

EGYPT'S REGIONAL POWER AGENDA IN NORTH AFRICA: A CASE STUDY OF THE SUDAN CONFLICT (DARFUR)

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Abstract

Acquiring the status of a Regional Power has centred on a number of criteria, ranging from material capabilities such as wealth, strong military, good economy, good governance, geographic location to employment of good foreign policy instruments. In all these, scholars have often neglected and craftily overlooked the roles and contributions aspiring regional powers make to security issues within a region. This paper demonstrates the crucial significance of regional security roles as a means for regional powers to reaffirm their status. Through a case study of the ongoing conflict in the western part of Sudan (Darfur), this paper analyses the role Egypt must play if it wants to regain its status as a regional power in North Africa; this position lost since the Arab Spring in 2011. Applying the Regional Security Complex and Securitization Theory, this research paper observes that, Egypt has failed to play an active role in the North African region, due to its inability to ensure security interdependence collectively among member states, especially failing to play an active regional security role in the ongoing conflict in the Darfur region in Sudan. The study observes that, Egypt's inability to initiate any effective regional security role in the Darfur crisis is attributed to its own internal problems it faces as a country both economically and politically, and more importantly the growing fear that member states in the region may refer to Egypt's past record of problems engaging in similar conflict. This work therefore concludes that, until Egypt accepts to take up the challenge of bringing together all the member states within the North African region to solve the Darfur crisis through security interdependence and also, carve a new political character for itself which would allow member states to accept and recognize its authority, Egypt would continue to lag in its quest for regional power status.

Keywords: Regional Power, Darfur Crisis, Regional Security Roles, Power Status, Egypt, Sudan.

MISIR'IN KUZEY AFRIKA'DAKI BÖLGESEL GÜÇ GÜNDEMİ: SUDAN ÇATIŞMASI (DARFUR) ÜZERİNE BİR ÇALIŞMA

Özet

Bölgesel güç statüsünün elde edilmesi zenginlik, güçlü askeri güç, iyi ekonomi, iyi yönetim, coğrafi yerleşim gibi maddi yeteneklerden iyi dış politika enstrümanlarına kadar değişen çeşitli kriterler üzerinde toplanmaktadır. Bunların hepsi için akademisyenler bölgesel güç kazanımının bölge içindeki güvenlik üzerindeki rolünü ve katkısını görmezden gelmektedir. Bu çalışmada, Mısır gibi bölgesel güçlerin statülerini yeniden teyit etmeleri için bir araç olarak bölgesel güvenlik rollerinin hayati önemini ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışmada Sudan'ın batısında (Darfur) devam etmekte olan çatışmaların bir vaka analizi üzerinde Mısır'ın Kuzey Afrika'da bölgesel bir güç olarak – bu pozisyon 2011'deki Arap Baharından bu yana kaybedilmiştir – statüsünü tekrar kazanmak istiyorsa oynaması gereken rol analiz edilmektedir. Bölgesel Güvenlik Kompleksinin ve güvenleştirme teorisinin uygulandığı bu makalede Mısır'ın özellikle Sudan'ın Darfur bölgesinde devam etmekte olan çatışmalarda aktif bir bölgesel güvenlik rolü oynamaması üzere üye devletlerarasında kolektif

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bir karşılıklı bağımlılık sağlama yeteneği olmaması nedeniyle Kuzey Afrika Bölgesinde aktif bir rol oynamadığı gözlemlenmiştir. Bu çalışma'da Mısır'ın Darfur krizinde etkin bir bölgesel güvenlik rolü başlatamaması, Mısır'ın hem ekonomik hem de siyasi sorunları olan bir ülke olarak karşı karşıya olduğu iç sorunlara ve daha da önemlisi bölge ülkelerinin Mısır'ın geçmişte benzer sorunlara karışmasıyla ilgili kayıtlara referans yapabilecekleri korkusuna bağlanmaktadır. Bu yüzden çalışmada Mısır Kuzey Afrika'nın tüm ülkelerini karşılıklı bağımlılık üzerinden Darfur krizini çözmek üzere bir araya getirme şeklindeki meydan okumayı kabul etmesine ve ayrıca kendisi için bölge ülkelerini kendisinin otoritesini kabul edip bu otoriteyi tanımlarını sağlayacak yeni bir siyasi karakter oluşturmadığı sürece Mısır'ın bölgesel güç statüsü arayışında geride kalacağı sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bölgesel Güç, Darfur Krizi, Bölgesel Güvenlik Roller, Güç Statü, Mısır, Sudan.

