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*** Lessons from the Downfall of US-Supported Dictators: What can be done by the Ethiopian Diaspora who live in the “Land of the Free?”**

By Maru Gubena

As will be clear in the following paragraphs, the cardinal foundation of US foreign policy is its own multiple and complex interests. It might, therefore, not be wrong to assume that the views and disillusionments expressed by some Ethiopians towards current US policy towards Ethiopia, and its close ties with the unelected leadership of Meles Zenawi in particular, are based simply on beliefs that the United States is a democratic country, welcomes a disproportionate number of immigrants annually from all over the world, and assists countries to follow the path of democracy, even helping people to free themselves from totalitarian regimes; or that the US itself may invade a country and overthrow the seated and functioning government, and arrest or even kill the entire leadership as in Grenada (1983), Panama (1989), and Iraq (2003). The question that deserves to be raised here is then: when the US takes such measures and invades countries, is it to democratize the countries in question and help their people, or is it on behalf of its own many-sided interests? The majority of world society, especially those from developing countries who see this question clearly, would argue that the United States has always and is waging both diplomatic and physical wars against certain countries and leaders for its own economic interests and military and ideological reasons. It is additionally true that the effective implementation of a democratic system in a given country, including the decentralization of power, respect for human rights, the achievement of women's equality, economic prosperity and political stability cannot be said to be necessarily in the interest of the United States and determinant factors in support to a seated government. Instead support depends on what the United States needs and the response to its demands by the country in question.

Let me provide an example to clarify the above argument. In Tanzania, the transfer of power from one governing party or individual to another based on undisputed decisions by the voice of the people has been an indispensable part of the political culture for the last decade. Though Tanzania is not a prosperous nation, the country has been politically stable since its independence from Britain in 1961. As can be recalled, the government of Tanzania has repeatedly declined US requests to cooperate fully in the war against the forces of Usama Bin Laden. The undemocratic and unelected dictator, Meles Zenawi, however, has enthusiastically and joyfully embraced these US requests, with the aim of being rewarded with substantial financial and military support from the Bush administration, which Meles can use to jail and kill more Ethiopian civilians. Due to the profound interest that the United States attaches to the unelected regime of Meles Zenawi, the Bush administration will not be willing to open its eyes to see the heinous crimes being perpetrated by the ruthless forces of Meles. But imagine: if five or ten students were to be killed on Friday by the police or special forces of Tanzania, the Bush administration would make all possible efforts towards an emergency gathering of all member states of the United Nations, and do its best to formulate a written, threatening statement agreed reluctantly by most member states, for possible economic sanctions to be imposed upon the country in question.

It should therefore be abundantly clear that for any US administration the determining factor in whether to finance and support or not to finance and support any regime in any country is not

how good and honest or murderous the leadership is, or what the regime or leadership can do for its people, but rather, what that country and its leadership can do for America. As the historical evidence makes clear, previous US administrations have never been willing to move an inch to review their foreign policy towards a nation-state where they are convinced they have a tremendous economic interest and political, geo-military strategic and ideological reasons – no matter what heinous crimes are being committed or detrimental socio-economic policies are being formulated and implemented by the leadership, and despite massive and uninterrupted protests by the people of the country in question against a seated totalitarian leadership that the US is financing and supporting.

It is for such deep rooted reasons, related to the glue that holds together United States foreign policy, that a goodly number of internationally well-known world dictators who have been financially assisted, morally supported and militarily equipped and trained have met their end not due to diplomatic efforts of the United States or sanctions it has imposed, but instead due to the rising up of effectively coordinated forces of the people – the oppressed – alone. Where diplomatic efforts and sanctions have been imposed, it has been because these actions were perceived as coinciding with US interests.

As can be recalled, during the Cold War, the United States was particularly fearful of the winds and ideological influences coming from the former Soviet Union and its allies. Consequently, attempts and efforts repeatedly made by the people of many countries to be rid of their repressive and self installed US supported dictators were persistently resisted and suppressed by every successive US administration. The historical records that will be briefly discussed below are cases in point.

Cuba. A memorable case is the Cuban revolution of the 1950s, led by Fidel Castro; he later met his future indispensable comrade, Che Guevara, who was originally from Argentina and a medical doctor by profession. The United States made no protest when General Fulgencio Batista quickly became aware that he was losing the election, interrupted the vote counting and staged a military coup d'état in 1952, and continued terrorizing the people of Cuba with his repressive rule for some seven years. Fearful of Moscow's undesired influence in countries among its close neighbours, the US became actively engaged in helping the dictator Batista with the sole objective of interrupting the progressive expansion of the forces of the people's revolution that was being waged against him. The United States worked hard to prevent the Cuban revolution, supplying General Batista with sophisticated warplanes, ships and tanks. Despite the incalculable material, political and moral support General Batista was able to enjoy from President Dwight Eisenhower, however, the coordinated people's force – the revolution – was irreversible, and on 1 January 1959, Castro's forces seized total control of Havana, and Batista was forced to flee the country with his entire family.

Chile. It is also true, as can be read in recently declassified US documents related to events in Chile, that the plans and strategies, including the organization of the armed forces led by General Augusto Pinochet to depose the democratically elected President Salvador Allende, were ordered and orchestrated by President Richard Nixon of the United States himself, with his Secretary of State, Dr. Henry Kissinger, and well-known select CIA agents. The reason for the United States to initiate the overthrow of Allende's government in September 1973 was simply Allende's socialist orientation and his socio-political and economic programme. President Allende and many of his colleagues were immediately assassinated by the brutal new US-installed regime of General Pinochet. Thousands of Chilean intellectuals, students and youth were ruthlessly

executed and their corpses thrown into the sea from military aircraft; huge mass graves have been uncovered. Some well-known opponents of General Pinochet's government were hunted down and murdered with the full assistance of the US administration, in Latin America as well as North America, including Washington DC.

After General Pinochet lost the "yes or no" referendum to continue or discontinue his rule in 1988, which triggered the possibility of a multi-party election, a presidential election was held in 1989. This ended Pinochet's long and painfully repressive rule in the land of Chile.

The Philippines. Having extended military bases to various places in the Philippines and played the role of a semi-colonial power in that country, where American citizens and members of the US armed forces have enjoyed a special, superior status above the people of the country, the United States also served as a staunch right hand to one of the world's previous dictators. President Ferdinand Marcos ruled the Philippines with an iron hand. He came to power as a democratically elected president of the Philippines through an election in 1965, and was reelected in 1969. In response to increasing civil strife in the early 1970s against his brutal rule, former President Marcos introduced a new constitution and declared martial law, imposing virtually dictatorial rule on the people of the Philippines. The early 1970s were additionally marked by a considerable and widespread corruption among government officials and by growing worldwide criticism related to the extravagance of the President's family, especially that of his wife, Imelda Marcos. Despite the deteriorating economy, the accelerating tensions and the outcries of the people of the Philippines, the United States government continued to provide President Marcos with protection, including financial, military and information that was vitally important in helping to hunt down citizens of the Philippines whom Marcos considered a potential threat to his regime and his personal survival. The highly respected and loved opposition leader, Benigno Aquino was assassinated by the forces of President Marcos at Manila international airport on August 1983, while returning from medical treatment in the United States. This became a galvanizing force and a source of unification among opposition parties in support of the widow of the assassinated leader, Corazon Aquino, who ran against President Marcos in the 1986 presidential election. During this election period, the support of the general population for Corazon Aquino was well coordinated and mobilized. Having observed the irreversible course of the people's power and of the revolution, the United States under the administration of President Ronald Reagan suddenly appeared to be in difficulty with respect to continued help to the dictator. Yet, despite the full and enthusiastic support Corazon Aquino received from the votes of the population of the Philippines, and despite the unexpected interruption in US support, the dictator declared himself the winner of the 1986 presidential election.

Hundreds of thousands of angry urban Filipino protesters were certain of blatant election fraud, and went to hunt down and hang the dictator. As they were attempting to storm Marcos's residential palace, US diplomats plus US special forces arranged his safe departure, together with his immediate family, to Hawaii, where he died three years later.

The same story is seen in many African cases. As will be briefly discussed in the following pages, United States involvement in the internal affairs of African countries has not been limited to the provision of unlimited support and personal protection to those African dictators who have become US favorites – with their most repressive policies, crafted to silence and rule their people for life – but goes as far as searching for and training those who will be willing to serve its multiple and long-term interests and deposing those whom US policy makers believe are unwilling to carry out US interests and orders as desired.

Ghana. Although the evidence of a direct US role in the organization and execution of the military coup d'état of 24 February 1966, which overthrew a giant of a leader and an African hero whose struggle and demand for immediate independence for his native country had been granted on 6 March 1957 by the former colonial power, Britain – making Ghana the first African nation to gain its independence – has not been as well-documented and abundant as in many other cases, recently declassified US and British documents indicate the involvement of US high officials and the CIA in the construction of arrangements for the demise of Nkrumah's leadership, along with his inspiration for the political and economic liberation of Africa. For a goodly number of Africans who strongly believe there was US involvement in deposing their leader and cutting short his intentions and the hopes of the people for an enormous amount of work, however, the coincidence of the coup event with an urgent telegram is an obvious evidence of US involvement. This telegram was received by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah from the US President, Lyndon Johnson, a little more than two weeks before the coup, and stated that the United States would cease bombing Hanoi so that Nkrumah's aircraft could land safely in Hanoi and he could continue his peace mission to end the American war in Vietnam. For many other African experts and western diplomats, this coincidence has remained a permanent source of bewilderment and continued to smolder in the hearts and minds of all politically conscious Africans. The untimely interruption of the work of an African freedom fighter was felt everywhere in Africa and continued to be a source of concern among Africans, due especially to the far reaching repercussions that the coup and the eventual death of Kwame Nkrumah himself on 27 April 1972 in Bucharest, Romania, have had on the progress of Africa's political development and the intended unification of African as a single country under a single leadership.

