

Will The U.S. Support Egypt's Violation Of Ethiopia's Sovereign Right to Operate The GERD?

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June 5, 2021



Countries of the Nile River Basin-World Bank (Courtesy of researchgate.net)

Is the United States' continued escalation of hostile policy towards Ethiopia preparing the groundwork to support Egypt's "colonial rights" over the Nile River? As the White House and Congress threaten more sanctions against Ethiopia, their sovereign right to generate electricity for its people through the operation of the Ethiopian Grand Renaissance Dam (GERD) is being linked to the conflict in Tigray. Is the Biden administration and the Democrat controlled Congress ominously following in the footsteps of President Trump, who shockingly gave a "green light" for Egypt to bomb the GERD? This would be a grave mistake, with more disastrous consequences than the Obama's administration's bombing of Libya and overthrowing President Kaddafi. While U.S. foreign policy in the region is aligning itself more closely to Egypt, it continues to undermine Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's sovereign authority to prevent the Balkanization of his nation.

Sanctions Are Not For Allies

Secretary of State, Antony Blinken's still unproven, but often repeated March 30th allegation of ethnic cleansing by the Ethiopia government in Tigray, has provided the impetus for the crescendo of group-think Congressional voices to attack Ethiopia, America's foremost ally in the Horn of Africa. On May 23rd, Blinken intensified U.S. aggression towards Ethiopia by:

- Issuing sanctions.
- Cutting off funds for security and economic growth.

- Pressuring multi-lateral institutions to cease funding programs in Ethiopia.
- altering U.S.-Ethiopia defense accords, which have been essential in the war against terrorism and providing security for East Africa.



Addis Ababa February 5/2021 (ENA) Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed held phone conversation with United States Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken on Thursday.

Both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives support Secretary Blinken's sanctions against Ethiopia. Sanctions are a very poor and crude tool for conducting foreign policy, and I have opposed their implementation except in the most unique cases. However, it is unheard of to apply sanctions against a long-standing ally, and it is utterly counterproductive. The government of Prime Minister Abiy should be supported in defeating the insurrectionists, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). This is contrary to calls from the U.S and United Kingdom for a cease fire and reconciliation between the Ethiopian National defense Forces (ENDF) and the TPLF.

TPLF, not the Tigrayan community, is intent on tearing apart Ethiopia, and weakening the government of Prime Minister Abiy. Ethiopia's future existence as a sovereign nation-state depends on quelling this insurrection.

Pause for a moment, think, then ask yourself; how did President Lincoln personally conduct the war against the southern rebels? He summarily shunned all calls for peace and reconciliation, until the anti-Union, insurrectionist movement was defeated.

The Biden administration and the U.S. Congress are contributing to the potential dismemberment of the most vital nation in East Africa by sanctioning, threatening, and punishing the government of Prime Minister Abiy. If these officials, actually had any knowledge of the dynamic of ethno-nationalism in Ethiopia, they might come to realize that their actions could encourage more ethnic regions to attempt separation from the nation of Ethiopia.

Senate Recklessness Led by Bob Menendez

A new level of belligerence towards Ethiopia was on display at the May 26th, Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on the conflict in Tigray. It is interesting to note that all but one of the speeches and accusations against Ethiopia were uttered by liberal Democrats. Ranking Member, Frank Risch, was the only Republican to join the anti-Ethiopian crusade.

Chairmen Bob Menendez referenced Secretary Blinken's allegations of ethnic cleansing and other alleged crimes by the Ethiopian government. He demanded that Ambassador Godec, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, who was testifying, provide the proof that Ethiopia has "committed war crimes and crimes against humanity" in Tigray. Appallingly, the other Democrats on the committee followed Menendez in lock-step, demanding "action now" against Ethiopia.



Senator Bob Menendez (D. NJ) Chairman of Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Courtesy foreign.senate.gov)

Sarah Charles, testifying from USAID Humanitarian Assistance, further inflamed the hearings by projecting that Ethiopia will experience another “man-made famine,” reminiscent of 1985, if actions are not taken immediately. The potential for a new famine became the mantra of the senators at the hearing.

