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(Re-engagement Strategy)

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Source: My views on news

JANUARY 28, 2022 BY SAJID NADEEM LEAVE A COMMENT

Ethiopia Foreign Ministry document

A 51-page document of the Ethiopian Foreign Ministry has been leaked. The document outlines a re-engagement strategy to repair fractures ties with the US and Western countries.

After the start of the Tigray conflict in November 2020, Ethiopian relations with the US and western countries deteriorated. EU and US accused Ethiopia of human rights abuses and deliberately blocking aid delivery to Tigray. The Ethiopian government reciprocated by labeling US and others as backers of Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). US removed Ethiopia from AGOA (African Growth and Opportunity Act) at the start of this year over human rights abuses.

After Tigray forces started their withdrawal from neighboring Amhara and Afar regions last month, Ethiopia-US relations saw an improvement. US President Joe Biden's telephone conversation with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmad, in the 2nd week of this month, was a clear indication that the two countries wanted to repair their bilateral ties.

The leaked document says that the Ethiopian government should talk to TPLF from a position of strength; Without dialogue, the conflict will go on with serious economic repercussions.

The document mentions the US desire to remove Eritrean ruler Isaias Afwerki from power. Eritrea is already under sanctions from the US and EU.

Sudan and Egypt are untrustworthy, the leaked paper claims. Sudan took advantage of the Tigray conflict and captured the long-standing disputed territory Al Fashaga on the Sudan Ethiopia border. Egypt and Sudan have been threatening Ethiopia against starting the 2nd filling of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). But despite threats, Ethiopia completed the 2nd filling in July last year.

It seems that the Ethiopian government is planning talks to end the Tigray conflict. But before the start of these talks, it wants to weaken Tigray militarily and economically through drone strikes and continuous siege.

Secondly, the government wants to pacify dissenting voices against the dialogue. Last month when the Ethiopian government released a few TPLF leaders, the move was criticized by some Amhara groups/individuals and diaspora members.

Those news outlets, which are critical of the government, have leaked this document. The leakage of the document could be an attempt to put pressure on the Ethiopian government to stop it from starting any dialogue with TPLF.

Ethiopian Federal Democratic Republic

Foreign Ministry

Advisory Office to the Minister

A Re-engagement Strategy to rekindle the foreign relations with western nations and international institutions that has grown cold as the consequence of the conflict that has occurred in Ethiopia

January 2022

Addis Ababa

Document number: 19

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Introduction

Background to the conflict and significance of the re-engagement strategy

Ethiopia, our country, is the country that has continued across generations by being a lamp in the anti-colonialism struggle and a strong foundation for pan-Africanism. However, as the consequence of the war that has been ignited on November 3, 2020 after the inciter [and] terrorist Tigray Peoples Liberation Front [TPLF] attacked the Northern Command of Ethiopian National Defense Forces, it has been confronted with a great challenge on the field of foreign relations. The current situation in which our country is in requires hard work to improve and restore to previous state the bilateral and multilateral relations it has with other nations, international organizations, intergovernmental as well as other non-governmental bodies.

It is known that a ‘law enforcement operation’ was undertaken when the federal government entered into a war in response to the invasion waged on it. Even though a situation has been created in which the TPLF was severely weakened as the result of the action taken by the government, following the government’s decision to declare a humanitarian ceasefire in order to give peaceful solution a chance, the terrorist group used the opportunity to undertake an invasion

outside of the Tigray region; in particular it entered into Afar and Amhara regions and has shown its terrorist character by killing and displacing innocent citizens as well as carrying out widespread destruction on public wealth and property.

During the first chapter of the law enforcement operation in which the TPLF suffered heavy defeat and was removed from Mekelle, the international community has been accusing our government and the Eritrean army with human rights violations, mass killings, blocking of humanitarian aid and rape; it also imposed sanctions.

When balance of power of the war, which spanned more than a year, tilted in favor of the Ethiopian government, the western world[1] was observed to show the tendency of holding a biased position and hurl false accusations that taint the name and dignity of the [Ethiopian] government. When the TPLF invader force ... victories

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... requires implementing it by formulating a strategy that harmonizes our diplomatic relations with the practical reality.

Therefore, in this process it has come to be believed that we have to undertake sufficient preparations to properly channel the future relations we'll have with various countries in the context of the changes that have now occurred on the ground and the issues some western countries and institutions had been raising & the positions they had held. In the context of this problem, it has become necessary to proceed by formulating a Re-engagement Strategy and Action Plan which takes into consideration in what way the pressures, which had been planned and executed in various ways, may continue or appear in a different form as well as the situations that have changed. Consequently this strategy takes into account the context and course of the war; considers the national security and interest of Ethiopia; adequately understands the current international [political] alignment; overcomes the pressures and sanctions imposed on our country; comprehends the principle of mutual interest; is ready to learn from our mistakes and take corrective action; and enables it to be implemented in an informed manner. In so doing, it

changes the current international standing of Ethiopia; multiplies Ethiopia's allies and tempers the negative positions of those aligned with the enemy camp thereby making them friends [of Ethiopia].