INTRODUCTION

The ongoing intrastate conflict in the western part of Sudan has obviously failed to end through peace agreement due to persisting misunderstandings between both warring factions, the government of Sudan and rebels. Efforts by the international community have also proven futile, generating the conflict into a self-perpetrating humanitarian catastrophe in which hundreds of thousands have died of war – related causes and more than a million have fled from their homes (Høigilt & Rolandsen, 2010). Though existing analysis of the conflict over the years have centred on themes of competition over resources and the Sudanese government's use of local militia, the regional dimensions of the civil war in Darfur with focus on neighbouring countries and their contributions as regional actors through conflict resolution are significant areas to explore. This gap needs to be tackled by regional actors especially Egypt, given Darfur's position as an area which shares borders with other states including Libya, Chad and the Central African Republic and is in recent history an area of importance to regional conflict dynamics (Høigilt & Rolandsen, 2010). Egypt's position as a former major regional power that neighbours Sudan further suggests that it has interests at stake in such a conflict dynamic and is expected to play a role in resolving the Darfur crisis. Hence, any possible (re)olution to end this conflict is dependent on the regional security roles and actions of Egypt in particular as it wants to reaffirm its regional power status in North Africa. This research paper therefore investigates the following questions:

- How does Egypt's regional security role in the Sudan conflict strengthen and reaffirm its regional power status?

- In what significant way(s) can this regional security role by Egypt sustain peace and order in the North African region?

The current study in this research paper explores these questions using the Sudan conflict in the Darfur region between 2003 and 2015 as a case study and provides a review on regional power, relating this to Egypt's quest to reaffirm its weakened regional power status in North Africa. The choice of and rationale for selecting this case study for the stated period (2003-2015) is significant in that, 2003 represented the first onslaught of the conflict while the year 2015 ushered in a period of renewed hope at ending this intractable conflict for the first time in concrete terms as rival factions of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) signed a reunification agreement in Arusha, Tanzania. Again, another crucially vital element that should concern our attention was the occasion in February 2015, when Kiir and Machar signed a document on "*Areas of Agreement*" to work towards the establishment of a transitional government. Though the talks later collapsed and fighting broke out again, but 2015 represented the watershed moment when the UN drafted its final agreement on the resolution of the conflict in South Sudan on August 17th, 2015. As such, this work argues that Egypt's quest to reaffirm its regional power status hinders on how it effectively employs the Regional Security Complex and Securitization Theory in North Africa.

1. Literature Review

The available literature on the concept of regional powers provides diverse definitions and notions that overlap and intersect. Hence, the concept of regional power and its acquisition has been differently explained by various scholars, allowing for conceptualizations like *regional great power*, *major regional power*, *great power*, *major power*, *secondary regional power* and *even middle power* (Shim & Flamm 2012). For example, Samuel Huntington (1999, p.36) elevates the concept of regional power to the category of a major regional power, referring to it as a country which is in certain ways dominant within a region but not able to protect as well as project its interests as globally as the only superpower, the United States.

However, conceptualizing regional powers does not necessarily change the roles expected of such actors in a particular region. What matters though, is with regards to the question of what qualifies a state to be considered a regional power. Lake (2006, p.4) introduces the concept of authority as the basis for acquiring regional power status and distinguishes it from coercion. Thus, in authority exists legitimacy and moral obligation which serve as the drivers that motivate the countries which are followers in the region to succumb to the actions of a regional power. As Lake argues further, this would help provide a social order that benefits subordinates, and thereby binds them into that order... (Lake 2006, p.28).

In contrast to the concept of authority as a means for acquiring regional power status, soft power also serves as a tool for regional powers to gain attention in their region of influence. Nye (2004) explains soft power as the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. From this perspective, the ability to set agendas as well as the attraction of a state's behaviour to other actors is an important power resource:

'Soft power [...] co-opts peoples rather than coerces them. Soft power rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others. [...] Simply put, in behavioural terms soft power is attractive power' (Nye 2004, p.5).

Soft power is therefore an ideational resource, which consists of political and social values and objectives that give public reputation to states (Flemes, 2010).

Nevertheless, regional power can also be described in terms of the most important country in the corresponding region as well as a major power at the global level (Nolte, 2010). This view is augmented by the assertion that regional powers possess economic power (in a given region) and have influence as well as the capacity for regional and global action (Kappel, 2011). Another argument supporting this view states that regional powers have military resources at their disposal and military power is based on the latent power of a country, which consists of its economic and demographic resources (Flemes, 2010). An aspiring state must therefore indicate its claim to leadership which implies a willingness to assume the role of a stabilizer in regional security affairs and also the role of rule maker in regional economics (Flemes, 2010). In sum, these scholars claim that, for an overall view and as a base for the comparison of regional powers, material resources are crucial and must consist of a set of *geographic, military, economic, human development resources and demographic resources*.