Allegations of hunger, and atrocities committed during the conflict must be fully investigated. However, to compare the current situation in Tigray to the famine of 1983-1985 that caused over one million deaths in Ethiopia, is contemptible. That famine was exacerbated by the destructive policies of Mengistu Halle Mariam, leader of the fascist-Marxist *Derg*. Likely unbeknownst to the uninformed senators, Mengistu, from 1976-1978 launched the “Red Terror,” murdering over half a million Ethiopians, in a genocide against his own people. To equate the famine of 1983-1985 and Mengistu’s policies to Ethiopia today and Prime Minister Abiy, is beyond reprehensible.

Senator Menendez opened the hearing by claiming that the conflict in Tigray echoes what happened in Darfur, Sudan. I travelled to Sudan many times from 1996 to 2012, including two tours of Darfur. Between that and my own extensive research, I am very familiar with Sudan and its history. I can assert unequivocally that there is no resemblance between Darfur, Sudan, and Tigray, Ethiopia.

Tragically, the behavior by the U.S. Congress, is shameful and reflects an acute superficiality in understanding the complex history of Ethiopia.

Overtake Geo-Political Thinking

While the U.S., led by Secretary Blinken, is reversing decades of friendship between Ethiopia and America, and endangering the Horn of Africa, the Biden administration is enhancing its rapport with Egypt.

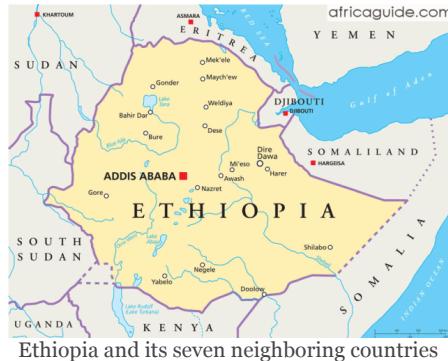
On May 26th, while the Senate was ratcheting up the pressure on Ethiopia, Secretary Blinken was in Cairo conveying:

“President Biden’s appreciation to President Sisi for Egypt’s critical mediation efforts in support of a cease fire between Israel and Hamas...”

“The Secretary affirmed the strong strategic partnership between the United States and Egypt, and President Biden’s commitment to this relationship. He reiterated the United States’ commitment to Egypt’s water security and to the urgent resumption of substantive and results oriented negotiations under the leadership of the African Union to resolve the dispute over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD).”

The sovereign right of Ethiopia to fill and operate the GERD for the general welfare of its citizens has become linked to the conditions in Tigray.

Democrat Senator Mendez, at the hearing ostensibly on Tigray, made the same veiled threat on the GERD as President Trump, who infamously suggested that Egypt might try to blow-up the GERD. Mendez blurted out, that Egypt has told him more than once, “if the GERD issue is not dealt with in a way that assures their water needs...they will do what is necessary...They have red lines...”



On May 27, Egyptian President Sisi, traveled to Djibouti, whose port provides access to the Gulf of Eden and Indian Ocean for its neighbor and major trading partner, Ethiopia. This was the first visit ever of an Egyptian head of state to Djibouti. According to *African Intelligence*, the two leaders discussed new security relations between their nations. *African Intelligence* further reports that Egypt’s defense minister and army chief of staff, who also visited Djibouti, “would like to see the creation of an Egyptian base in Djibouti not far from the Ethiopian border.”

At his news conference in Djibouti, President Sisi said:

“I stressed Egypt’s rejection of any attempt to impose a fait accompli through unilateral measures that disregard the interests and rights of the two downstream countries.”

Egypt has made repeated military threats against Ethiopia, has formed a military alliance with Sudan, and last month, carried out joint military exercises with Sudan labeled “Guardians of the Nile”.

Since Egypt is the second largest recipient of U.S. aid next to Israel, it would not be difficult for the U.S. to convince Egypt to stand down.

According to a knowledgeable expert on the region, the Biden administration is preparing to relocate the hub of its anti-terrorism deployment in the Horn of Africa, from Ethiopia to Kenya. The U.S. is trying to persuade Gulf nations, who support Ethiopia, to leverage their relationship in an effort to pressure Ethiopia to abandon its commitment to the GERD.