The diplomatic successes obtained as the result of the efforts undertaken to withstand the international pressures that ensued the conflict

It was become possible to ascertain our sovereignty and survival by bringing down, through diplomatic means, as well as informing the truth to the international community in response to the multilateral and bilateral diplomatic pressures, the biased and coordinated defamation campaigns – i.e. that the Ethiopian government was committing human rights violations, using starvation as a weapon, is posing obstacles to prevent humanitarian aid and other similar accusations – that the western nations, institutions and media directed at the [Ethiopian] government when the conflict broke out on November 3, 2020 as the result of TPLF's provocation.

The federal government was able to resist external pressures by anticipating and predicting the pressures that may come from western countries, by following international rules and regulations during its engagement in the survival operation, by prioritizing the human rights of citizens, by seeking peaceful solutions, by showing that it has principled commitment, by getting alleged human rights violations investigated by an independent body and striving to make accountable those who committed the violations.

It has made international pressures to loosen over time by spearheading the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those displaced because of the war; by working to restore basic public services, i.e. electricity, banking, telecommunications, internet, health services, etc; by showing readiness for sustained ceasefire when the terrorist force showed readiness to desist from its violence instigating actions.

On the other hand, [we were] able to expose on various international platforms those who disregarded the [Ethiopian] government's patience and commitment for peace and openly or clandestinely operate save the terrorist group that is descending to the grave because of its vein actions and to remove our country's government.

The fact that the attempts by western countries, [international] media, humanitarian aid agencies and civic institutions to impose various pressures as well as get the UN Security Council to impose multilateral sanctions in order to create a puppet government that is obedient enough to implement their geo-political and strategic interests has been repeatedly nullified by coordinating Ethiopia's allies is taken as a manifestation of success.

As the result of the high level diplomatic engagements between the Ethiopian government and EU officials as well as the Foreign affairs heads of member states that were aimed at explaining Ethiopia's positions, some member states stood in support of Ethiopia during EU council's sessions where issues about Ethiopia were discussed; this is the outcome of diplomatic effort.

Because the African Union was made to deeply understand the justness of the law enforcement and survival operations, which our country is carrying out, it has accepted that the issue is an internal matter and unwaveringly pursued the principle of non-interference that is found in its charter. Western countries and institutions didn't support this position it [AU] had taken so much so that they went as far as condemning the Union for breaching the principle of non-indifference by choosing to be silent when genocide and war crimes were being committed.

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Regarding human rights violations, the fact that the Ethiopian government established a joint investigation commission; accepted some of the findings of the report released by the commission; moved to give justice by forming a ministerial task force; and showed its commitment to the building of a democratic system and affirming of human rights by holding accountable those who perpetrated the violence, enabled it to get the support of many countries.

The resolution that was formulated by the EU and passed by UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva is aimed at downplaying the international investigation committee, that was established to investigate the human rights violations committed during the Northern Ethiopian war as well as previous efforts of the [Ethiopian] government; it also casts aside the resolutions set out by the investigative report of EHRC and UNHRC. Because of this friendly nations of Africa and other continents have opposed it.

Western media had praised the TPLF force as having battlefield experience and indomitable. However, because it was made to suffer defeat during the first round of law enforcement operation and the second round of operation for national survival, western media institutions were forced, since recently, to change their manner of reporting at least to a limited extent.

Following Ethiopian government's declaration of unilateral ceasefire on June 2021 in order to give peaceful solution a chance, since the terrorist group used the opportunity [to expand] its invasion outside of Tigray, particularly on Afar and Amhara regions, and showed its terrorist character by killing and displacing innocent citizens as well as destroying the wealth and property of the public, westerners were forced, against their will, to hold, at the last hour, a position [of demanding] for the Tigray army to withdraw from Amhara and Afar regions.

The international pressure that may occur if the survival operation is to enter into the Tigray region

The government has announced that there will not be any mobilization into the Tigray region in order to halt the war that was going on in Northern Ethiopia. There are many reasons which compelled the government to reach such a decision. However, when examined from the context of TPLF's provocative character, it is inevitable that the survival operation will continue in various chapters and strategies until it [TPLF] reaches a level where it is no longer a threat to national security. As has been observed in the past, even though the TPLF was defeated in battle and forced to withdraw from other regions, it is wrong to assume that it will, in the future, be limited in Tigray region only. This is because as group's the past history of provocation and militant arrogance shows, it seeks to continue to build armies and wreak havoc to the peace of our country. If our National Defense Forces penetrate into Tigray region in order to pursue the terrorist force and cripple it, western governments and media, organizations operating in the name of humanitarian assistance and civic societies may rally once again to put pressure in order to save the TPLF force.

The decisive solution for the Ethiopian government is to win the war with clear cut superiority, subdue the terrorist force and its collaborators, conclude the final chapter of the ongoing survival operation with victory and shift its full capability to development. If a military action is taken that calms down the residents of Amhara and Afar and pinches the TPLF, the group will be

forced against its will to come to negotiations. However, as the war drags on, the pressure coming from the international community coupled with the economic crisis and human losses inside the country may make inevitable entry into negotiations even without having military upper hand. Countries like [U.S.] America too will inevitably rally to impose additional sanctions that they believe may disrupt the economic, political and military foundations of the government.