However, the claims above do not focus on the fact that states can strengthen their regional power status through regional security roles in a particular region. Stewart – Ingersoll & Frazier (2012) have argued that regional powers are more than states with a high degree of material capabilities, relative to their neighbours - accumulating material capabilities is a part of the process to the acquisition of regional power status. Importantly, regional powers should be responsible for

ensuring security and maintaining order in their region of influence. In this case, regional powers have to meet various conditions as:

"The internal dynamics of such a state should allow it to play a stabilizing and leading role in its region. ... Such a state "should indicate and demonstrate its willingness...to assume the role of ... stabilizer and, if not peacekeeper, or at least peacemaker. ..." (Nolte 2010, p.10).

Buttressing the security role of regional powers is Flemes' (2010) compilation of four pivotal criteria for acquiring the status of regional power namely, possession of the necessary power resources; employment of foreign policy instruments; the formulation of the claim to leadership; and acceptance of the leadership role by third states. Flemes' (2010) criteria is in line with Shim and Flamm (2012, p.8) who similarly categorized regional power acquisition into different kinds namely:

- i) Delimitation referring to the territorial, economic, cultural, or political context in which the potential regional power is embedded.
- ii) Pretension concerns the question of whether leadership claims are voiced by the actor, and if so, what these claims are.
- iii) Endowment referring to how the actor is equipped in predominantly material terms, for instance, military, economic, and natural resources and demographically or geographically.
- iv) Influence referring to the level of leverage or impact an actor has on important issues of regional/global concern.
- v) Recognition concerns the intersubjective character of interstate relations and asks how others view the actor's role as a regional power, or if it is even acknowledged.

The last two criteria (influence and recognition) are paramount in defining the status of a regional power in terms of regional security roles in a region. Thus, so long as a regional power has influence, it is likely to succeed in maintaining order and stability in its region of influence. Also, influence and recognition provide regional powers with a political character which allows member states in the region to accept and recognize the roles played by such regional powers in the region.

Likewise, this paper supports the view that the acquisition of material, economic and ideational resources are not adequate to describe a regional power status, until such regional power takes on a regional security role through influence, in order to maintain order and stability in a region. Hence, this paper proposes that the role of regional powers in security issues is vital as it serves as a means to further strengthen their status in the region.

For this reason, Egypt's regional security role in the Sudanese conflict, through the assurance of the conduct of security interdependence among member states within North Africa potentially strengthens Egypt's regional power status.

2. Theoretical Framework

This paper employs the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), as a theoretical framework necessary for analysing Egypt's regional security role, in the Sudan conflict. Waever (2004) suggests that the RSCT "*is an analytical scheme for structuring how security concerns tie together in a regional formation*" where geographical neighbourliness is the factor of paramount importance. The RSCT is defined as "a set of units whose major processes of securitization, de-securitization or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another (Buzan, Waever & Wilde 1998, p.201). In this sense, the RSCT advances a "*we feeling*" and sense of belonging among member states regarding security issues in a

region. Thus, every member state within a region must consider the security issues of each other a pressing issue which calls for cooperative intervention effort.

Coupled with the RSCT is the application of the securitization theory in this paper, to explain how regional powers consider security issues in a region. The securitization theory is relevant since Egypt's regional power agenda centers on how it approaches and tackles security issues in the region. The main argument of the securitization theory is that security is a (illocutionary) speech act, that solely by uttering 'security' something is being done (Taureck 2006). Thus, 'it is by labelling something a security issue that it becomes one' (Wæver 2004: 13). The extent to which Egypt labels the ongoing Darfur conflict a security issue, would go a long way towards creating attention in North Africa especially among member states, and helping Egypt achieve its ambition of regaining a regional power status while simultaneously maintaining peace and order in the region.

In securitization theory, a securitizing actor claims a right to take extraordinary measures in ensuring the referent object's survival as long as the referent object's existence is labelled a threat in the region (Taureck 2006). Similarly, Egypt can act as a securitizing actor by labelling the Darfur crisis as a threatening issue in the region and take up extraordinary measures, collectively calling on members in the region to help maintain order and peace in the Darfur crisis. Once this is ensured, the security issue is seen to have moved out of the sphere of normal politics into the realm of emergency politics, where it can be dealt with swiftly and without the normal (democratic) rules and regulations of policy-making (Taureck 2006). It also serves as an opportunity for Egypt to gain attention in North Africa, once it successfully brings order into the region.