President Biden may or may not be aware of the implications of his decision to undermine Prime Minister Abiy’s government and support Egypt in their brinkmanship with Ethiopia regarding the GERD. His administration, filled with personnel from the Obama and Clinton presidencies, is following the same warped geo-political doctrine of his predecessors. Rather than responding to the fixed contours of the contentiousness surrounding the GERD, a true statesman would desire to shift the discussion to a higher level of potential resolution. Instead, the U.S., dominated by geo-politics, is fixated on seeking partners, who serve their narrow immediate interests, such as Egypt’s role in mitigating the Israel-Palestine crisis.

In fact, there is no danger of Ethiopia depriving downstream nations (Egypt and Sudan) of water for their people. This was admitted by Egyptian Foreign Minister, Sameh Shoukry himself: **[Egypt Foreign Minister Says Water Safe Despite Ethiopian Dam Threat](#)**.

The GERD will actually help both Egypt and Sudan by regulating the Nile, preventing deadly floods, reducing evaporation, and providing a water bank to draw on in emergencies. However, the GERD is not even the fundamental cause of Egypt's water problem, as Yaniv Cohen explains: **[Egypt has a water problem and it's not only the GERD](#)**



Eskom's Koeberg nuclear power station today turned on its temporary mobile groundwater desalination plant, which will ease the pressure on the City of Cape Town's water supply. Courtesy esi-africa.com)

The real issue concerning the Nile River is strategic; the Nile does not have enough water to provide for the hundreds of millions of Africans living in the nations of the Nile Basin.

For the economic growth and well being of the nations of the Nile Basin, more water is needed than the Nile can deliver. The equivalent of a second Nile has to be *created by human beings*. This is the discussion that should take place among the Nile Basin nations and the larger international communities. It requires creative and visionary thinking, outside of the box, not confined to geo-politics. To alleviate nations from quarreling over a limited supply of Nile water, let us be bold in our imagination. Instead, conceive of the *New Nile Project* by constructing nuclear powered desalination plants along the Mediterranean and Red Sea to create large amounts of new potable water. These nuclear plants in addition to efficient desalination, and supplying abundant energy, would become *nuplexes*— manufacturing hubs for industrial and agricultural development.

Some addicted to the narrow thinking of geo-politics today, will object and say it cannot be done, it will take too long and cost too much. To those naysayers, I would respond by asking, is it better to have water wars among emerging nations that are struggling to feed their people laden by poverty? As populations expand, and economies grow, more water will be required. Why not use the urgency of resolving today's combative dispute over the filling of the GERD, to prod our lazy minds to create a solution for the future of the Nile Basin? Overcoming all the many engineering and scientific impediments to achieve our *New Nile Project* will be challenging, but this is the very reason we human beings were put here on earth.



President Lincoln delivering his Second Inaugural Address March 4, 1865. (courtesy hisotyplace.com)

A Just End To A New Beginning

The fighting in Tigray, the ancient birthplace of Ethiopia, must come to end as soon as possible to prevent the loss of more lives and further suffering. This laceration in the fabric of Ethiopian society should be healed, and not allowed to propagate. Following the government's safeguarding of the Tigray region, an all-out mobilization must be launched, with vigorous international support, to rebuild the province, upgrading economic conditions to guarantee that every person living in Tigray, a productive and dignified life.

When the conflict in Tigray is concluded, it would be appropriate for Prime Minister Abiy to emulate the spirit of President Lincoln's *Second Inaugural Address*. It was delivered on March 4, 1865, almost four years after the war began, which killed hundreds of thousands of Americans, and six weeks before his enemies assassinated him. After President Lincoln affirms his commitment to defeat the southern rebels at all costs, he compassionately pleads for peace.

"With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

Let Prime Minister Abiy use this overture as a prelude to lead a healthy dialogue with the Ethiopian people; to unite the nation around the preeminence of an Ethiopian identity, one that supersedes ethnicity. Reformulation of the Ethiopian Constitution of 1995 to emphasize Ethiopian citizenship, which transcends ethno-regionalism, should follow.

It is in the shared, common, and self-interest of all Ethiopians to participate in the development of their society and increase the wealth of their economy for the benefit of themselves and their posterity. With the near future generation of 6,200 megawatts of electricity from the GERD, Ethiopia will bring light and prosperity to all its citizens. This is cause for all Ethiopians to join together in joyous celebration.

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