It is possible to anticipate, predict and resist the impact of western countries by showing that that the survival operation conducted by the government follows international laws and regulations; that it is a force that operates by prioritizing the human rights of citizens; that it has a principled commitment to search for peaceful solutions; that, even if human rights violations have been committed, it is working to impose accountability on the perpetrators by investigating it through an independent body; that it is spearheading the effort to make humanitarian assistance accessible to civilians who are victims of war related displacement; that it is working on restoring public service institutions – i.e. electricity, banking, telecommunications, internet, health services, etc.; that it is ready for sustained ceasefire when the terrorist force shows its readiness to stop its provocative actions. In this way we should improve and strengthen our collaborative relationship with these countries. However, it is appropriate to expose on various international stages those who cast aside the government's tolerance and commitment for peace, and are operating openly or clandestinely to save the terrorist group which is descending into its grave through its own vanity as well as topple Ethiopian government which has popular acceptance.

Overview of the outlook held and position pursued by various nations and international institutions regarding the conflict

The outlook and position of African countries

Although the majority of African countries, and especially our neighbors, saw the issue as an internal matter and left it to us to solve it with our own capabilities – and some had been collaborating [with us] – Sudan, on the contrary, took advantage of the situation, breached our country's border and carried out an invasion.

The African Union had shown interests in making the conflict get resolved through negotiations. However, because the [Ethiopian government] stated that the issue is a law enforcement activity, the idea of negotiation was not pursued to any relevant extent when high level discussions was undertaken with the Commission. Since an unconstitutional attempt to bring about regime change is condemned in the Union's charter and a series of [other] documents which were produced later, the institution's focus has proceeded in a positive direction [in alignment] with this as well as with respecting the sovereignty of member countries. Recently, westerners were making various attempts to threaten and persuade the AU and some African countries in order to put additional pressure on Ethiopia. However, since the [Ethiopian] government continued to cooperate with Olusegun Obasanjo, High Representative to the African Union, so that the peace efforts started by the AU based on the principle of "African solutions to African problems" may bear fruit and since this [peace effort] garnered union-wide support, the urging and plot of the westerners didn't bring about pressure on our country from African side. [Yet] due to the diplomatic harassment and the 'Addis has been encircled' [false] narrative, some envoys of the member states as well as not a few officials of the Commission were seen making preparations to flee. Employees of the Commission were also observed lobbying to make use of the budget allocated by member states in order to benefit from the evacuation operation and spend holidays in their home countries. There were also countries who exaggerated the problem and presented themselves as candidates in order to benefit by relocating the Union's institutions [from Ethiopia]. On the other hand, a strong stance which asserted, "Addis Ababa is our capital; we will not desert this country during its time of crisis and go somewhere else", was pursued by the Commission in general as well as some member states. Nevertheless, the idea that sustained solution to the problem would be peace that is brought about through negotiations; that there isn't a problem that can be solved through war; and that ceasefire and humanitarian aid assistance which is followed by inclusive national dialogue – has gained widespread acceptance. This is also the strategy that is being pursued by president Obasanjo and the Union bodies. Therefore, we should work carefully by taking into account that the relation with African Union regarding the TPLF issue will move through Obasanjo's mandate.

The position held by most of the neighboring countries from the start was that the federal government should quickly put an end to its war with the TPLF. They were indirectly saying 'destroy TPLF'. They had not shown a change in their position until the eve of victory of the first

chapter of the law enforcement operation. We have realized however that the prolongment of the war and TPLF's advance as far as North Shewa had made them doubt the strength of our government and [national] army.

At this time, the position of [our] neighboring countries has returned back to its firm foundation following the counteroffensive operation headed from the front by FDRE Prime Minister and the [strong] support the local public showed him and its anti-Weyane position as well as the support of the diaspora and its sustained anti-west protest. However, even though there is support [for Ethiopian government] among the governments of all countries, this doesn't mean there aren't in-and-out negative movements.

Following the victory that the federal government is scoring since November, a tendency has been observed of desiring to know regarding the possibility of continuation of the peace negotiations or [if] the government would pursue the [course of the] war and enter into the Tigray region. Most neighboring countries want the war to be concluded through peaceful solution.

Even though TPLF leaders had attempted to persuade over the phone some officials of neighboring countries to stand beside the [TPLF] group, they were not able to get as much support as they had thought. However, the Egyptians and to some extent the Sudanese have continued their efforts to put South Sudan in their circle in the name of [providing financial] support.

Horn of Africa nations, by realizing that their relations with Ethiopia is tightly intertwined, support that the stability of our country is key to bring about mutual prosperity by strengthening regional coalitions. Djibouti, for instance, states that since its security is tied to the fate of Ethiopia, it believes on the need to completely destroy the TPLF group.

The countries of the region firmly disapprove of the tendency by some superpower countries to meddle in the internal affairs of African nations in the name of protecting human rights. For instance, Yoweri Museveni, president of Uganda, has recently sent a message through his social media page that the pressure [exerted by] the westerners is not right.

Because the TPLF group had established ties of interest during its time in power, a tendency has been observed by officials of some African countries to support the group. In addition, evidences point to the existence of plots to weaken the federal government among anti-Ethiopia foreign media, think-tanks and destructive forces, which have accumulated in neighboring states and are releasing hostile reports. The plot by countries which provide technical and financial support to African Commission on Human and People's rights to get the investigation done virtually although it should be carried out on the ground in collaboration with our country's institutions should not be seen lightly. The manner in which the report of the commission is going to be made public and the challenges that it would bring forth require preparation and close follow up.