Wæver (2002, p.251) further opines that, treating something a security issue is always a matter of choice; political choice and this choice is actualized through securitizing discursive practice of labelling something a security threat. Therefore "security is the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics" (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, 1998: 23). It is therefore incumbent on Egypt to relabel the ongoing Darfur crisis as a security issue and also serve as the securitizing actor in the region, ready to ensure security interdependence among member states with the sole aim of bringing peace and order in Darfur and North Africa at large.

The RSCT and the securitization theory hence, without any shreds of doubts, are used in this research to explore the perception on the Sudan Conflict in North Africa through regional security roles and interdependence among member states within the region. Attention is especially given to Egypt's regional security role with a collaborative effort from member states and how this can lead to cooperation and order in the North African region, while Egypt indirectly reaffirms its status as a regional power.

3. Research Design

This paper focuses on the Sudan conflict in the Darfur region between the periods of 2003 and 2015. The application of the RSCT and the securitization theory in this research proposes two hypotheses. First, if Egypt considers the Sudan conflict as a security issue in the region which needs to be addressed collectively by member states such as Chad, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya in the region, then, Egypt's intervention in this crisis reaffirms its regional power status. Second, the extent to which Egypt has recognition among member states within the region through its regional security role reinforces and reinstates Egypt's regional status and goes a long way to sustainably restore peace and order in the Darfur conflict, which ultimately, leads to promoting cooperation the region.

The case study is divided into four sections. The first section provides a brief history on the origins of the conflict in Sudan. The second part is an assessment of Egypt's influence in North Africa

with a focus on its regional security role in the Sudan conflict. The third section applies the two hypotheses in order to investigate the consequences of Egypt's regional security role in the Darfur crisis and its chances of reaffirming regional power status. The final section concludes the paper.

4. Case Study:

a. Origin of the Darfur Conflict in Sudan

The Western part of Sudan (Darfur) has experienced a long history of armed conflict since it gained independence in 1956. It has been a scene of a bloody conflict which has led to the death of hundreds of thousands of people and the displacement of more than two million people (Sikainga 2009). This conflict originated from an impulsive combination of environmental, political, and economic factors (Sakainga 2009; Jackson 2012).

Though environmental degradation and competition over resources can be understood as primary causes leading to the conflict in Darfur, the ongoing carnage is also a product of a long history of ethnic marginalization and manipulation by Sudan's ruling elites (Sakainga 2009). The Darfur crisis is an outcome of Khartoum elites' attempt to obtain absolute control of national wealth and power over the entire Sudan. This led to structural violence in the form of pervasive discrimination, marginalization and inequality, bringing resentment and resistance which triggered overt violence (Quach 2004). The Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), and its military wing; the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), led the rebellion in the South, presenting itself as the defender of all marginalized groups in the country and raised the slogan of "New Sudan" (Sakainga 2009).

This conflict which recently worsened in 2003 reached its peak when the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) rebel groups began fighting the government of Sudan, which they blamed for oppressing and segregating Darfur's non-Arab population. The two main rebel groups took it upon themselves to demand, improved infrastructure in the region, proceeds from oil wealth, equal representation of government and an end to the economic disparity between non – Arabs (Black Africans) and Arabs in Sudan (Nwazota 2008).

As a way of responding to these accusations, the government of Sudan was reported to have carried out a campaign of ethnic cleansing against Darfur's non-Arabs, supplying the Janjaweed militia to combat the rebels (Flint & Lefkow 2004). This allowed the militia to target civilians in attacks creating instability generally in Sudan. It also created a prolonged fierce contest between the government of Sudan and the rebels. The inability of either party to achieve a decisive victory, the growing unpopularity of the Sudanese regime coupled with economic hardships called for a peace agreement between the Sudanese government and the rebel groups (Sikainga 2009).

