**Foreign policy dimension of Ethiopia during Emperor Tewodros II**

Emperor Tewodros II designed a foreign policy that would help him unify his domain and consolidate his power in relation to others. Throughout his reign, Tewodros II tried to develop a dynamic foreign policy that reached out beyond the Horn of Africa region. He distinguished Christians and Muslims, i.e. he considered Christians as friends and Muslims as enemies. He perceived the Turkish and Egyptians as the basic enemies and he wanted to have positive relationships with Russia, France and Britain because these countries are Christians.

Besides, Tewodros II possibly thought that an alliance with Britain and France, based on true Christian bonds, could secure Ethiopia from their imperialism. Since he viewed international relations in the medieval context of the cross versus the crescent, he had false hopes of the aid which might come to him from Britain and France in his struggle against the Muslim powers. When the expected did not come, and instead it was learnt that both France and Britain were allies of his enemies, Turkey and Egypt, the earlier distinction between the two imperialisms disappeared, and he prepared to fight them both.

Moreover, Tewodros II was aware that most arms then being sold to Africans were inferior to those possessed by Europeans. While it may appear that he might have overcome the difficulty diplomatically by persuading the Turks to lift the arms embargo against Ethiopia in return for some concessions, in reality this could not be done. The revived Turko-Egyptian imperialism against Ethiopia, his deep suspicions of their designs on his country, and the history of bloody confrontation between Islam and Christian Ethiopia in the fifteenth century, would not allow for a rapprochement between Ethiopia and her Muslim neighbors.

Nevertheless, he would bear to have at first made a distinction between the two. Since European imperialism had not yet threatened his empire or his sovereignty as the Turko-Egyptian imperialism was then doing, he appears to have considered the former as potentially less dangerous than the latter. To overcome the Turko-Egyptian threat he was ready to align himself with imperial Britain and France in spite of his suspicion of their ultimate designs on his country. Moreover, such an alliance did not appear to him to be a contradiction. His intended crusade against Egypt and Turkey would be a fight not only between Ethiopian nationalism and Turko-Egyptian imperialism, but also between Christianity and Islam; and Britain and France were Christian powers.

Furthermore, to secure as wide a support for his plans as possible, he simultaneously dispatched special appeals to the emperors of France, Russia, Austria and Prussia. In his letter to Queen Victoria and Napoleon III Tewodros II complained of Turkey's encroachment on his country, and how he had been prevented access to the outside world by Turkish control over the Ethiopian seacoast. He told of his intention to send ambassadors to London and Paris and requested the two sovereigns to guarantee their safe conduct through Turkish territories. The letters ended with the significant phrase "see how Islam oppresses the Christian." While no formal proposal was made for an alliance, there was an implicit appeal for support. It was indeed unfortunate that when he took the first bold steps towards an alliance with Britain and France in spite of his underlying suspicion of their imperial designs, no efforts were made by those powers either to reciprocate his friendship or to allay his suspicions.

The dimension of foreign policy is explained in terms of alignment, scope and modes of operation. The alignment of the policy is alliance in which Tewodros II forms a formal agreement with Christian states like Britain, France and Russia to get military aid to overcome the Turko-Egyptian threat. The foreign relation is limited to the Christian European countries and refused the relation to the Islam world due to the desire to colonize Ethiopia, and the history of bloody confrontation between Islam and Christian Ethiopia in the fifteenth century. The mode of operation is bilateral negotiation in which Tewodros II tries to contact Queen Victoria and Napoleon III to tell them the situation in the region. To sum up, emperor Tewodros II used alliance in terms of alignment, regional in terms of influence and bilateral negotiation in terms of modes of operation.

Theodore II, who reigned in the mid-nineteenth century, was the first modern Ethiopian leader to try to develop a foreign policy that transcended the Horn region. Before Theodore’s time Ethiopia did not have a foreign policy and her relations with other countries were sporadic and spasmodic. His primary concerns were the security of Ethiopia's traditional borders, obtaining technology from Europe (or modernization), and to a lesser degree Ethiopian rights to the monastery of Dar-es-Sultan in the city of [Jerusalem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerusalem).

Theodore’s forerunners among the mesafint, sahale Selassie, ali and oobie and to some extent even the earlier Tigreans Sabagadis and Welde Sellasie had all been receiving explorers and adventurers, missionaries and more or less official representatives of European governments. They had accepted the gifts brought to them and by the eighteen-forties had even started to sign official treaties brought for their signatures. But beyond this and asking for more gifts, usually firearms, the Ethiopian part in opening of the country was passive. All this changed under Theodore, who used foreign policy as an instrument to achieve Ethiopia’s national purposes.

Theodore alone fully appreciated not only the necessary of acquiring firearms but also the importance of producing them and restructuring the Ethiopian society as an effective response to the increasing pressure of European imperialism. Theodore’s foreign policy was not just a response to Europe’s pressure; it was dynamic, anti-imperialistic and anti-Islamic. While it opposed outside imperialism I aimed to promote Ethiopian imperialism, And was thus a forerunner of the policies of the succeeding Ethiopian rulers, particularly Menilic II.

Emperor Theodore II had clear foreign policy goals. He wished to develop close relations with Christian Europe, Particularly Britain and France, as he hoped to procure from them the much aspired “technical aid” to modernize his army. An equally important aim was to check the turko-egyptian imperialism that threatened his country’s independence and to carry on a crusade against those Muslim powers to achieve the ancient frontiers of Ethiopia. Thus close relations with Europe were fundamental to Theodore’s foreign policy.

Theodore was interested in foreign diplomatic relations with as many European countries as possible. However, he was determined to treat with them on equal terms only, to initiate contacts with those powers that might advance his own aims, and to seek technical aid that would be offered without prejudice to his sovereignty. In all these aspects Theodore’s foreign policy was very modern.