When the position of African countries and especially that of the neighboring countries is evaluated, apart from the well-known anti-Ethiopian position of Egypt and Sudan, we can dare say that the position taken by the rest of the neighboring countries is to stand on the side of Ethiopia.

The outlook and position of western countries and institutions

The western world, which is headed by the [U.S.] America, by utilizing its capability of bringing about economic and political impact as well as its control of the media and international organizations, has twisted the context of the conflict and exerted on Ethiopia a great pressure that is difficult to resist.

Since the beginning of the conflict, the westerners [saw] the mediation efforts of the Ethiopian government as superficial and were observed to find it hard to understand and condemn the crimes committed by the TPLF, which was the cause of the war, on the North command.

On the contrary, the westerners are exerting great pressure on the Ethiopian government by blowing out of proportion in a biased manner the accusations that Ethiopian government is violating human rights, is using starvation as a weapon of war, and is putting obstacles to prevent delivery of humanitarian aid and others.

Because of the strained relations westerners have with the Eritrean government, they accuse that the involvement of the Eritrean government in the war has complicated the situation and that the Eritrean government is exerting a negative influence on Ethiopia and the peace and stability of

the region. It can be guessed that the reason they were repeatedly calling for the withdrawal of the Eritrean army from the Tigray region is because of this.

[U.S.] America and European countries have set out a strategy of controlling the politics of the Red Sea and limit the activities of China and Russia. Consequently, since Ethiopia has a geo-political significance in the Red Sea that would enable it to play a decisive role in determining the politics of HOA and North Africa, this has caused the west to exert an all rounded pressure on Ethiopia to establish a government that is subservient to them. In this regard, by taking into account that the deep plot to uproot the role China has in building [projects] in Ethiopia and the institutions of the HOA (see for instance the attempt to thwart Africa CDC project) has a long range objective, the issue of how to limit the threat needs to be properly worked on.

Even though the [Ethiopian] government withdrew from Tigray region by declaring unilateral ceasefire, the fact that the westerners failed to condemn & preferred to remain silent when the TPLF waged war on Amhara and Afar regions; used children [child soldiers] for war; robbed around 1,500 aid carrier trucks and used them for its wicked plans; carried out killings and inflicted suffering on members of the interim administration and innocent citizens raises questions of fairness and trustworthiness to their prior reports of human rights violations.

It should be noted that the issues of protecting human rights and delivery of humanitarian assistance are [raised] not because they care about the lives of Africans but are largely as a means of fulfilling the political interests of [U.S.] America and its allies. By examining the question “Why hasn’t change come about in Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Mali or South Sudan where the UN allocates a budget of a billion dollars and deploys peace keeping forces?” for comparison, it is necessary to find a [suitable] answer to the question of how our country ought to give a strategic and institutional response to the floods of pressures.

[U.S.] America, European Union and the UN have been pursuing a position that the conflict can’t be solved through war and that there should be an urgent ceasefire; that [the parties] must enter into negotiations without preconditions; that there should be a general dialogue and recently for the Tigray forces to withdraw from Amhara and Afar. Unless this happens they threatened to impose sanctions on the Ethiopian government, Amhara Special Forces, Ethiopian

military commanders, TPLF as well as on those which are associated with them; the American government has also imposed a unilateral sanction.

The Ethiopian side is not expected to agree with the key security and economic interests of the Westerners; however, the issues can be presented as agendas for engagement. The Ethiopian government and the ruling party don't have a pro-China ideology just as it doesn't have a pro-western ideology. Therefore, we can't have a conflict of national interest with either of the two blocks [West & East]. Hence it appears that the problem arose because of a failure to approach and engage without prejudice and to clarify the positions over which there is an agreement and those over which there isn't. Consequently, the re-engagement strategy focuses on these issues.

The outlook and position of the United States

America holds a position that it was possible to solve the crisis that occurred in the northern part of our country through peaceful means and negotiations rather than military action. Therefore, it firmly opposes the law enforcement operation carried out by the [Ethiopian] government. It has been urging for a peaceful resolution of the problem by sending various officials to Ethiopia. America has gone to great lengths to accuse the Ethiopian government for failing to embrace its calls for peaceful resolution of the conflict and portray it as arrogant and militant.

It could be guessed that it [U.S.] is worried that if the Ethiopian government were to resolve the crisis that occurred in Tigray region through military action, the existence of the party would end because the TPLF leadership would then be destroyed or be brought to justice. Therefore, in order to sustain the existence of TPLF, it exerts pressure for mandatory negotiations and its recommendations to that effect.

America recognizes that Ethiopia plays a decisive role in the peace and stability of the HOA and that it is a major partner in the fight against terrorism. However, it predicts that because of the conflict that arose in the northern part of our country, Ethiopia may be weakened and reach a level where it is no longer able to play its usual stabilizing role. Because of this, it states that the situation has made it concerned because it feels that the HOA region may end up being a hotbed for terrorists and extremists and that this may harm America's interests.