In 2005, a peace negotiation to end this Sudanese conflict took place in Kenya, backed by the Internal Departmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the United Nations and the government of the United States, allowing the two parties sign a peace accord which came to be known as the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) (Høigilt & Rolandsen, 2010). The CPA was hailed for ending the bloodshed and destruction that were raging in the South for several decades (Sakainga 2009). However, the CPA was also criticized for its focus only on the North-South conflict and hostilities between regular forces, and to some extent the militias associated with political parties, ignoring the grievances of other marginal regions such as Darfur, the East, and other opposition groups (Rolandsen 2010). The failure of this Agreement to deal with all of the regional crises and tensions was one of the principal reasons behind the outbreak of the rebellion in Darfur (Sakainga 2009). Upon mounting pressures from the UN, the African Union, and the external actors, the

Sudanese government and the Darfur rebels agreed to hold a series of peace talks in Nigeria, which led to the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) in 2006 (Netabay 2009). However, the agreement was signed by only one rebel group and was rejected by the rest who argued that the DPA was a bad deal for Darfur (Sakainga 2009). Peace processes and talks have hence failed to succeed since the Darfur crisis in Sudan, escalating the conflict into what the United Nations and United States describe respectively as the "*world's worst humanitarian crisis*" and "*genocide*" (Sakainga 2009).

The current situation in Darfur does not allow for much optimism. The peace process is frustrated by the foot-dragging of the Sudanese government, the fragmentation of the rebels, and the lack of a strong resolve by the international community (Sakainga 2009). The failure of both warring parties to reach an agreement through various peace talks and negotiations by the international community and other neighbouring states like Chad therefore leaves the resolution of the Sudan conflict in the hands of Sudan's own neighbours and regional actors. These actors have the responsibility to intervene in the crisis and collectively treat it as a regional issue which affects every member in the region. It particularly calls for the security role of other regional actors who have not yet intervened intensely in the Darfur crisis, especially a country like Egypt, who aspires to reaffirm its status in this region.

The following section of this paper assesses Egypt's regional security role so far in the Sudan conflict since 2003, focusing on how Egypt's security intervention effort in the conflict reaffirms its lost regional power status in North Africa.

4. A Review of the Case Study

b. North Africa: Egypt

The North African region as described by the United Nations is comprised and uniquely composed of seven countries and territories: Egypt, Algeria, Morocco, Libya, Sudan, Tunisia, and Western Sahara. Among these seven countries, only Libya, along with a distant neighbour, Chad, have clearly made significant attempts despite their failures, through peace talks and agreements to curb the ongoing conflict in the western part of Sudan. For example, Chadian pressure on the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), Darfur's leading rebel group, and Qatari facilitation of negotiations between the Khartoum government and JEM, led to the signing of a framework agreement between the two parties in Doha on 23 February 2010 (Høigilt & Rolandsen, 2010).

Egypt's regional power status in North Africa is currently weakened by its experience with political uprising and civil dissensions in 2011 (Abdou & Zaazou, 2013). A new Egyptian administration has employed diplomatic steps in foreign policy initiatives promoting signs of increased investment and economic growth with the aim to push forward and reaffirm Egypt's weakened regional power status in North Africa (Høigilt & Rolandsen, 2010). These measures, nonetheless, have proven futile.

Egyptian regional power status is further diminished by this ongoing conflict in the Western Sudan Province of Darfur, as no sustainable efforts have been initiated by Egypt to intervene in order to bring peace and order in the region into the region. Egypt has not exhibited enough regional security action or role since the Darfur crisis. Though indirectly Egypt regards Sudan as its own backyard and is in general highly critical of other countries' engagement in Darfur, Egypt has not remained as an active political player in the Darfur conflict (Høigilt & Rolandsen, 2010). Its reluctance to take a more active position in relation to Darfur contrasts with its security involvement in earlier decades. In the 1970s and 1980s, when Libya succeeded in increasing its regional power status by weakening the authority of Chad and Sudan, and entering into alliance with Ethiopia and South Yemen, Egypt opposed this action by Libya at the time. Egypt was unwilling to see a radical and unpredictable Arab

leader rising to prominence in its environment and hence viewed Libya's policies as catastrophic and a looming danger. As a result, together with Sudan and Chad, Egypt chose to actively assist these governments to thwart the Libyan agenda by Gaddafi at the time. However, two decades on, the peak of the Darfur conflict between 2003-2005 did not present Egypt with any grave security threats, and this could probably be the reason why Egypt's role in the conflict so far has been little.

Egypt's most significant contributions presently have only been humanitarian aid and peacekeeping soldiers to the United Nations African Union Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) force (Høigilt & Rolandsen, 2010). However, in May 2010, Egypt suddenly stepped up its involvement by hosting Justice Equality Movement (JEM) leader Khalil Ibrahim, who turned to Cairo in dissatisfaction with the way the Doha talks were handled by Qatar. This leader claimed the Qatari mediators favored the Khartoum side, and therefore sought to involve different actors (Høigilt & Rolandsen, 2010). Aside from receiving Ibrahim, Egypt has so far been cautious, and it remains to be seen whether or not the current Egyptian regime under Abdel Fattah El-Sisi will keep following up on the peace initiatives which were pencilled earlier in the past decades.