The economic and political repercussions and the trauma of the coup have been heavy and hard to bear for Ghana and its people. Ghana remained politically instable and economically weak for over two decades after the coup, as must have been the desire of the United States and its allies. Its people were impoverished and in some cases were undesirable to the international community, and humiliated when they sought employment in foreign counties such as Libya or the west, or even as far away as Asia or the Far East, as a means of survival.

Thanks to the determination and strong leadership of President Jerry Rawlings, his love for Ghana and its people and for Africa in general, the political landscape of the country and the living standard of its people have changed in a dramatic fashion. The status of Ghana within the international community has also changed. Today Ghana is ruled by a democratically elected president. Under the current leadership of President John Kufuor, the country's economy continues to grow, reaching an annual rate of over five percent in 2005, and the people of Ghana have gained a reputation as a hardworking people who are self respecting, peace loving and above all proud of their country and of themselves.

Starting in the late 1950s and early 1960s the struggle for political liberation in African countries coincided with the expansion of the Cold War, otherwise known as the East-West conflict. In this period, African liberation leaders and freedom fighters, especially those demanding not just political liberation but the complete independence of their countries and of Africa in general, continued to be victims of European colonial powers and the United States.

Congo. Patrice Lumumba, the first democratically elected Prime Minister of the then (and now again) Congo, truly an African nationalist and liberator, was one of the victims of conspiracies among the US, Britain and Belgium due to his ideological differences with the west, his love of his people and his country. The energetic and highly devoted African nationalist, Patrice Lumumba, was murdered on January 1961, just a little more than one and a half years after his

objective of independence from Belgium for his country was realized on 30 June 1960. Four months earlier he had been overthrown from his position as Prime Minister of Congo by his own armed forces, led by his number one enemy, Colonel Joseph Mobutu (who later became known as President Mobutu Sese Seko), in full cooperation with the United States and the government of Belgium. Historical documents, including photos taken before the coup showing Colonel Mobutu with high officials in the US administration, demonstrate the physical presence of both CIA agents and US high officials, their involvement with the power structures and networks of Mobutu and work to strengthen these networks. An enormous number of books authored by Europeans and Americans also clearly demonstrate the involvement and role of the United States in organizing plans for the coup and the eventual assassination Patrice Lumumba himself.

According to historical documents, Mobutu Sese Seko was selected, trained and heavily rewarded by the United States, was made a personal and close friend of many high US officials, and was provided with information that was indispensable in hunting down, torturing and destroying his suspected opponents. Throughout his brutal rule of over two and a half decades, Mobutu Sese Seko executed his political rivals and secessionists publicly, in front of thousands of innocent children. With the sole purpose of setting examples and terrorizing the entire population of Zaire, youth and intellectuals who opposed the inhuman rule of Mobutu Sese Seko were hanged before huge audiences. Despite the many debacles facing the people of Zaire, including the heinous crimes perpetrated by Mobutu and his followers against them and Mobutu's embezzlement of over US \$ 6 billion – which was kept in secret European banks, specifically in Swiss banks – the United States remained the undisputed personal friend and supporter, financier and protector of Mobutu Sese Seko, the most cruel of African social animals, due simply to his fanatic pro-America and pro-western ideological stances and his hostile position towards communism and socialist countries. In addition, Mobutu Sese Seko was repeatedly heavily rewarded by the United States and Europe for his long and staunch support of the apartheid system and regime in South Africa – a system that was the enemy of the entire African population – and for his support of Jonas Savimbi, the leader of UNITA.

The closing years of the Cold War are said to have been the most nightmarish period of his era for Mobutu. He realized that his service to western countries might someday be unwanted, so that the United States and its allies might cease their unlimited support. Moreover, it was during this period that the forces of the oppressed started to organize themselves, devising and strengthening their political structures and military strategies. And in fact, due to the end of Cold War and the intensity of the people's war being waged against the regime of Mobutu Sese Seko, the United States and its allies told Mobutu that he was no longer welcome in most western countries. Even his phone calls to US and European officials were unwelcome.

As the now helpless dictator Mobutu Sese Seko became weaker as his health deteriorated day by day, and as the forces of the oppressed, led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, became more coordinated and stronger, the war intensified and the dictator was at last thrown from the back of the oppressed of Zaire on 16 May 1997. And as the internationally known brutal dictator Mobutu Sese Seko was no longer welcome in the United States and other European countries, he was forced to exile himself and his family to Morocco. He died in the same year, September 1997, in Rabat, Morocco.

It is therefore be emphatically emphasized that while the administration of the United States does not hesitate to engage in planning and organizing the overthrow of a democratically elected leader, including their elimination for ideological differences or to further its own interests, embracing and supporting an established repressive dictator who is willing to follow its footsteps

is also an easy decision for the United States. Personal charisma and the devotion a leader may show to his or her country and the well-being of its people are not among the criteria used by the United States in deciding , to embrace and support a particular leader or country.

Liberia. Samuel Kanyon Doe, the former President and dictator of Liberia, a man with little or no personality whose personal and educational background and policies show enormous similarities to those of TPLF leader Meles Zanawi, is a case in point. Doe, having just achieved the position of a sergeant, staged a military coup on 12 April 1980, deposing and killing the democratically elected president, President William R. Tolbert, Jr. and his associates in the presidential palace. Doe, who originated from the Krahn ethnic tribe – characterized in Liberia as rural and deprived – quickly established a military dictatorship based on ethnicity called the ***People’s Redemption Council***, and nominated himself as its head. Having openly declared that his ideological stance was pro the United States and the west in general, Doe himself and his ethnically based policy were quickly and fully embraced and supported by the United States. It made no difference that since the very day Doe came to power, Liberia had been marked by mass executions of those associated with the previous government as well as others perceived as opponents of his heavy-handed rule. Even his own associates, such as Thomas Weh Syem, the second in command of Doe’s regime, did not escape Doe’s ordeals.

As the massive, heinous crimes he was indiscriminately inflicting upon the innocent people of Liberia continued, some colleagues and allies decided to deny their cooperation and friendship; they escaped him to take up the gun to fight, with the intention of ending the brutal rule of Samuel Kanyon Doe. The downfall of Doe was followed by a civil war that cost over 250,000 human lives, and the dictator of Liberia was eventually captured and killed on the street in Liberia by the guerrilla forces of one of his rivals, Prince Johnson, on 9 September 1990. After 25 years of terrorization and trauma, Liberia is at last politically stable and since November 2005 has a democratically elected leader – a woman, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who is seen by Africans and donor nations as the new hope and inspiration for African women and Africans everywhere.

Exploring the meaning of Ethiopian patriotism and love for Ethiopia: The Urgent Need for Mature Mechanisms

As the six historical cases above clearly show, unless the United States perceives that its own interests are at risk it will never move an inch on grounds of human rights violations or election fraud alone. Even if the victims of the untold crimes and the other oppressed arise and decide to collectively show their teeth, and no matter how many people have been atrociously murdered, mutilated or hung on a daily basis by the dictator of a nation-state, the key question is how the US perceives its interest. This is reinforced by the new phenomenon called “fighting terrorism,” which appears to have replaced the Cold War; if this comes to an end, there will be less reason to support the current Ethiopian regime.

The question is then: Can Ethiopians draw lessons and learn from the long and painful experience of the people in the cases above, especially from the people of the Philippines, Chile and Ghana? They, despite the enormous military superiority and the repressive nature of internationally known totalitarian regimes and despite the incalculable support provided to them by successive US administrations, at last managed to make the terms “coup d’état” and “unelected dictatorship” into history – a thing of the past. Further bewilderment, at least for me and perhaps for many other Ethiopians and friends of Ethiopia as well, is provided by issues that include: why do some

Ethiopians, especially those of the Ethiopian Diaspora residing in the United States, expect to see dramatic measures and actions taken by the Bush administration against the unelected TPLF leadership, when in fact we know quite well that the foundation of US historical and current foreign policies rests on its own multiple long-term interests? Why do we tend to lean so heavily on US foreign policy makers and Congressmen, while looking with depression at their body language, moods and goodwill? Why was it necessary for some of my compatriots in the resistance camp to express their disillusionment and anxiety towards the current US administration so loudly and publicly at this stage, instead of actively and inventively engaging in a search for mechanisms that would help to galvanize Ethiopians at home and abroad to action, and to link our efforts and skills – upon which our resistance against the unelected TPLF leader is entirely dependent?