On the other hand, even though it was accusing the TPLF, during its 27 years in charge of Ethiopia, for its economic policy (ideology), human rights abuses and for narrowing the democratic space, nevertheless it [TPLF] was a collaborator in fulfilling America's interests. Moreover, since it may serve as the main obstacle that prevents the renewed friendship with the Eritrean government, which America greatly condemns, and prevent rapprochement between the two countries from bearing fruit, it is predicted that America would greatly desire the existence of TPLF.

The American government has imposed a unilateral travel sanction on Ethiopian and Eritrean officials and military commanders as well as TPLF members and its military wing; it has also been announced that it will be forced to impose additional sanctions if the situations don't improve. In addition to the travel and visa restrictions the imposed sanctions also include additional restrictions on economic and security assistance to Ethiopia as well as defense trade control policy. In addition to continuing the already imposed major sanction on Eritrea, the American federal treasury has recently imposed sanctions on Eritrean institutions and citizens claimed to be destabilizing Ethiopia's stability and unity.

The sanction that has been imposed by the American government may harm east African region and further destabilize its security; The fact that it was imposed at a time when the human rights violation alleged to have been committed in Tigray was being investigated in a transparent manner and while the humanitarian aid delivery was being carried out has upset the Ethiopian government.

In order to improve our diplomatic relation with America, we have to ask: "what do the Americans want from Ethiopia? Or What did they not get? Even though they have not revealed their desire openly, based on the speeches and writings of the country's high level officials, a few ideas can be raised. Among these:

They say they positively and admiringly accept the political reform that has been brought about in Ethiopia and the actions taken during the time of reform including actions like opening of the democratic space, focus on protection of human rights, economic liberalization. However, they have started to claim that the reform has not proceeded in the desired speed and extent and has even been reversed. Among these, for instance, they say that the move to transfer institutions that

were under the possession of the government into the hands of the private sector has been reversed.

They see as a positive outcome the ending of the no-war-no-peace situation that had existed between Ethiopia and Eritrea for the past 20 years with a peace treaty. They recall, following this [event], the lifting of the sanction that had been imposed on Eritrea by the UN Security Council. However, by claiming that the Eritrean government has not made any policy reform, they sort of complain that the Ethiopian government has not exerted influence on the Eritrean government. In particular, since they severely dislike Isaias Afewerki and want him to be removed from power, they were angered by Dr. Abiy Ahmed's strengthening of ties with President Isaias Afewerki, the participation of the Eritrean army in the law enforcement operation and its not withdrawing in the desired time frame; it is said that this has eroded their faith on the Ethiopian government.

America had expected that similar to its political and economic reforms, it [Ethiopia] would also undertake similar [reform] on its foreign relations policy. Consequently, it had expected the new Ethiopian administration to cool down its relations with China and look towards the west. However, since our foreign relations policy is based not on ideology but on our national interest, our relations with China and plenty of other countries continued with greater strength. This doesn't seem to have made the American side happy.

On the other hand, taking into account the fact that the role played by Ethiopia for the peace and stability of the HOA is great, it is said that the US holds a position that since the civil war that is going on in the country will weaken the country, it should go out of the civil war and play the role it has to play in Africa

There are signs that [U.S.] doesn't see positively the move by the Ethiopian government to use [the theme], "our country has never been colonized and has maintained its liberty and territorial integrity" in order to strengthen the country's unity. Moreover, they don't see in a positive light the effort of our country to revive the spirit of pan-Africanism. Since the initiative opens the door and sets precedent for Africans to overcome the culture of subjugation to the interests of the western world, America is imposing pressure by presenting a wide alternative. It is clear that France and England, which wield great influence on the continent, would be main collaborators

over this issue. It is necessary to realize that such agendas are ones which the American ambassador to the African Union follows up daily and exerts pressure on.

In addition, America's tendency to coerce Ethiopia to fulfill Egypt's desire so that its interest in Egypt would be secure; the fact that most members of the American Democratic Party are pro TPLF and their exerting undue pressure on the government by siding with the terrorist party; the complaint raised regarding the alleged purchase of weapons by Ethiopia from countries which are America's antagonists; they are also pursuing the idea that the Africa Center for Disease Control and Prevention that is being built in Ethiopia conflicts with America's interests.

The outlook and position of European countries and the EU

Both now and in the past, EU and member states as well as UK and Norway held a position that the conflict with TPLF cannot be solved through war. They are making calls for two sides to get rid of the enmity and reach a ceasefire agreement; to resolve their differences through political negotiations; for the war to end and for humanitarian aid to become accessible to areas that have been affected by the war.

It is to be remembered that the EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting that took place on October 18-21/2021 and November 15-16/2021 had discussed this issue; Jutta Urpilainen, EU Commissioner for International Partnerships, who had visited our country on October 25/2021 had brought similar message. The EU Council meeting that took place on December 13/2021 discussed about the situation in Ethiopia and apart from reflecting its usual position, hasn't brought anything new.

The EU and member states as well as UK and Norway hold a similar position in this regard and support AU mediation efforts for ceasefire and resolution of the conflict through political negotiations. Nevertheless, differences among the countries have been observed in their exertion of pressure on Ethiopia. We can examine the positions held by EU and some European countries regarding imposing pressure on our country by putting them under four categories.