The apparent collapse of the Doha peace talks and the return of the JEM rebel group to Egypt, puts Egyptian foreign-policy makers in a contradictory situation. On one hand, the situation is an opportunity for Egypt to further its goals in regaining regional diplomatic prestige; this is even more tempting since Egypt is widely perceived among Sudanese observers to have lost political clout. On the other hand, Egypt's further involvement in the Doha peace talk process is unseen since Qatar has already been complimented by all parties, including external factors and or actors such as the African Union and the UN, in its magnanimous efforts with the peace talks. This challenge probably explains why Egyptian officials have been reticent on this conflict issue (Høigilt & Rolandsen, 2010).

A complex mix of internal and external pressures influencing Egyptian foreign policy makes it difficult to gauge Cairo's room for manoeuvre when it comes to getting the Darfur peace talks back on track. This narrow view of Egypt's security interests might suggest that Egypt should not be concerned with peace processes in Darfur. However, in a holistic and long-term perspective, Egypt has much to gain from taking a more active role. This would, for example, increase Egypt's international standing and assist in stemming destabilizing tendencies that go beyond the borders of the Darfur region (Høigilt & Rolandsen, 2010). For Egypt to undertake such involvement, however, will require the mobilization of considerable sincerity; political, diplomatic and genuine support from neighbours in the North African region.

Hence, the next part of this paper focuses on how Egypt could attain its regional power agenda through regional security roles in the Darfur conflict. It explains this using the Regional Security Complex and Securitization Theory as effective frameworks for Egypt to regain its regional power status.

5. Reaffirming Egypt's Regional Power Status Through its Regional Security Roles in Darfur

There have been many signs of a reinvigorated Egyptian foreign policy. The foreign policy which was earlier pursued by the Morsi regime is reported to have put Egypt's national security interests in great danger and jeopardized regional stability (El – Adawy 2013). Consequently, in the first few months following the collapse of the Morsi administration, the interim government under Sisi was also trying to repair this damage but sadly, Egypt's own internal squabbles does not grant it the luxury of playing significant roles as it had had to grapple with both internal and external security concerns. Egypt seems poised to play a prominent role beyond its own borders, but the hope of

resuming the sort of regional leadership that it formerly exercised is dependent not only on its ability to demonstrate a strong economy, good foreign policy and material capability, but also play an active regional security role in the region, helping to resolve particularly the Darfur crisis collectively with its neighbouring countries.

Reaffirming a lost regional power status involves many efforts beyond the already known criteria of regional power acquisition such as material capability. Assessing Egypt's regional power status from its material capability and geographical position could have undeniably made Egypt's struggle for such status a done deal, especially regarding Egypt's position back in history as a major player whose material and leadership capabilities was a channel for other Arab countries (including Sudan) into the United States and Europe (Høigilt & Rolandsen, 2010). Regardless of the current challenges confronting Egypt since 2011, there still exists more hope for such a country to rise up and reclaim the lost glory which was once its hallmark in the North African region. Optimistic through Egypt's new foreign policy, it rests on such a country to also take it as a challenge to be more active and involving in security issues in the region. The nature of Egypt's commitment to security issues in the region, through security intervention in conflicts goes a long way to helping the country reclaim its regional power status. As a result, Egypt's quest to reaffirm its regional power status hinders on how it effectively employs the Regional Security Complex and Securitization Theory (RSCT) in the North African region.

The RSCT is necessary as a theory of regional cooperation, which can help bring states within a particular region together for carrying out a common security discourse. This means the security of each actor in a region interrelates with the security of other actors and exercising this effectively leads to intense security interdependence within the region (Lake 2009). Though Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, Sudan, and Morocco are all located and considered as a part and parcel of North Africa and each of these states have equal ambitions of rising as a regional power, it rests on an initiator like Egypt whose chances are maximum per its new foreign policy measures, to take up this task of uniting all neighbouring states in this region to collectively tackle the persisting security issue in Darfur. This is possible when Egypt begins by ensuring that the Darfur situation is promoted and discussed regionally as a security issue affecting North Africa and not just Sudan's national security threat. Appropriately applying this suggests Egypt will need to articulate Sudan's conflict in political and economic discourses in order to attract necessary attention to this issue, which will in turn, attract recognition among member states towards Egypt's emergent role in diplomatic intervention in North Africa.