It is undoubtedly true that engaging in a war against the violent regime of Meles Zenawi by focusing on the diplomatic front, successfully managing to convince the international community of the need to impose economic and military sanctions, including travel restrictions targeted to dominant figures among the TPLF leadership, is the easiest and most peaceful roadmap to follow with the idea of ending the undesired and unelected leadership of Meles Zenawi and removing its longstanding divisive and repressive systems from the backs of peace-loving Ethiopians. However, as various authors and my own previously published articles have clearly indicated, and especially given the multiple short and long-term interests that the US administration is strongly convinced it has in our country and in Meles' repressive leadership in particular, war waged on the diplomatic front will produce little or no fruit and certainly no guarantee of achieving our desired goals, including the immediate release of our undisputed leaders who are currently languishing in the lawless justice and prison systems constructed by the TPLF leadership, and freeing our people from the yoke of this most vindictive regime, unless our diplomatic efforts and peaceful resistance become an effectively coordinated part of a more internal war directed at changing and reorienting our long-existing enemies – certain patterns of our own habits, attitudes and culture towards each other, including our ways of communicating and working together; and unless we make all possible efforts to revive the love and respect, the feelings of patriotism and unity our ancestors had as a group and for each other. We must manage to fashion new power structures and new working mechanisms that will help to strengthen and sharpen our teeth and make us into an immovable force, to be feared and respected by both our friends and enemies.

It is also undeniably true that the tasks and responsibilities of galvanizing our feelings of togetherness, nationalism and our sense of shared responsibilities are complex and difficult, especially compared to many of the activities we have been used to carrying out separately or with just a few individuals or friends and family members. But as we all can possibly agree, working in an isolated, individual way is not just detrimental: in fact it has been and is the common, deep-rooted enemy of all Ethiopians – probably, at least in my view, a more dangerous enemy than the TPLF leadership. The difficulty is especially clear when we are confronted with actual physical interactions, and when we are forced by events in our country to mold and incorporate our views into a single voice and work together side by side. It appears that we often prefer just to speak out about Ethiopia in general, about those we don't know, and listen from afar to the crying voice of those who are directly affected – the local victims of the unelected TPLF regime – without facing those victims physically. Our conventional way of working on the individual level, in small groups or with family members, is a clear sign, a reflection, even an evidence of our inability to be tolerant to each other and work together hand in glove in larger groups. This has become not only a permanent bottleneck to the progress of our resistance and to the achievements of our intended goals, but also an obvious, almost insurmountable opponent that stands in the way of our unity and is responsible for prolonging the life of both our enemies and

their unlawful rules. Since we have not paid attention to these issues, the problems – our seeming inability and unwillingness to learn to debate with each other and compromise, while maintaining mutual respect, loving each other as compatriots and friends who are concerned about common issues; and to be tolerant, able to differentiate issues from questions of individual personalities, while remaining committed to common goals – continue to expand and deepen in our hearts and minds in a fashion that may not be reparable, unless urgent and appropriate measures are taken by concerned and wise Ethiopian fathers and mothers.

It is unfortunately true that there is an urgent need to wage a new war on our own side of the front line. Yes, it is depressing to observe that for many Ethiopians of my generation and those who are younger, in recent times even the meaning of being an Ethiopian, of Ethiopian patriotism and of loving “Ethiopia” has become increasingly confusing. This is quite different from Ethiopians of previous generations. It appears, at least in my own personal observation, that many Ethiopians are simply fond of “Ethiopia” – the land, its flag, the mountains, the rivers, the rocks and stones, and of course, Ethiopia’s longstanding history – but have little or no feeling of attachment or affection for the present people of the country. Indeed, a disproportionately high proportion of Ethiopians today remain vindictive and full of bitterness about each other, persistently reluctant or unable to collectively craft and develop a common working ground and learn to respect and love each other, or to live and work hard not just for individual or family well-being or enrichment, but rather to build a larger “family” with a shared responsibility for *collective* well-being. Yet we walk and sleep with a profound feeling of pride, proud of and leaning heavily and irresponsibly upon the ceaselessly fascinating history of Ethiopia, and proud simply of being the children of those who fought gallantly and decisively against foreign powers, despite the relatively modern and deadly firearms of those powers. Instead it would probably be wise to remember that the reason our ancestors, even with their primitive weapons, were able to forcefully defeat their heavily armed foreign enemies and return them in humiliation to their fortifications, was that they were strongly united by the forces of Ethiopian unity and dignity; they were also deeply nationalistic, in the sense that they loved and respected their Ethiopian compatriots and every piece of land belonging to Ethiopia. This should make it abundantly clear that people cannot live and work together to create a country that is relatively prosperous economically and stable politically if they have not first established the cardinal components of a culture of mutual respect and love – a culture that helps to glue together the differing views, ideas and creativity of the people who live in this nation-state.

What can be done by the Ethiopian Diaspora who live in the “Land of the Free?”

As can be recalled, even though Ethiopian students were in Europe and the United States earlier, the history of the Ethiopian Diaspora began with the upheaval of the bloody 1974 Ethiopian revolution. This can be characterized as the beginning of the darkest years in the history of Ethiopia itself and its people. Over time, internal strife among individuals and groups seeking power continued and became a permanent source of political instability and a bottleneck to the formation of civil societies and the rule of law, including processes of democratization; the fragile economy continued to deteriorate considerably; the number of Ethiopians suffering from poverty and disease increased substantially; and the Ethiopian Diaspora grew to a remarkable level. It has grown not just in numbers but also in socio-economic potential and influence, which extends to both national and international bodies and to influence on both peace and war, through the roles those in the Diaspora play as scientists and academics and in discussions with diplomats.

Regrettably and disappointingly, however, and despite our considerable expansion in numbers, the increasingly percentage who have a high level of education, the economic resources we have been able to earn and are still earning – and despite the respect we have gained from our countries of asylum or immigration as honest, peaceful and hardworking people – the Ethiopian Diaspora lives in a manner comparable to rural or semi-urban Africans who work in industries located in a country ruled by a totalitarian regime where workers are not allowed to establish their own labour unions. Yes, even while living in the so called “land of the free” and in the face of needs that are enormous and urgent, to this day the Ethiopian Diaspora lacks professional organizations and institutions of its own that are capable of operating internationally from their own buildings, with office spaces and trained personnel where socio-economic and political strategies to further the well-being of the many-sided interests of the Ethiopia Diaspora and the complex issues facing our country can be discussed, developed, formulated and carried out. The Ethiopian Diaspora does not have such vitally important and respected organizations and institutions, although they would be conducive to reviving our morale and the lost feelings of patriotism, love and respect that our ancestors had for their country and for each other. They are also needed to help to restore or develop a culture of working and living together in a responsible way, so that we can directly influence and be an indispensable part of the forces of socio-economic and political change in of our country, playing a substantial role in defending each member of our community in times of unexpected difficulties. That is, our current situation is not because we lack the necessary knowledge, professional skills and economic resources, but rather due to the tragic division and disunity that began at the time of the cruel period known as the “Red Terror.” The forces of division and disunity that came into being during the early years of the Ethiopian revolution were gradually expanded and became rife in the hearts and minds of a huge section of Ethiopian society, both at home and abroad, after the failed struggle waged by the Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Party – the EPRP – in an attempt to crush and overthrow the fascistic enemy - the military regime known as the Dergue (Committee).

While stressing with full conviction the urgent need to establish such organizations and institutions, I am absolutely not saying that we should attempt to dominate the societies in which we live, as some feel the western Jews have done. Nor am I saying that the Ethiopian Diaspora requires hundreds of office buildings with tens of thousands of employees in Vienna, Paris, Amsterdam, London and many major cities of the US. What I am simply suggesting is that given the slim prospects most, if not all, Ethiopians living abroad have of returning home, and given the increasing numbers of the Ethiopian Diaspora due both to new arrivals from Ethiopia and to children born into the Diaspora, the creation of means and tools to help in strengthening the bonds we have with our people back home and the culture into which we have been born is indispensable. Establishing organizations and institutions to meet this need – at a minimum, one in Washington DC and one in London, with the necessary financial resources and personnel who are trained in diplomatic and other educational skills – can be a source of pride to all Ethiopians, and a source of hope for the future especially for those defenseless Ethiopians who have not had an opportunity to arm themselves with modern education. Above all, the establishment of professional organizations and institutions of our own will not only decrease the extent of our dependence on devoted volunteer compatriots for day-to-day activities and responsibilities, and serve as a focus, a source of education, a meeting point and an adjudicator for community members in conflict, but also can serve the Ethiopian Diaspora in particular as an indispensable bridge with our people at home. This will be instrumental in accelerating the collapse of the unelected enemy of Ethiopia, and can be employed as a power base to challenge in courts of law those who are responsible for changing the face of our country, for killing many innocent Ethiopian citizens, and for the unlawful incarceration of our elected leaders.

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* For detailed reading, please download the main article, "*Lessons for Ethiopians from the Downfall of US Supported Dictators: An Urgent Need for Mature Mechanisms,*" posted early last year.

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Requiem for Somalia's Aborted Islamic Revolution

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With the defeat and dissolution on December 27 of the Islamic Courts Council (I.C.C.), which had sought to unify Somalia in an Islamic state based on Shari'a law, at the hands of the country's clan-based and internationally recognized Transitional Federal Government (T.F.G.), propelled to victory by major Ethiopian military action, Somalia opens a new chapter of its chaotic political history.

From the I.C.C.'s takeover of Somalia's official capital Mogadishu from the warlord's who had divided it and then dispersed -- as the I.C.C. now has done -- until its recent expulsion from the city, the Courts movement had taken Somalia through an attempted Islamic revolution that extended through most of the country south of the breakaway sub-states of Somaliland and Puntland.