The first group includes the countries that argue for the imposition of strong action including sanction on Ethiopia and move to exert coercive diplomacy on other member states. Prominent among these are Ireland, Netherland, Finland, Norway, Belgium, Luxemburg, Estonia and the

European Union. Ireland has been using its elected membership in the UN Security Council, in addition to [its place in] EU, to collaborate with America for the Tigray issue to be presented as an agenda in the Security Council meeting.

It has made a presidential statement to be released regarding the Tigray issue; even now it appears as though it will continue to openly work with America to make the issue in the northern part of our country an agenda for the Security Council. The countries mentioned above work through the EU Council to get sanction imposed on Ethiopia and hold similar position as Joseph Borrell, vice president of the EU and high representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs. This official is heard openly lamenting in public that the punitive action that he sought has not been imposed on Ethiopia. He attempted to use the Africa Europe Collaboration Platform that took place in Kigali to present a [derogatory] accusation on our country. It was only Ethiopia and Eritrea which registered a reservation claiming that the name of one country should not be singled out and mentioned in the document. The delegations of countries that are influential in the AU, after saying ‘yes’, ‘yes’, to [our] request, didn’t give us practical support; therefore a research based task has to be carried out.

The second group consists of countries which, despite giving attention to upholding of human rights and humanitarian assistance, which they consider European values, believe that it is possible to solve the problems that have occurred in the northern part of our country through involving the Ethiopian government in a constructive engagement; they don’t believe in taking sanction measures. In this category are included Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Poland, Czech Republic and Austria. These countries are decisive in playing a constructive role within the EU and in preventing the EU from going ahead with the sanction. However, during the EU foreign Affairs Council meeting, which took place on October 18-21/2021, the fact that apart from few, many of these countries chose silence regarding the issue of [imposing] sanction on Ethiopia is concerning. The influence these countries exert on the EU Council and other member states cannot be undervalued. In the future, working closely together and in sync with these countries is useful and decisive for [influencing] the position that would be held by the EU. Outside the EU, the UK has not been observed to go far in pushing for sanctions.

The third group includes Denmark and Sweden. These countries wobble in between the first and the second groups. Even though these countries have shown interest in desiring the EU to take a

firm position on the [Ethiopian] government to actualize accessibility of humanitarian aid and stop human rights violence. However, they move cautiously in bilateral relations. They mostly don't come forth in support of Ethiopia; nor do they play the lead role in efforts to get sanction imposed [on Ethiopia] either.

The forth group includes eastern and southern European countries (Russia, Turkey, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania, Serbia, Croatia, Greece, Malta and Cyprus). Among these 5 countries (Slovakia, Latvia, Lithuania, Croatia and Cyprus) don't have representation in our country and thus don't have direct information. The remaining 9 countries (Russia, Turkey, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Serbia, Greece and Malta) follow closely through their embassies the issue of the northern part of our country and believe that the Tigray issue is Ethiopia's internal matter and accept the policy of non-interference. However, among the countries mentioned those that are EU member states are under the influence of the Union and are compelled to accept the Union's common position. Therefore, these countries embrace the governing position within the EU[2].

Russia and Turkey, on the other hand, provide support to Ethiopia. Russia[3], in particular, is proving its true friendship in perilous times by standing alongside the African block and China in UN Security Council and UN Human Rights Council and supporting our country.

2.2.3.1 The outlook and position of European Union

The new president of the European Union Council, Charle Michel, is said to have a balanced stance while the vice president and head of Foreign Relations, Joseph Borrell, is making great moves to get sanctions imposed on Ethiopia. It can be guessed that this is mainly due to the influence exerted on him from America; it is a time when the European Union is making moves to improve its relations with America and may be evidence of the presence of coalitional coercion in America and European Union over some issues. While America exerts pressure on some countries by holding a common position with the European Union, it can be seen that Ethiopia has fallen within this pressure. At this time the position of the European Union Council is increasing humanitarian assistance, getting rid of enmity and reaching a ceasefire agreement, imposing accountability on individuals and institutions that have committed human rights

violations, carrying out inclusive national dialogue, seeking a political solution for the conflict; it is exerting pressure on the Ethiopian government in such direction. By assigning a special envoy for the AU, the European Union is closely following the matter.

The European Union Commission follows the directives of the European Union Council and can't hold a position that is different from the Council. On the contrary, since the Commission is a body that carries out operational tasks, it has tried to use direct budget support as a tool to exert more pressure on our government. It is also trying to see as tied in relation to one another the developmental cooperation programs that it plans to implement over the next four years with the government's move to comply to the above mentioned desires of the Union.

European Parliament, on the other hand, is susceptible to lobby groups because it is a collection of politicians. Consequently, it was seen reflecting a biased position on Ethiopia. The decision it announced on October 7/2021 wasn't widely debated upon; nor was our country, to which the issue is of concern, permitted to appear before the parliament and given a chance to present its case; it is a move to openly support the TPLF. The decision set out by the European Parliament, beyond influencing public opinion, doesn't bring about that much harm. However, since there is a possibility that the positions held by the Parliament may be put into use in policy making, the issue must not be neglected.

Generally the common position[s] of the European Union is largely expressed through the position held by the Council; these are

Unrestricted access to humanitarian assistance

Desisting from enmity and reaching a ceasefire agreement

Implementing accountability over bodies that committed human rights violations

It is to be recalled that these positions of the European Union were announced when Jutta Urpilainen, EU Commissioner for International Partnerships, paid a visit to our country. She has announced that the development cooperation the European Union provides for Ethiopia and its actions to support the reform will depend on the improvement of these issues.