Though this conflict has seen the intense intervention of some distant neighbouring states such as Chad and Libya, including the organization of peace talks and agreements among the warring factions, these efforts to some extent, did not completely fulfil the task of ensuring peace in North Africa. Egypt has on the other hand certainly played a less active role but, this country's (Egypt's) new leadership cum foreign policies, presents its readiness to move beyond its borders to intervene in security issues in North Africa. Therefore, Egypt's efforts to reclaim its lost political clout in the region lies in its ability to promote security interdependence among member states in the North African region by tacitly acknowledging that, security issues affecting one member is an issue affecting regional security.

Furthermore, the securitization theory is crucial in this case for Egypt to succeed in its quest for regional power status. Securitization in international relations studies is the process of state actors transforming subjects into *matters of 'security'*: an extreme version of politicization that enables extraordinary means to be used in the name of security (Buzan, Waever, Wilde, 1998). As Buzan, Waever, Wilde, (1998) assert, "issues that become securitized do not necessarily represent issues that are essential to the objective survival of a state, but rather represent issues where someone was

successful in constructing an issue into an existential problem". Egypt must, therefore, gear all efforts towards success in constructing security issues in this Darfur conflict.

Securitization studies aim to understand "*who securitizes (securitizing actor), on what issues (threats), for whom (referent object), why, with what results, and not least, under what conditions.*" (Buzan, Waever, Wilde, 1998 p.32). Therefore, successful securitization consists of three steps. These are: *identification of existential threats, emergency action and effects on inter-unit relations by breaking free of rules* (Buzan et al. 1998: 6). To present an issue as an existential threat is to say that: "*if we do not tackle this problem, everything else will be irrelevant (because we will not be here or will not be free to deal with it in our own way)*" (Buzan et al. 1998: 24).

This first step towards successful securitization is called a securitizing move (Taureck 2006). A securitizing move is in theory, an option open to any unit because, only once an actor has convinced an audience (inter-unit relations) of its legitimate need to go beyond otherwise binding rules and regulations (emergency mode), can we identify a case of securitization (Taureck 2006). In practice, securitization is thus, far from being open to all units and their respective subjective threats. Rather, it is largely based on power and capability and therewith the means to socially and politically construct a threat (Taureck 2006).

Egypt is likely to succeed as long as it makes the first security move to consider the conflict in Darfur as a security issue which affects every member in the North African region and hence, proceeds to label Sudan's conflict as a security issue requiring collective efforts by each and every member state. This would further push for an emergency action and create a collective effect among member states in the region to join all hands in bringing peace and order to the ongoing Darfur crisis. This security role or action which Egypt needs to adopt however, rests on the extent to which it has influence on those member states and how it demonstrates a character of control through recognition in the region.

6. Sudan's Recognition of Egypt's Political Character in North Africa

To ensure security interdependence among member states through an active regional security role in the Darfur crisis, is not the only means whereby Egypt can regain regional power status. Egypt may be unsuccessful as Chad and Libya, if Sudan especially fails to recognize Egypt's security responsibilities and political character it conducts in the region. Hence, aside playing an active regional security role in a region, Egypt needs to also carve a strong political character which would allow for recognition of its roles and acceptance by the member states within the region. This would help boost Egypt's status and facilitate the security responsibilities it plays in the Darfur conflict.

Recognition of roles is built from the character of the aspiring regional power, which allows member states within the region to acknowledge and accept the authority of the regional power. The recognition and acceptance of a regional power to some large extent, also rests on the member states within the region, and their readiness to accept the conduct and actions of regional power's political character as right in a region. Political character here is defined as a feature of a regional power, which makes its actions and conduct legitimate to member states in a region and allows for the acceptance of authority of such aspiring regional power. Some of these legitimate features have been described by Stewart – Ingersoll & Frazier (2012, p. 14) as states that perform a function within their neighbourhoods, identify and frame security problems and emphasize those that present shared threats, lead in the development of mechanisms through which such regional security threats can be managed and play a significant role in employing these mechanisms in order to address such problems. Cooper et. al (1993) assert that the security roles of these aspiring regional powers must be able to carve a

niche for them. 'Niche diplomacy' he defines as the capacity of regional powers to increase their regional influence and acceptance through the employment of their specific capabilities (e.g. peacekeeping). Therefore, regional powers have the responsibility of keeping their backyard neat and orderly sometimes with a measure of support by great powers dependent on states in the region (Flemes 2007).