Now that the I.C.C. has disbanded its institutional structure and most of its fighters have returned to support their clans, the revolution is over. Even if the hard line elements of the I.C.C. regroup their forces -- estimated to number 3,000 -- in Somalia's deep south and mount a guerrilla war, they will be just another player in a decentered game; it will only add an Islamist insurgency to Somalia's myriad other conflicts. The I.C.C.'s majority of moderates have no taste for a guerrilla war and will recede into their respective sub-clans: Somalia will revert to its accustomed condition of political entropy.

Most comprehensively and essentially, the failure of the I.C.C.'s revolution marks another in a series of unsuccessful attempts -- including ultra-nationalism, socialism, military dictatorship and internationally mediated and imposed clan-based federations -- to create a unified Somali state and to find a political formula that could channel Somali nationalism effectively enough to transcend the country's clan-based society. Unless its constitution is revised from clan representation to some national formula, which at present appears unlikely, the T.F.G. will simply mirror

extant conflicts rather than resolve them. There is no new unifying political formula and appealing ideology on the horizon, which means that Somalia has returned to its previous status of a failed state.

On December 30 in Mogadishu, Ethiopian forces were keeping a low profile and the T.F.G.'s prime minister, Ali Mohamed Gedi, was working to install his government and promising that he would disarm clan militias. Addis Ababa would like to withdraw its troops and armor from Somalia as quickly as possible to avoid an armed backlash against its presence and to stop the drain on its resources; Gedi wants the Ethiopians to stay for at least a month longer to secure his position. Disarmament is unlikely to occur as the sub-clans adopt a self-protective posture, the warlords return to reclaim their former positions, and Ethiopia stays out of the picture, leaving insufficient T.F.G. forces to carry out the mission. After a day of calm in Mogadishu, gun fire has resumed, although there are no signs of insurrection.

With the appointment of Osman Boqore as the T.F.G.'s new parliamentary speaker, Gedi has eliminated his major rival Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan, who had attempted to broker a reconciliation agreement between the T.F.G. and I.C.C. Nonetheless, the rise of Gedi to a central position for the moment does not betoken the emergence of a strong central government in Somalia. The Ethiopians will withdraw and the T.F.G. will not have the power to prevent political fragmentation.

Addis Ababa has accomplished its own mission in Somalia, which was to eliminate the threat of an Islamic state on its eastern border, and is content to leave the country in a condition of political weakness. Having leagued with the warlords and Puntland militias, as well as the T.F.G., in its campaign against the I.C.C., and needing to mend its relations with Somaliland, which is resistant to unification with the T.F.G. and has serious border disputes with Puntland, Addis Ababa is unlikely to give whole-hearted support to Gedi. Since Somalia launched an unsuccessful irredentist war against Ethiopia in 1977 to gain control of the latter's ethnic-Somali Ogaden region, Addis Ababa has striven to keep Somalia fragmented and to play factions off against one another. Addis Ababa has not changed that strategy and should not be considered the T.F.G.'s reliable patron.

The Roots of the I.C.C.'s Failure

Understanding the I.C.C.'s aborted revolution is facilitated by the trenchant analysis of Somali intellectual Dr. Abdishakur Jowhar in his article, "A War of Miscalculation," published on the website Hiiraan Online. Commenting on the I.C.C.'s declaration of jihad against Ethiopia and its aggressive moves in mid-December to challenge Ethiopian forces based around the T.F.G.'s provisional capital Baidoa in the south-central Bay region, Jowhar writes: "They threatened Ethiopia and stirred the wasp's nest, but they have not bothered to prepare themselves with protective clothing. They had the guts, the belief, the belligerence but not the arms, the organization or the depth of pocket necessary for waging war (jihad) against Ethiopia. They believed their own rhetoric of god being on their side, of representing all Somalis, of having already taken over and centralized the whole power of the nation in their hands."

As Jowhar sees it, the I.C.C.'s leadership got carried away with itself and succumbed to a triumphalist illusion that led them to throw "young bodies armed with weapons not much better than spears and a prayer against the well oiled fully equipped Ethiopian meat grinder." As do many Somali intellectuals, Jowhar epitomizes his

analysis in a Somali proverb: "The tree lamented that the axe with wooden handle would not have been able to cut it down if part of it was not in the axe."

Jowhar's understanding is an indispensable first step toward diagnosing the I.C.C.'s failure. There is little doubt that the Courts movement's leaders believed that they had unified Somalia, if not altogether territorially, then in terms of popular support and destiny. They also believed that the Somali people, at least the vast majority of them, embraced Islam as a political formula for national identity, and that they could count on religion-based nationalism to sustain them in a confrontation with Ethiopia.

Finally, they believed in the justice of their cause and in the goodness of their works in bringing order, services and Shari'a law to the broad swathes of Somalia that they controlled. The common mentality that evolved in the I.C.C. after its early and generally unopposed successes hardened after Addis Ababa sent forces into Somalia to protect the T.F.G. and pushed the Courts movement to overplay its hand.

As sound as it is, Jowhar's analysis does not tell the whole story. Although the I.C.C.'s takeover of the strategic southern port city of Kismayo in late September placed external actors opposed to the I.C.C. on alert, the Courts movement operated pragmatically -- taking just as much as it could without triggering a decisive military response against it. Until mid-December, the I.C.C. maintained an effective balance of strategy and tactics that gave it the upper hand in any bargain that it might reach with the T.F.G.

The I.C.C.'s change from a strategy based on pragmatic calculation to one inspired by ideology is what accounts for PINR's mistaken judgment in its December 11 report that "major armed conflict is surely possible, but not yet inevitable." PINR predicted correctly that Addis Ababa's "defensive posture" would "change only if the I.C.C. became more aggressive," but PINR did not expect the I.C.C. to overplay its hand.

In retrospect, the cause of the I.C.C.'s aggressive moves around Baidoa in mid-December, which were initially successful and emboldened its leadership, was the passage by the United Nations Security Council (U.N.S.C.) on December 6 of Resolution 1725 authorizing a partial lifting of the frequently flouted U.N. arms embargo on Somalia for the purpose of introducing an African Union (A.U.) peacekeeping mission that would protect the T.F.G. in Baidoa and train the transitional authority's armed forces. Sponsored by the United States and backed most strongly by Addis Ababa and the T.F.G., the Resolution was anathema to the I.C.C.

PINR's December 11 report on Somalia undervalued the impact that passage of the Resolution would have on the I.C.C.'s leadership and how it would strengthen the militant factions in the Courts to the disadvantage of its more conciliatory elements. PINR's judgment in early December was that the Resolution was too weak to damage the I.C.C.'s power position seriously. A compromise between Washington and European powers, the Resolution prohibited frontline states -- notably Ethiopia -- from contributing to the peacekeeping mission, leaving Uganda, which quickly backed out from rapid deployment, as the only state willing to contribute forces.

Considering the remoteness of the possibility that the peacekeeping mission would ever come into effect, PINR expected the I.C.C. to absorb the symbolic blow and

continue consolidating its gains, engaging in testing actions with Ethiopian forces and seeking to expand cautiously into Puntland by encouraging its domestic supporters there. Instead, the I.C.C. took the passage of the Resolution as a sign that the Western powers under Washington's leadership had swung their support decisively to Addis Ababa, and that there was only a small window of opportunity to gain clear advantage over the T.F.G.

After Resolution 1725 was passed, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, the moderate chair of the I.C.C.'s Executive Council, told a rally in Mogadishu that it was "shocking that foreign troops already in Somalia are not mentioned" in the Resolution and that the Resolution "legalizes war" against Somalia. At that time, PINR did not appreciate that the "shock" was genuinely severe and would have the effect of making the I.C.C. feel isolated and embattled, and threatened with subjection to Washington's will through its perceived proxy Addis Ababa.

From the perspective of power and interest, it is possible to make the case that the Courts movement's leadership calculated that -- in the medium term -- the effects of implementing the Resolution would disadvantage it, yet the "miscalculation" noted by Jowhar is too great to be explained on the basis of pragmatic calculation alone. Indeed, the passage of Resolution 1725 threw the I.C.C. into a panic and strengthened its hard line elements who had always insisted that the Western powers' appeals for negotiations could not be trusted and that military assertion was necessary to advance the revolution.

The turning point came on December 13 when the I.C.C. issued an ultimatum to Addis Ababa that if it did not withdraw its forces from Somalia, they would face intensified attacks from the I.C.C.'s militias. During the week that followed, the Courts' forces engaged in probing attacks around Baidoa, encircled the town, expanded into the Bakool region on the border with Ethiopia and met with resistance from their adversaries.

However, when the ultimatum's deadline came on December 20 without Ethiopian withdrawal, the I.C.C. backtracked, saying that it had not meant that it would mount its major offensive immediately and that the ultimatum was aimed at showing Addis Ababa the I.C.C.'s determination. Nonetheless, the probing attacks initiated by both sides escalated, resulting finally in Ethiopia's full-scale operation utilizing air power and heavy armor that crushed the Courts movement.

In making its move, Addis Ababa had the tacit backing of Washington, which announced that Ethiopia had genuine security concerns and derailed a nonbinding draft resolution at the U.N.S.C. presented by Qatar that called for immediate withdrawal of foreign forces from Somalia. The other external actors -- regional states, the A.U. and the Arab League (A.L.) -- were reduced to espousing the Qatari position without being willing to exert any but rhetorical pressure.

Just as Washington had given diplomatic cover to Israel's incursion into Lebanon in the summer of 2006, it gave Addis Ababa its window of opportunity in Somalia, despite regional opposition and the misgivings of European powers, which fell into line at the U.N.S.C.: the I.C.C.'s response to Resolution 1725 amounted to a self-fulfilling prophecy about its opponents, a gross over-valuation of its own strength and a desperate measure.

