are not guerilla warriors like Che and Mao. Instead of trying to become a fish in a sea by winning popular hearts and minds, they want to become predators feeding of popular resources by stirring fear and intimidation. They utilize poorly governed territories (regions) as safe havens and

exploit the global connectivity to their advantage. They don't have the discipline to form a vertical organization where orders are relayed from top to bottom. Instead, they rely on loose networks and common interest in a weak government where violent of any sort is encouraged at the bottom. The final step is action.

Several powerful countries have fought and succeeded in winning the new kind of war. The first step in fighting a network is to become a network. At the end of the 19th Century, anarchists assassinated President Mckinley. Organized crime flourished in the U.S during the first half of 20th Century. Lucky Luciano brought major mafia families together and inaugurated a nationwide organized crime involved in gambling, drug, prostitution, and alcohol (banned at the time). They bribed, intimidated, and killed people including politicians, judges, and police officers. This problem created Hoover's Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) that managed to control anarchists and criminals, earning nationwide respect. Meanwhile, the Soviet spies operated widely within the US and stole secrets (including atomic bomb blueprint). They also continued to expand their empire worldwide (including an attempt to install a missile in Cuba). These challenges created Donovan's CIA and Angleton's counterintelligence unit. Although the United States is a federal state, the ungovernability of states like Chicago (Al Capone's base), New York (Luciano's base) and other states like Arkansas and Las Vegas (a major mafia safe havens) rendered the federal government to create what many criticize as the deep state. The evolution of conflict after 9/11 increased the number of intelligence agencies (including Hyden's NSA) in the financial, virtual, outer space, and other sectors.

There are two important lessons to derive from the situation in Ethiopia. The first pertains to the regional states. Each region as an autonomous entity and must be treated as such. Ethiopia is a large country having a long history. The population and size of most regions are as big as

any given country in Europe. One must realize that instability is a symptom of ungovernability. If the unstable regions were countries, international organizations would have called them fragile states. So, it is important to treat the unstable regions as fragile states and identify the specific conditions, networks, and individuals that created ungovernability of territories within the regions. The conditions are corruption, mis/non-governance, the official-perpetrator link, and the individuals are state/non-state elites. Once one identifies the problem, then one can implement the proper security/institutional sector reform (including judicial/institutional) applied in any post-conflict country might be implemented. The new warriors call for the autonomy of regional states because the current ungovernability serves their purpose. The current problem is a weakness of certain regional states to enforce law and order, not autonomy. The federal government must assist them in reforming their sectors by weeding out the new warriors and restore their strength.

The second important factor pertains to the federal government. The new kind of conflict in the world is not only broad but also deep. Powerful countries worldwide have extended outreach, but they are unable to contain the new warriors effectively. Their level of depth is still not enough. Despite the presence of enormous surveillance mechanism, the new warriors have continued to thrive because governments have failed to penetrate their social networks. Modern day terrorists are often born, raised, and lived in advanced countries. However, they live in isolated ethnic quarters where state presence is broad (physical) not deep (social). In our contemporary conflict environment, state presence must be broad and deep. It is not enough to have police and military presence. The broad presence is good enough for reacting, not preventing conflict. The state can prevent violence through deep (not broad) presence, i.e., by understanding and penetrate into the social networks of perpetrators. This is not done by

conventional policy/military force but through networks. Not all networks need to be clandestine because the ultimate goal is winning hearts and minds of the population. The depth of state can measure its depth by check how close it is to ordinary folks. The state can counteract the reliance of perpetrators on fear and intimidation by forming strong and activist popular networks that people can trust and lean on. The key is the ensuring the majority's desire for peace and security through active (not necessarily centralized or orchestrated) gains reliable outlet.

To conclude, the current problem in Ethiopia is not strange or insurmountable. It has happened in many countries, and some have successfully addressed it. What's left is adopting best practices to the local context and avoiding the mistakes others made. The new wave of conflict that emerged after the Second World War decolonization developed throughout the Cold War, matured in the 1990s, and dominated conflict after 9/11 has visited every state. This new wave combines superficial political goals with criminality and identity clashes and exploits the dimensions of global connectivity. The modern perpetrators are not conventional warriors but merge in the populace through fear and intimidation rather than winning heart and minds. They don't operate as vertical organizations where orders flow from top to bottom. Instead, they operate as loose networks where everyone is encouraged to loot and murder. The cartels in Latin America, terrorists in the Middle East and Europe, warlords in Africa and Asia behave in this manner. The most effective state operators were those who avoided confronting the perpetrators using conventional force (***because they aren't genuinely capable of or interested in total victory but aim at rendering the state ungovernable to secure safe-haven for crime, jihad, and identity-based massacre***) and formed networks to undermine, breach and destroy their network. The regional states that demonstrated governance deficit (can't control territory and enforce the law) need multisector reform lest they continue to provide a safe-haven. The federal government

should adapt to the new wave of conflict by ensuring breadth (geographical outreach) and depth

(social penetration) by creating new institutions and bolstering the existing ones.