Since the Ethiopian government is a government that has constitutional legitimacy and is elected by the people, the Europeans expect that, in conjunction with the weakening of the TPLF force, it will come forth to peaceful negotiations. They predict that it would be possible to enter into ceasefire and peaceful situation within months or weeks.

They mention that on the part of the government, it is necessary [for it] to work for urgent accessibility of humanitarian assistance and delivery of social services and on areas where national understanding and reconciliation are needed; that it is necessary to work on ceasefire and removing of enmity as soon as possible and that focus has to be made on getting rid of frequently raised complains.

Regarding sanctions, it has been stated that it will be implemented based on the human rights report on individuals who have been identified, by concrete evidence, as responsible; on the other hand it was mentioned that the steps taken by the Ethiopian government regarding those whose names are not mentioned in the report and the issues that require further investigation will be decisive.

Regarding the human rights violations, they support the fact that Ethiopia has accepted the report of the joint investigative report and has engaged in its implementation. They claim that the actions taken should be announced to the public and the International Community as soon as possible and that [the government] should work on making information accessible. They indicate that it will be of utmost benefit for Ethiopia to make public and accessible the unilateral investigations and actions it has taken so far.

They state that it is necessary to conduct investigation, either by the joint commission or unilaterally, the mass killings, human rights violations and sexual violence that were committed since July 2021; the outcome of the investigation has to be made public and work has to commence to get to know the full extent of the damage.

In general [they call for] continuation of cooperation with the High Representative of the African Union as well as supporting the peace efforts of other partners within this framework in order for the peace effort to reach its conclusion through the conducive situation that has occurred. It should be understood that the support they give to the High Representative is firmly tied to implementing the EU objectives listed above.

The outlook and position of International Organizations

Since our government carried out a law enforcement operation on the Tigray region, some countries have been exerting political pressures upon it in the UN Security Council and Human Rights Council for the past year. It is believed that some western countries may press ahead in order to make it continue as an agenda on the Councils and other platforms. Moreover, these countries have continued exerting pressure by using various international platforms and, by imposing non-essential UN staff travel ban on UN employees that travel to our country, by campaigning for the international telecom conference, which our country is set to host on June 2022, to be hosted by another country, by repeatedly calling for the Human Rights Council and the Security Council to arrange a meeting and reach a definite decision, they are attempting for bringing forth an outcome.

With the coming to an end of 2021, before the countries whose membership in the UN Human Rights Council and Security Council expires and leave their position, they are scrambling to bring to fruition the political agenda they had been pursuing in collaboration with the permanent members and for the announcement of outcomes that focus on our country. This doesn't mean they will leave us be if their efforts don't succeed; yet it is indubitable that they will be [too] exhausted to pursue this political pressure with countries who are to be new members of the councils.

The tendency to attempt to present the Tigray issue through the UN Security Council shows that the possibility of imposing sanction is not closed. Apart from the unilateral travel restriction imposed by the American government, multilateral sanctions have so far not been imposed on Ethiopia. Most of the time the UN is forced to impose sanctions when it obtains evidence that the countries are either committing human rights violations or are building nuclear weapons. Considering the fact that western countries, human rights organizations, international organizations and influential media are presenting exaggerated reports about the alleged human rights violations in Tigray region, it appears that there is a possibility it may continue to be the focus of UN agenda. The tendency to attempt to present the Tigray issue through the UN Security Council shows that the possibility of imposing sanction is not closed.

Therefore, it is believed that besides multilateral platforms, UN Security Council and Human Rights Council, they will continue to exert political pressures on our country through all platforms that they believe would suit them. In this regard, it can't be said with confidence that the newly joining members of the Security Council like Brazil, Albania, and Gabon will not easily be exposed to the pressures of western world member states or not support the resolutions that are drafted by the Council on our country. Similarly, newly joining members of the Human Rights Council like Benin, Argentina (elected for the second time), Gambia, Kazakhstan, and Paraguay, are predicted to come under pressure by European countries that have numerical superiority in the Council and America, which has joined the Council once again, and support the decisions that are drafted by the Council regarding [against] our country.

Media and Human Rights Organizations

Western Corporate Media, which are mouthpieces of America led forces, are [known] by many for fabricating false news, causing social chaos in developing nations, and instigating genocide, destructions and similar deeds. These media had been praising the TPLF force as being battle hardened and indomitable. Later, when the force suffered defeat, they were observed presenting reports that claimed that the federal government, together with Amhara Special Forces and the Eritrean Army, has committed genocide on the people of Tigray. This position of international media and human rights organizations has remained unchanged and they are expected to persist with their position as long as a decisive [shift of] power balance does not come about.

Various International human rights organizations and media have shown a tendency to lean on analysts and lobbyists close to TPLF and based on manipulated information have carried out a seemingly orchestrated campaign to erode the [Ethiopian] government's trustworthiness and alienated Ethiopia. Since Western countries don't want to see beyond their interests, in addition to force and sanction, they use propaganda as a tool to subjugate countries. By using human and democratic rights as a mask, they were seen spreading false information through the media they control and attempting to fulfill their plan of immersing Ethiopia in a cycle of conflict and instability.