Conclusion

As a result of the I.C.C.'s defeat, Somalia's political future is more uncertain than ever, as the country devolves back to its fractious clan structure, the warlords who fought with the Ethiopian forces and were supported by Addis Ababa reappear and attempt to reclaim their former turf, and the hard line I.C.C. elements prepare to mount a guerrilla war in the deep south as Ethiopian forces and their allies pursue them. Addis Ababa has succeeded in installing the T.F.G. in Mogadishu for the first time, but has made it clear that it is not prepared to superintend state building, leaving the divided, warlord riven and generally unpopular and militarily weak transitional institutions to fend for themselves after a brief occupation.

Three possible scenarios present themselves for the new chapter in Somalia's political history. The most unlikely is that the T.F.G. will unify Somalia south of Puntland in an effective central government; its clan-based constitution is an inherent weakness, and the many sub-clans are in a mode of self-protection. More likely is a return to the pre-I.C.C. period of extreme decentralization, warlordism and state failure, either with or without an Islamist insurgency -- the latter being the more probable outcome.

External actors will revert to their previous positions, with regional states playing off Somali factions against one another to their own perceived advantage and Western powers drawing back from the scene, unless an Islamist insurgency becomes a base for international Islamic revolutionaries. Ethiopia's prime minister, Meles Zenawi, has said that massive humanitarian, reconstruction and development aid from Western powers is required for Somalia's stabilization, but that is unlikely to come in sufficient quantities.

Given Somalia's fragmented political situation, Washington, which has realized its strategic aim of eliminating the I.C.C., is unlikely to support the T.F.G. with direct financial and military contributions and will prefer to funnel any of its aid through Addis Ababa. Washington is eager to have Uganda lead a peacekeeping mission to bolster the T.F.G., but Kampala is still resisting and whether adequate funds for such a mission would be granted by donor powers and whether it would be accepted by major Somali factions is questionable. Everything from an Arab peacekeeping force to democratic elections is being suggested by external analysts and actors, but it is unlikely that any bold plans will gain sufficient support to overcome Somalia's political entropy, which is exacerbated by the ambitions and conflicts among the country's neighbors.

Somalia has received sustained attention from PINR because the now aborted Islamic revolution provided the possibility for the establishment of an Islamic political model in Africa and for the unification and consolidation of a Somali state. Those possibilities have at present been eliminated and Somalia is once again at the mercy of its constituent factions and the interests of external actors.

For six months, Somalia was the site of an attempt at significant political change that had importance beyond its borders; for that to happen again, a fresh attempt at national unification -- probably not based on Islamism -- will have to emerge; but should that occur, it will be in a matter of years, not months or days.

Posted on 04 December 2007 @ 09:28

If Somalis knew the serfdom in Ethiopia

Aklilu Demissie

For those who are not yet awake the borders of Ethiopia now extend to the shore lines of Bossaso, Mogadishu and Kismayu in the East, just curtailed for the time being by the Indian Ocean . If there are the most humiliated people that exist in the world under a brutal dictator are Ethiopia and Somalia .

You can go to other war on terror front lines, Iraq and Afganisistan; thanks to America 's blessing they have legitimate, elected assemblies to lead their countries. Thanks again to America 's curse an illegitimate, rejected tyrant is let loose unleashing the most heinous crimes against humanity in Ethiopia and the Horn.

On what they call a third front on war against terror, you have the most hated, ruthless tyrant who managed to survive after defeat at the polls with the help of misguided backers in the State Department. America paradoxically has preferred to do business with a rejected tyrant, Meles Zenawi.

The Ever tightening noose on freedom and democracy in Ethiopia is being carried out in the plain view of the American government. Presently the pressure for democracy and release of people's representative parliamentarians, poverty reduction

specialists, and the youth is sidelined in order for Zenawi to extend his sphere of influence in the Horn at the expense of the desire for change in Ethiopia . The war in Somalia has allowed the brutal dictator continue brutalize in a renewed vigor any descent at home.

The Somali people are not naïve about how Meles rules in his home town .After losing the elections in May 2005, with his direct command and rule of the security apparatus, entirely based from his ethnic tribe has desecrated the meaning of being elected and representing a constituency.

After refusal of parliamentary participation by the opposition party members, his security forces relentlessly chased representatives individually from dawn to dusk threatening them with their lives. At present there is no opposition member in parliament who had not been threatened with attack on his/her family. Worse, some had been taken to a freshly dug out grave yard, their hands tied behind their backs and told they would be buried alive if they didn't participate in the parliament. Many had got physical beating both in town and in rural areas .Those who produced parliamentary card on the assumption they would get the immunity the constitution has ascribed for elects were ridiculed by Meles' security people and were told to shove it up their ar** . They were told Tigrayan brothers didn't die for you [elected opposition members of parliament] to snatch it by throwing good- for-nothing papers in boxes.

Some have been obviously bribed and abandoned the cause of freedom and democracy. They now beg for the population to come around their party. Others since they couldn't bear the pressure of the security apparatus, just decided to participate giving the excuse of fighting the regime from the parliament and sarcastically told not to be seen opposing foreign diplomats advice.

The gallant, democratic champions have been successfully defending themselves by routing Meles'forced witnesses in the Kangaroo court. For every exposition of the regime's treachery what awaits them every day in Kality is hell. These present and future hopes of Ethiopia have never succumbed to every text book of systematic torture they have been exposed by Meles.

For Somalis and the world, this is the Meles who is articulating democratic governance. Be it Gedi or Yosuf who have been given premiership and presidency respectively by Meles, blessed by UN do not at all have the slightest reign or power to rule Somalia. Nor does any of the ethnically federalized regions [kelel] of Ethiopia , which are in fact ruled by de facto Tigray officials, ruthless TPLF secrete service and Agazee militia.

The Somalis should not think that their Ethiopian counterparts to be living in a free and democratic country. In Ethiopia you can not see what the West would like to call it, faces of freedom. People live under the yolk of an ethnic minority regime bent on division, subversion and killings.

Every day it is a land of detention, torture, mayhem carried out by a one man state of Meles Zenawi. Since the current political turmoil in the country could not be contained by a now rotting propoganda machine and repression of Meles, he just resorted to the world with his casus belli in order to ease the growing domestic and international pressure stemming out of unbelievable crimes against humanity.

He might have thought it could be sophistication if he went out hunting three Al Qaeda international terrorists on terror list. And, his daily rolling on burning earth to have gone for a while. The expectation was a rallying from his victims who are gagged and live a slave like life in their own country. For brief moment the tyrant may have felt he got a brief respite from the ever growing struggle in Ethiopia for freedom.

He could not crush the spirit of change reeling in Ethiopia : and he could not wipe it out with live bullets, humvees, bazookas and rampant, indiscriminate detention and torture.

Who will buy Meles? Somalis? A rejected, ruthless, blood thirsty tyrant in Ethiopia who rules by sword and bullets?

Inebriated by his self grandeur he was congratulating himself to have done the AU and UN's dirty business.

A terrorist in his town can not claim to have bestowed freedom and stability to Somali people. Somalis should know as long as Meles is in Somalia, they should say goodbye to freedom, democracy and the right to live, which Ethiopians do not have at present. They should forget sovereignty and territorial integrity and cohesion.

The United Sates Government has clearly abandoned and put aside its face on the dream of human being to live in democracy and freedom in Ethiopia . No foundation exists for social security, happiness, improvement and progress in Ethiopia . It is naïve for it to be extended from Meles to Somalia .

[Posted on 03 December 2007 @ 09:17](#)

Poof! The Magic Jihadist!

[Prof. Alemayehu G. Mariam](#)

In the 1979 animation adventure, Puff the Magic Dragon and the Land of Living Lies, the Dragon takes a little girl called Sandy, who has a vivid imagination and lies a lot to escape the problems of her troubled home, to the Land of the Living Lies, where

she meets such famous fibbers as Pinocchio and the boy who cried wolf, and honesty is prosecuted:

Sandy: Puff, look!

Puff: That is the famous purple cow that no one has ever seen.

Sandy: And the pink elephant.

Puff: That some see too often.

Sandy: Who is that?

Puff: Kilroy. Always was there, and never was anywhere.

Prosecutor: Little girl, isn't it true you zipped the zipper when you snipped the snoo?

Sandy: I can't understand him.

Puff: Because he's the prosecuting attorney: a genuine flim-flam.

Prosecutor: And furthermore, you frightened the flip by frying the frisbee. Uh huh! Therefore I put to case that all the while the fluster flittered, your velocipede matriculated. DIDN'T YOU?

Puff: [eating homework] Arithmetic. Ketchup goes well with lower mathematics.

Sandy: Where are we?

Puff: Oh, a long way from your house, I'm sure.

Puff: Don't you think it's odd that I, a dragon, should eat homework for lunch? Of course it's odd, for it never happened. It was a falsehood, a canard, a prevarication. Oh, why beat about the bush. It was a simple lie told by a little girl named Sandy.

The jihadists are coming! The jihadists are here. Poof! They are gone. "It was a falsehood, a canard, a prevarication. Oh, why beat about the bush. It was a simple lie told by..."