Egypt, to all intents and purposes, as it stands now, needs to carve a new character for itself in the region as it aspires to become a regional power. Looking back at Egypt's past records of engaging in political uprisings and civil dissensions, makes the candidature of Egypt highly suspicious and extremely questionable with regards to becoming a rising regional power in the North African region. The Arab Spring in Egypt brought about negative implications which tarnished the country's image even on the international scene. Furthermore, Egypt has its own internal problems as a country which needs to be solved owing to five years after the Arab Spring, which left the country on shaky grounds financially, while unemployment became widespread with persisting discontentment among the masses. This has recently been coupled with an ISIS-linked insurgency which grows with terror attacks becoming more blatant and frequent. All these internal problems within Egypt, reduces its confidence to peep into the affairs of other member states within the North Africa region. Egypt has a great task of clearing the negative image it has earlier on won for itself during the Arab Spring in order to rise and take on its regional power status. The fear and uncertainty that member states like Libya, and neighbours such as Chad and especially Sudan itself, would remind Egypt of its past records of intractable conflicts and use that against the country, puts Egypt in a very tight and uncomfortable position to take up a befitting political character which would help regain its regional power status.

All these and rightly so, attest to why Egypt has not played enough regional security roles in North Africa, as it aims to reaffirm its status as a regional power. Unfortunately, Egypt's material capability is not worth enough to reaffirm its lost regional power status in North Africa and hence, calls for Egypt to go beyond those features, considering especially active regional security roles seriously.

Conclusion

Acquiring regional power status has been a major issue of interest in international relations, providing a long-standing debate on criteria to its attainment. Whereas many have argued on different kinds of criteria that regional powers use to acquire their status, pointing mostly to material capabilities like wealth, GDP, strong economy, leadership capabilities, soft power and geographical position of a state, this paper reviews an additional feature for acquiring regional power status stressing on the aspiring state's role in security issues in the region, collectively ensuring security interdependence among member states.

Using the conflict in the western part of Sudan (Darfur) as a case study, this paper has suggested the role Egypt, (which was once a 'darling' to most Arab countries but due to the Arab Spring lost its regional power status) must do in order to regain its status in the North Africa region. This paper has argued that Egypt's ability to rise and take on its regional power status is contingent on two main hypotheses. Primarily, Egypt must be ready to take up a more active regional security role in the North African region, making sure that the security issue of any member in the region becomes a concern for all other member states within the same region. In this case, Egypt must be involved in the ongoing Darfur conflict in order to ensure peace and order within Sudan to be specific, and the larger North African region as a whole, in particular. This security role by Egypt in the Darfur crisis would further bolster its ambition to reclaim the lost status as a regional power.

The successful nature of Egypt's regional security role further lies in how it gains recognition from other member states in the region. Egypt would succeed in its regional power agenda, so long as it gains a political character which allows for acceptance and recognition from the other member states in the region. This political character would then allow Egypt to succeed in bringing peace and order in the Darfur conflict. Hence, Egypt must build a character worthy of emulation by all, which would attract member states within the North African region to accept, acknowledge and recognize its authority.

These hypotheses are supported by the RSCT and Securitization Theory which suggest the need for every member state to consider security interdependence within a region as key, and further regard the security issue affecting a member within the region as an issue that affects every member state in the region. Connecting it to the Sudan conflict through a case study, it has been observed that, Egypt so far has not played any active role since the ongoing Sudan conflict, in spite of sharing close borders with Sudan. Yet still, Egypt has intentions of reaffirming its regional power status which has been lost. Also, Egypt's candidature as regional power in North Africa is without doubt suspicious, and extremely questionable owing to the fact that it had previously engaged in similar conditions of war and conflict and its constant apprehension & fear that member states in the region would use it as a blackmail tool to thwart its regional power ambition. This has stifled Egypt's confidence to play a more active security role in the region. Egypt, therefore, in the face of all these surmountable quagmires, has the challenge of carving a new political look for itself in the North African region as it aspires to regain regional power status. Internally, Egypt as a country is also faced with few challenges especially since the end of the Arab Spring and civil dissensions. Though a new government with a fresh but questionable renewal of mandate under el-Sisi is trying to put things in place particularly regarding Egypt's new foreign policy measures, there is more ahead for Egypt to build this new political character in order to gain recognition and acceptance from member states like Algeria, Morocco, Chad, Libya and Tunisia.

The paper concludes that, Egypt has a long way to go in its regional power agenda, due to the fact that it has been unable to play a more active regional security role of ensuring security interdependence collectively among member states in the region and its inability to put on a new political character in the region which would allow member states accord it the necessary acceptance and recognition it deserves as a regional power. Until Egypt resolves these challenges, its regional power ambition remains a stagnant agenda (mirage) which lacks the necessary policies for reaching such goal.

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