If one report is released by a certain media organization or human [rights] organization, other media were seen sharing it without any attempt to corroborate or seek to understand the views of

the other side. However, the fact that they have chosen to turn a deaf ear whilst aware that mass killings, human rights violations, sexual violence has been committed by the TPLF group since July 2021 shows that they are not balanced [in their reporting]. Social network pages too have carried out an orchestrated action of removing from their platform and blocking pro federal government voices and pages which allegedly expose the crimes and plots of the TPLF.

Some self-proclaimed human rights organizations engineer and release distorted reports on human rights violations that would serve as resource to forces that support the TPLF terrorist force and aim to impose their political interests on Ethiopia. When external forces dip their extremely stretched hands into the internal affairs of Ethiopia, they do so by displaying the human and democratic rights charts produced by these institutions. By deliberately forgetting the fact that the TPLF is an inhuman group that had been suppressing human and democratic rights during its time in charge of federal power, it is inevitable that they will continue to present it as victim while portraying the democratically elected and legitimate government as a force that violates human rights. The decision passed by UN Human Rights Council meeting on December 17/2021 regarding the humanitarian situation in Tigray was one that went outside of the purpose for which the Council was founded and made it a means of acquiring political benefits.

The outlooks of other superpowers

There are other superpowers which stood opposite to western superpowers, which work on keeping Ethiopia in a cycle of violence, understood that the issue is an internal matter and argued that there shouldn't be meddling in internal affairs of countries. Among the notable mentions in this regard is the deep pan-African spirit shown by African Union member states which stood with us during such challenging times as well as the role played by Russia, China and India in preventing a decision from being passed on Ethiopia on international platforms, especially on UN Security Council. The all rounded support provided by Turkey, United Arab Emirates and the like deserves unique attention.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that when the pressure of the westerners intensifies, there will not be any chance for the superpowers, which had been supporting Ethiopia, to temper their position if they find out that it goes against their national interest to resist the pressure.

By collaborating with allied countries, Ethiopia is expected to nullify the neo colonial plot and proxy war drums of westerners. Sustained diplomatic work should be extensively carried out by the Ethiopian government including intensely continuing its efforts to find peaceful solutions; strengthening bilateral and multilateral diplomatic efforts; by explaining, including in person, our issues to African Union and other sub-continental organizations so that they support the policies of our government with a single voice and pass decisions in its favor; and strive to nullify sanctioning tendencies. The [Ethiopian] government should create sustained awareness among the International Community regarding the concrete actions it has taken to elevate upholding of human rights as well as accessibility of humanitarian assistance; it should also formulate a road map and work to diminish the diplomatic disagreements and escalations it faced with super powers.

[1] In this paper what has been mentioned as ‘the western world’ refers mainly to [U.S.] America and some European countries and institutions; it doesn’t indiscriminately [intend to] put all into one category.

[2] Eastern Europe and areas around the Caucasus were part of the former Soviet Union and 30 years ago became liberated and declared independence. These are Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, etc. All except Belarus have embassies in our countries and therefore it is indubitable that they will be following closely the close relationship our country has with Russia. Among the countries mentioned above some (Ukraine and Georgia have close relations with the western world and are in extreme hostility with our most trusted ally – Russia. They were seen taking positions that is against our country during UN Human Rights Council and similar multilateral platforms.

When Armenia lost the Nagorno-Karabakh region, which was under its control for the past 30 years, to Azerbaijan, which had received comprehensive military support from Turkey, Russia, despite leaning more to Armenia over the contentious matter that sparked military conflict between the two former republics of the Soviet Union, it nonetheless tried to remain largely neutral.

Belarus is a country that is severely accused by the western world of human rights violations, suppressing opposition and the despotism of its leader, and is therefore under heavy pressure from western countries. As the result, seemingly guided by the motive of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”, it has been seen supporting our country’s position on International Human Rights Platforms.

Countries like Belarus, Iran and North Korea, which like Ethiopia, are under pressure from Westerners and the UN institutions, taking advantage of the unfair pressure imposed on our country by Western countries and UN institutions, are showing an inclination to want the formation of an anti-West front in Ethiopia.

On the other hand, among the countries of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus which were former members of the Soviet Union, Georgia and Armenia have shown that they have stood with the enemy camp by supporting the establishment of an international human rights investigative commission, which was proposed by the EU, that investigates the alleged human rights violations in the Tigray region in relation to the war that occurred in the northern part [of our country]. Therefore, we have to take precaution not to appear as if we have formed a special relation with Belarus, Iran, North Korea and similar other countries which are in extreme antagonism with the western countries.

[3] Since Western nations are still frustrated by the process that resulted in Crimea becoming part of Russia in 2014, they are severely criticize Russia, which has publicly stated that the possibility of Ukraine joining NATO and the Eu is a red line, on the pretext of human rights abuses. Opportunities are multiplying for them [Russia] to ask our country to go beyond the usual abstaining and support their positions regarding their claims that Russia has committed widespread human rights abuses in Crimea. For instance, during the UNESCO board meeting on October 2011, that took place in Paris, even though we went beyond abstaining and supported Russia’s position, Western countries were able to get it passed through majority vote.