And so the horned jihadists of the Horn of Africa have come and gone like the "purple cow that no one has ever seen" or "the pink elephant that some see too often." Across the dusty Ogaden border, we were told, lurked 8000-strong wild-eyed jihadists poised to overrun Ethiopia. "Mothers, hide your children! Fathers, come out with your pitchforks! Soldiers, put on your battle dresses and sling your guns. The jihadists are coming! The jihadists are here!" Where are they? Here! There! Everywhere! Poof, the magic jihadists are gone! Darn, you missed the whole show!

The Fireman and the Jihadists

The current invasion of Somalia by Zenawi evokes images of the fireman who deliberately sets a house on fire and calls the fire department to come and put it out. As the firemen arrive, he is heroically fighting the blaze, earning the gratitude and admiration of his colleagues.

Zenawi invented a jihadist bogeyman in Somalia, exaggerated the Islamist qua Al-Qaeda threat and sought to cynically exploit the Bush Administration's knee jerk reaction to terrorism. He sought to depict Somalia as the New Front in the ongoing global war on terror, and flimflam the U.S. Now, having routed the ragtag motley

crew of Islamist militiamen perched atop pickup trucks toting 50 cal. machineguns, Zenawi hopes to present himself to the world as #1 Al-Qaeda hunter and terror fighter in the Horn of Africa, and defensor pacis (defender of the peace) to boot. But we all know he is a "foo fighter."

The truth of the matter is that the whole jihadist menace in the Horn of Africa -- the "New Talibans" -- is a figment of Zenawi's imagination. The jihadist bogeyman was invented to divert international attention from Zenawi's massive and gross violations of human rights in Ethiopia. But nobody bought it, except perhaps Jendayi Fraser, the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, who seems to share Zenawi's hallucinations about wild-eyed and fire-breathing terrorists lurking behind every desert rock in the Ogaden.

The year 2006 was not a particularly good one for Zenawi. His cherished image of "democratic reformer", "new breed of African leader dedicated to democracy, human rights and development", etc. was gone, forever. He became known as the tyrant, the butcher, the mass murderer, the thief, and so on. Undaunted, he kept on tyrannizing, butchering, murdering....

The Somali jihadist PR offensive was supposed to provide respite and cover during a period of extremely bad publicity for Zenawi. He was facing increasing international condemnation for his brutal suppression of opposition and dissent in the country. The kangaroo trial of the opposition leaders, civic society and human rights defenders provided comic relief to all (but not the defendants) as the prosecutor paraded screwy perjurers before the court. When their lies were exposed on cross-examination, the perjurers fingered lead prosecutor Kamal as their coach for lying. The Inquiry Commission charged to investigate the massacre of unarmed protesters in November, 2005, returned its verdict, albeit in a briefing to the U.S. House of Representatives: "Zenawi, your boys did it! Ain't nobody here to blame, but you. You are responsible!"

So, the Somali jihadists bogeyman was a God-send (no pun intended) to create a convenient diversion from from the adverse international attention, and hoodwink the locals. The initial PR for the diversionary campaign was handled in standard "Keystone Cop" style. At the outset, Zenawi denied having any military presence in Somalia. A few days later, he admitted dispatching some military advisors to provide technical assistance to the Western-backed Somalia Transitional Government (STG). Shortly thereafter, he admitted having a few hundred soldiers loitering outside of Baidoa to protect the STG from being overrun by the Islamists. As he launched a full scale offensive, he declared he was pursuing Islamists who were battle-ready to attack Ethiopia and destabilize the Horn region. He explained, "Ethiopia's defensive measures are targeted only at this terrorist group."

One can not overlook the subtextual attempt to inflame religious passions in the war rhetoric. Zenawi charged the Islamists are fundamentalists who want to govern Somalia according to Islamic law, and have recruited foreign Muslims to join their jihad against Ethiopia. The Islamists publicly invited support from the Islamic world by presenting themselves as victims of Ethiopian Christian Crusaders supported by Islamophobic Western countries. Sheik Hassan Aweys, the leader of the Shura Council, charged that Ethiopia was a Christian nation in a Muslim region of the world. Bishop Eustatwos Gebrekristos, a top prelate of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, countered by accusing the Islamists of trying "to convert Ethiopia to Islam." Fortunately, the rhetoric found little traction among both sensible and not-so-sensible people in the region.

The Fire Department and the Jihadist

The Bush Administration has been supportive of Zenawi's adventures in Somalia, first tacitly ("we urge restraint on all sides"), and in the past week days, openly "Ethiopia has genuine security concerns about the Islamists"). The rationale for supporting the intervention is the old "Islamists/Al-Qaeda-terrorists-running-loose-in-the-Horn" canard. Two weeks ago, Jendayi Fraser claimed that Sheik Aweys and the Shura Council were "controlled by Al-Qaeda cell individuals." She alleged that "the top layer of the courts are extremists to the core, they are terrorists and they are creating this logic of war."

For the past 15 years, Somalia has been in a state of internecine warfare and anarchy.

Somalia has the dubious distinction of being the archetypal "failed state". U.S. policy in Somalia (if there ever was one) during this period has been a dismal failure. In 1993, the U.S. undertook Operation Restore Hope with the aim of averting a humanitarian disaster from the factional fighting and general anarchy in Somalia. A year later, the U.S. made a hasty exit following the disastrous attempt to capture the warlord Mohammed Farah Aideed. 18 American troops were killed in the battle, and their bodies dragged in the streets of Mogadishu.

The bombing of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 oriented U.S. policy in Somalia towards counterterrorism, particularly, the capture or killing of a small number Al-Qaeda operatives and Somali collaborators who are believed to be responsible for the attacks. Repeated U.S. requests to turn over these operatives -- the so-called core of the East African cell-- have fallen on the deaf ears of the Islamists. The CIA spearheaded the counterterrorism effort by financing secular Somali warlords and businessmen under the auspices of an organization known as the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counterterrorism.

The CIA effort failed to neutralize the terrorists, but contributed to the ascendancy of the Islamic fundamentalists, who were presumably coddling these terrorists. The Islamists, apparently spooked by all of the covert and no-so-covert CIA activity launched their own preemptive strikes, overrunning their opponents in a relatively short time and capturing Mogadishu in June.

This past summer, the State Department took over the policy role for Somalia from the CIA (cloak and dagger was out) hoping to diplomatically engage the Islamist militias, whose victory was claimed to be a major setback to American policy in the region. A few days ago, President Bush declared that the first priority for the United States was to keep Somalia from becoming a safe haven for terrorists. Ho-hum, the cycle repeats itself!

The Truth About U.S. Foreign Policy in Somalia

It is apparent that the U.S. has not had a comprehensive policy for Somalia over the past 15 years. The ironic truth is that 1) the Bush Administration does not have a coherent policy for Somalia as a failed state, and 2) the two individuals who are responsible for developing such a policy, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and Assistant Secretary Jendayi Fraser (regarded by many informed commentators as lacking the authority and skill to craft a diplomatic solution), both African American, have manifested little interest or political will to deal with the Somali issue.

Recent comments by important American policy makers on U.S. policy (or lack of) are revealing. John D. Negroponte, the director of national intelligence, asserted that Somalia "has come back on the radar screen only fairly recently." Sen. Joseph Biden (D-DE), the incoming Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Joseph R. Biden Jr. had special criticism for the Bush administration: "By making a bad bet on the warlords to do our bidding, the administration has managed to strengthen the [Islamic] Courts, weaken our position and leave no good options. This is one of the least-known but most dangerous developments in the world, and the administration

lacks a credible strategy to deal with it."

Sen. Russell D. Feingold (D-WI), the incoming chairman of the Senate Africa Subcommittee criticized Rice for failing to develop a "comprehensive strategy" and give high-level attention to Somalia. He has promised to hold hearings in January, 2007. Representative Donald Payne (D-NJ) implicitly rejected the Administration's policy on the Horn by "strongly condemning" Ethiopia's "aggression and called for the immediate withdrawal of Ethiopian and all foreign forces from Somalia."

Gen. John P. Abizaid, chief of the U.S. Central Command, following his recent meetings with Zenawi urged "restraint" ahead of the inevitable invasion. According to Zenawi, Abizaid "shared his experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan with us and he indicated that we have, to the maximum extent possible, avoid direct military intervention in Somalia."

John Prendergast, an expert on Africa who served in Clinton's National Security Council described the Bush administration's Somalia policy as "idiotic." He claimed U.S. support for Ethiopia's military incursion has "incalculably strengthened" the Islamic Courts, rejuvenated Somali nationalism and "made our counterterrorism agenda nearly impossible to implement".

Following the sweeping victory of the Islamists, Prendergast argued: "A successful counterterrorism effort would require the United States to pull the political and military threads together into a coherent strategy of broader engagement.... Long-term counterterrorism objectives can be achieved only by American investment in the Somali peace process. Yet the State Department has just one full-time political officer working on Somalia -- from neighboring Kenya, and he was just transferred out of the region for dissenting from the policy on proxy warlords."

In response to the scathing criticism from all quarters, the administration announced the formation of the Somalia Contact Group to hold talks with representatives of the Islamic Courts, the STG, other regional actors and U.S. representatives.

Throughout the crisis, the State Department has gone to extraordinary lengths to help shape favorable American public opinion, including issuance of a memo advising: "The press must not be allowed to make this about Ethiopia, or Ethiopia violating the territorial integrity of Somalia." The U.S. has sought to dispel the belief that United States is using Zenawi to launch a proxy war against the Islamists.

Zenawi has denied any involvement of American soldiers or weapons in battles in Somalia. He says there has been a sharing of intelligence, perhaps a little assistance in pinpointing the exact location of Islamist militiamen for artillery practice.

