

## What is next for Sudan and South Sudan after Meles Zenawi

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By Steve Paterno and Scott Morgan

August 26, 2012 - The Recent passing of Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi is going to have a huge impact and implication on the relations between Sudan and South Sudan. The question has to be when will they be felt? Tension between the two neighboring countries is already high. Thus far, the intensity resulted into intermittent clashes, with serious potential for all out war.

It was only a few months ago when the AU summit was moved to Addis Ababa from Blantyre so that President Bashir could attend the meeting of his peers and avoid an ICC warrant. It was at this effort that Mr. Zenawi in an effort to prop up his image to donors despite a deteriorating Human Rights Climate within Ethiopia managed to broker a meeting between Omar Bashir and his South Sudanese Counterpart Salva Kiir. This was accomplished despite copious Press Reports that Mr. Zenawi was not seen at all during the Summit.

We know now the efforts were able to bring a deal on one of the most contentious issues regarding Oil Transit Fees. However, the other outstanding issues such as the Border Demarcation, Abyei, security, citizenship are still unresolved. This is particularly important, because Mr. Zenawi contributed Ethiopian Peacekeepers along the Inter-Sudanese Border under a UNSC mandate to attempt to keep tensions from escalating beyond the normal rancor. The mandate for this peacekeepers will expire soon, and then what is next? US Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan, Princeton Lyman, already acknowledged the passing of Mr. Zenawi is a great loss for peace between the two countries.

There is one key aspect that should be realized. Much like in Somalia where Ethiopian Troops went into the country on four occasions during the tenure of Mr. Zenawi, It has to be acknowledged that in this situation Mr. Zenawi may have been acting at the behest of the United States. This was probably done so that no direct ties could be directly tied to Washington. This seems to be the Modus Opparendi of the last couple of administrations, since President Bill Clinton who baptized Mr. Zenawi as among the new breed of African leaders.

The issue of water rights in the Nile will also be a factor. How this will play out in East African Politics has yet to be seen at this point of time. Could War erupt between various nations over water? This is a scenario that is overlooked currently but needs to be monitored, especially with the uncertainties and troubles brewing among the Nile countries.

The situation calls for a serious US leadership and engagement. America cannot fumble on this, given its investment in the region and the great potential for fallout, where US interest is at stake.

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