Quick Flashback: Why did Zenawi Invade Somalia in the First Place?

Zenawi has asserted that he has a legal and moral obligation to support and defend the STG, which is purportedly recognized by the international community. Of course, the claim of a "legal obligation" to invade a sovereign country is nonsense, and unsupported in international law; and there is no such thing as a "moral" obligation or justification for military invasion. (See e.g. ENDNOTES for international legal authority on the use of force.) If external military action needs to be taken against a sovereign country legally, that authority belongs to the U.N, first and foremost. Even intervention motivated by humanitarian concerns requires U.N action, except under the most extraordinary circumstances (which Somalia does not present). Indeed, in 1992, the Security Council authorized a United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) to aid in humanitarian relief. Other U.N.-sanctioned humanitarian interventions have taken place in Cambodia, in Haiti and in the various republics of the former Yugoslavia. But Zenawi has no authority under international law to invade Somalia on the grounds of "legal" and/or "moral" obligation.

Assuming, for the sake of argument, that Zenawi had a "legal and moral obligation" to invade Somalia, we should ask the following questions: 1) Does the defeat of the Islamists bring about an end to terrorism in Somalia and the Horn? 2) Will Zenawi's

“support” to the STG result in the reconstitution of Somalia as a sovereign nation (and not merely establish the STG as an Ethiopian puppet government)? 3) Will Zenawi’s support for the STG guarantee security, peace and territorial integrity to Ethiopia? 4) Does Zenawi’s “support” to the STG obviate the need for an international and/or regional peacekeeping force in Somalia? How long will Zenawi have to provide “support” to the STG before his troops vacate Somalia and let the Somalis sort things out on their own?

Is there a Possibility for a Negotiated Settlement to Put Humpty Dumpty together?

The familiar children’s rhyme goes:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall.
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

The question is: After 15 years of clan warfare, anarchy and chaos, is it possible to put Somalia back together? Can Zenawi’s horses (tanks) and troops put Somalia back together? Can the U.S.? Can anybody put Somalia back together?

The answer is: Only Somalis can put Somalia back together. On their own terms!

For well over a decade, there have been countless efforts at national unity and reconciliation in Somalia. None have produced any meaningful results. In 1993-1994, Ethiopia sponsored several peace conferences to bring together the numerous competing factions to develop a consensus without much success. Efforts by the governments of Egypt, Yemen, Kenya, and Italy to bring the Somali factions together have equally failed. In 2002, Kenya organized the Somalia National Reconciliation Conference, which led to the establishment of the STG under the leadership of Mohammed Gedi, the government for which Zenawi has now taken conservatorship.

Quo Vadis Somalia?

Where do we go from here in Somalia?

First and foremost, all foreign troops must go, immediately withdraw from Somalia. That includes Ethiopian troops, Eritrean troops, if any, the motley crew of mujahadeen fighters, if any. The African Union has called for the “the withdrawal of all troops and foreign elements from Somalia.” Other countries and international organizations have made similar calls.

Second, diplomacy must be given priority over any military solution, including one imposed by Zenawi as a matter of “legal and moral” imperative. The Arab League and various neighboring countries have called for dialogue and negotiation among the various Somali factions. Even the U.S. supports a diplomatic solution. The Somalia Contact Group aims to hold talks with representatives of the Islamic Courts, the STG, other regional actors and U.S. representatives.

Third, U.N. Security Council Resolution 1725 which passed just a few weeks ago should be vigorously implemented and monitored so that “all Member States, in particular those in the region,...refrain from any action in contravention of the arms embargo and related measures.” This resolution also authorized an East African

peacekeeping force to prevent the overthrow of the STG by the Islamic militias. With the exception of Uganda, few other countries have expressed in building a peacekeeping force for Somalia. Even Museveni seems to be retreating in the face of a conspicuous absence of enthusiasm for such a force. Nonetheless, control of the influx of arms into Somalia will be critical to the overall success of any diplomatic solution, but also very difficult to achieve. A recent U.N Security Council report has confirmed that Ethiopia, Eritrea and other countries have circumvented the international arms embargo imposed on Somalia since 1992 .

Learn from the American Experience of "Shock and Awe" and "Mission Accomplished" Syndrome

When the U.S. invaded Iraq on March 20, 2003, it adopted a strategy called "Shock and Awe", based on the military doctrine of using overwhelming military might to destroy not only the material capabilities of the enemy, but also his will to fight and resist. Six weeks later on May 1, 2003, President Bush delivered a speech on the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and declared the end of major combat operations in the Iraq War. In the background was a large banner declaring: "Mission Accomplished."

The parallels between Zenawi's invasion of Somalia and Bush's Iraq folly are manifest. It is easy to feel irrationally exuberant about a victory against a ragtag crew of militiamen toting rifles and machineguns mounted on pickup trucks. Although some of the defeated Islamists have cast off their uniforms and joined the civilian population in the face of the advancing Zenawi/STG troops, others have presumably fled to the south to make a last stand or carry on a guerrilla war. Wherever they may be and however many are left, they will continue to hover in the shadows (but not lurk behind every desert rock) as a reminder to the larger Somali population that Somalia is under occupation by her historical enemy – her nemesis -- determined to install a puppet government. The riots that broke out in Mogadishu at the sight of Zenawi's troops should be an indication of things to come if Zenawi insists on staying in Somalia for long.

The bottom line is that Somalia has been spinning out of control for a very long time; and one must grudgingly admit that the Islamists brought about a measure of internal stability and a semblance of order unseen in Somalia for a decade and half. Zenawi's problem is whether he will be the one to restart the centrifuge that will plunge Somalia back into the familiar abyss of clan warfare, chaos and anarchy, a land where life is short, nasty and brutish! We should all pray that the future of Somalia will not be a mirror of its past.

"We Will Not Let Mogadishu Burn!"

As Zenawi's forces entered the Somali capital, he made a curious statement of special interest to history buffs. He said: "We will not let Mogadishu burn!" In 64 A.D., when fire broke out among the shops lining the Circus Maximus in Rome, Emperor Nero played his violin from a distance and watched Rome burn. Historians blamed Nero for the disaster, insinuating that Nero started the fire so that he could bypass the Roman senate and rebuild Rome to his liking.

If Zenawi "will not let Mogadishu burn," what plans does he have for it anyway? Perhaps a series of villas and pavilions set upon a landscaped park and a man-made lake right in the middle of Mogadishu?

Anyway, now that the jihadists have come and gone (Rah! Rah! Rah! They have gone, haven't they?), along with the "famous purple cow that no one has ever seen and the pink elephant", could we please talk about the serious issues of human rights, release of political prisoners, arrest and prosecution of the murderers of 193 peaceful protesters and 2500 Anuaks, ..., and that sort of thing?

You are invited to share your comments at:

<http://almariamforthedefense.blogspot.com/>

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ENDNOTES

Article 2 (4) All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.

Article 33(1) The parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice.

Article 35 (1). Any Member of the United Nations may bring any dispute, or any situation of the nature referred to in Article 34, to the attention of the Security Council or of the General Assembly.

Article 37 (1). Should the parties to a dispute of the nature referred to in Article 33 fail to settle it by the means indicated in that Article, they shall refer it to the Security Council. (2) If the Security Council deems that the continuance of the dispute is in fact likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, it shall decide whether to take action under Article 36 or to recommend such terms of settlement as it may consider appropriate.

Article 4 -- The [African] Union shall function in accordance with the following principles:

- (a) sovereign equality and interdependence among Member States of the Union;
- (b) respect of borders existing on achievement of independence;
- (e) peaceful resolution of conflicts among Member States of the Union through such appropriate means as may be decided upon by the Assembly;
- (f) prohibition of the use of force or threat to use force among Member States of the Union;
- (g) non-interference by any Member State in the internal affairs of another;
- (i) peaceful co-existence of Member States and their right to live in peace and security;
- (p) condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional changes of governments.

INVADING SOMALIA TO SAVE IT

HAMA TUMA

Those who have failed to understand the real reasons that prompted Meles Zenawi to send troops to invade Somalia are not few in number. As usual, self declared experts wax lyrical trying to explain to us on why and how Meles had to obey the American diktat, how he is scared of a few thousand hard core Salafist fanatics who may invade and wrest off the Ogaden that a full sized Siad Barre army could not, or how Meles, who is said to graze or chew Khat every afternoon, saw during one of his highs that taking over Mogadishu is the way to a cleaner skin and Nirvana.

Obviously, none of the above reasons hold any water. To put it frankly, none of the so called experts like David Shinn and John Prendergast, former eulogizers of Meles and the TPLF, have the morale high ground to preach now on the realities of the Horn. Yet, they and all the others have failed to understand why Meles sent troops to invade Somalia especially since he was attacking the former dictator Mengistu of wreaking havoc in Somalia. Meles was backed by Siyad Barre in the past and feels

indebted towards Somalia. This is the basis of his undying concern for that Stateless country and its battling clans. Meles may not have a fondness for Mogadishu that rivals the one he had for Asmara but here again the Somali capital was said to be brimming with the Eritreans he sincerely loves to frequent with no matter the circumstances. Those who say Meles sent non- Tigrean soldiers to the invasion with the hope that the Somalis may finish them off are also off mark as Meles is jealous of guarding his victims all to himself. Yes, the little fellow is insatiable. Moreover, the invasion cannot be explained away by the allegation that Meles was told that a plant cure for his newly developed skin problem (his face and hands just to talk of the visible parts) is to be found in the gardens of the Somali presidential palace taken over by Sheikhs Ahmed and Aweys. The invasion had in fact deeper and profound motives that I will attempt to reveal here below.

The invasion of Somalia was prompted by the deep love Meles Zenawi has for that country. There they were the Somalis enjoying clan warfare, flooding, all the miseries of the world without even a decent State and Meles could not just sit back and deprive them of an invasion. He had to do his share to make their life as Horn citizens worthy of the region. Somali had invaded Ethiopia when the latter was deep in the grip of a political crisis and Meles had to reciprocate. The Somalis needed an invasion to complete their pain and needed an invasion to seek some unity against a foreign enemy. Meles has obliged and given them the opportunity. Will they take it or waste it? You can lead the horse to the water but you cannot make it drink--and thus no one can blame Meles if the Somalis failed to unite. Another reason is the search for physical contact with Eritreans. With the northern front patrolled by UN soldiers, direct contact had not been easy and Meles, who used to spend his vacations in Asmara and likes nothing more than physical contact with his cousins, had been suffering from what his Chinese doctors have diagnosed as Lack of Contact with Eritreans Anxiety (LACEA). This could only be cured by going to Mogadishu and by making physical contact, even by proxy, with the Eritreans rumored to have been there en masse. Maybe he found none there and this could explain his sadly chauvinistic assertion that the Eritreans were hiding in the skirts of Somali women. As a confirmed coward, Meles knows of course where the best hiding place could be though he could have said Kismayo instead.

Some would surely ask what Ethiopia has got to export to Somalia by the invasion. Not bananas for sure. Of misery and bloodshed Somalia had plenty too. What then? The Bible? Meles is a closet Albanian Stalinist and he has rejected his only God, the son of Afewerki. AIDS through General Bacha Dabale? The Somalis have their own sick fellows with warlords and Islamic court Sheikhs on the verge of insanity from the blood they have spilled. Some lesson on unity? The man is the epitome of division but the clanish Somalis can learn little from him. Delusion of grandeur? But what do you gain showing off with aged Russian jet fighters and tanks against a small force that had none of both? Meles has in fact appeared as a bully, hiding behind a bigger bully, using a battering ram against a fly, burning the gojjo/tukul to get rid of the tuhan/bed bug. Bad bully. And that, alas, is what has also prompted him to invade knowing full well that, at least in the first round, he will roll over the relatively poorly armed and outnumbered Islamic court fighters while getting the chance to strut and parade like a peacock, a victor-- I warned them, they did not listen, I came, I saw, I conquered. A pathetic Caesar on the Horn, a tin pot dictator, a remote control commander, a coward playing at warrior, a fool rushing into the marsh. Meles loves disasters so long as the misery of peoples is assured. And he

expects a thank you from the world at large.

The invasion of Somalia is also provoked by the Ethiopian opposition. Those in Kaliti and elsewhere are all to blame. They isolated and hounded Meles so much that even former friend are shunning him and beginning to call him authoritarian. And the opportunist Americans could dump him like they dumped the Shah, Mobutu and even Saddam. Which meant he had to bend backwards to oblige these powerful fellows. A camp in Hurso? Take it please! Action in Somalia? Whatever you say! Washington is looking for three “terrorists” hiding in Mogadishu—no problem, I will invade the whole country and try to find them. Meles was forced to obey the Americans because the opposition, disloyal elements to their core, isolated and exposed him as a dictator. The Opposition could have been charged for this crime too. But, given the situation, what else could he do but bootlick! Let the Americans back the opposition and cause his demise? Over your dead body is the Meles response. A few thousand dead in Somalia is hardly a sacrifice worth talking about. Didn't a hundred thousand perish in the Badme front only to lose Badme and other areas in a World Court ruling later on? Moreover, the Islamic Court was threatening to end the anarchy of Somalia in its own way and no one can expect Meles who relishes division and anarchy to fold his arms and watch as Somalia overcomes clan divisions and casts a bad light on his own ethnic policy that, let us admit it, has failed to fragment and destroy Ethiopia.

Somalia had to be invaded to be saved from its own newly developed delusions. Thanks to Meles, it has now been given the chance of anarchy and more warfare, perhaps the chance to unite against a foreign enemy and wage more war, a chance to avoid an Iraq type massive American invasion by being victim of a poor man's invasion by Meles instead, an opportunity to invite Eritreans and others for the free for all like in Eastern Congo, and the golden occasion to be the victim in the eyes of the world. Why blame Meles when all he wanted to have was physical contact with his Eritrean cousins and to extend a helping hand to the fraternal people of Somalia? The Islamic Court desired to kill as many Ethiopian infidels as possible and Meles has paid the transportation cost to bring the potential victims to Mogadishu--he should be thanked. A house delivery for a Jihad, if you want. Meles had also to test the American trained counter terrorist soldiers in Blattein. If not in Somalia, where? Moreover, after feeding America all the intelligence about the vile terrorists lurking in Somalia, Meles could not shy away from the invasion called for by the situation. Be fair and be in his shoes all of you critics, though he may be as nasty as the bearded Sheikhs or even worse. You can destroy a country to save it-- that is one American concept that Meles has understood ever since Dedit. That is why Meles is sabotaging the interest of Ethiopia in order to safeguard it.

So in the end, why did Meles send troops to invade Somalia? The desire for mayhem and anarchy? for murder and bloodshed? Out of love for the Somalis in need of a foreign invader? To prove that he is his own man and can invade any country? To use his rusty jets and tanks and get rid of some of his troops? To throw Ethiopia into a mess? All and anything-- except to please Bush. Mogadishu is taken, Kismayo will fall. It is “mission accomplished” Meles style. What next? We have to await the coming Meles session with khat and the revelations he may have on the way out of the mess.

Meles has no place to hide his heinous crimes

By Robele Ababya

January 5, 2007

The invasion of Somalia defies common sense; it is a glaring misuse of scarce resources of the poor by a brutal regime desperate to divert attention from its gross violation of human rights. It is regrettably embarrassing in that the TPLF army of impoverished Ethiopia is occupying a poor and failed state in which anarchy and lawlessness reigned since the fall of Dictator Siad Barre.

It is embarrassing more so because Ethiopia, albeit she was a victim of a series of naked aggressions, had never before in her long history violated the territorial integrity of a neighboring country. The occupation of a bone-poor country under the pretext of fighting ?Islamists? is an historic mistake; it will create an interminable vindictiveness by radical forces in the Islamic world. The invasion is a mortal blow to the Ethiopian culture of tolerance and mutual respect among citizens of all faiths at home. It is a betrayal to the wisdom of the Ethiopian Christian Emperor who was the first in the world to uphold the principle of freedom of conscience and embraced followers of the Prophet Mohammed who sought the Emperor?s protection from persecution in the Middle East.

It was belittling for proud Ethiopians of glorious heritage of gallantry over external aggression to watch a superior professional surrogate TPLF army, equipped with foreign supplied modern weapons, engaged in war with a poorly armed ragtag militia! The invasion will no doubt deepen hatred between neighbors and exacerbate the irredentist claim to Ogaden as part of Greater Somalia vigorously pursued by the past nationalist regimes. The ?victory? over Islamists that was greeted with standing ovation (in violation of rules of procedures) of the supporters of the ruling regime in the rubber stamp TPLF Parliament obscures the costly adventure of the war in the face of rising poverty and further instability in the Horn of Africa. The sad thing is that poor Ethiopians will have to bleed through their noses to pay for the costly war, which cost will keep soaring for as long as the invading TPLF forces remain stuck in Somalia under various pretexts that the habitual liar Meles will not fail to fabricate.

Meles, on 16 December 2006, was quoted as saying that ?The only forces we are pursuing are Eritreans who are hiding behind the skirts of Somali women.". This is a rude metaphor in bad taste. Nevertheless, it prompts one to ask whether Meles was not hiding behind the skirts of Ambassador Aurelia Brazeal, Ambassador Vicky Huddleston and Assistant Secretary of State Jendayi Frazer when:

- he invaded a neighboring country under the pretext of fighting ?Islamists?;
- his security forces under his direct command murdered 193, injured hundreds, jailed tens of thousands including distinguished leaders of the CUD Party,

- he muzzled the media, dismantled democratic institutions, and terrorized Ethiopian citizens with a show of force including modern war machines supplied by the Bush Administration.

Is it not a shame that all the aforementioned gross human rights violations took place under the watch of the three high-ranking diplomats?

The tyrant Meles, basking in an air of supreme confidence, boasted at a news conference that his forces in the war killed 1000 and wounded thousands of Islamists. He did not mention casualties suffered by his own forces. One wonders how his financier and benefactor of the TPLF regime, Sheik Alamudin, took this boasting and the loss of lives of his fellow Muslims who were not a significant threat to Ethiopia.. It is possible that the Sheik might go underground waiting for a propitious moment to revenge.

Meles began to beat the drum of war warning the Ethiopian people that their country is about to be invaded by ?Islamic Extremists? from Somalia. This was obviously to divert attention from domestic political problems and gross human rights violations including the brutal murder of 193 innocent Ethiopians. His forces are now bogged down in Somalia with each passing day creating perennial enemies for Ethiopia in the entire Islamic world and driving a wedge of suspicion between Christians and Muslims at home.

This writer was watching developments in Somalia with his eyes glued on the television screen in his hotel room as the invading TPLF forces, trained and armed to the teeth by the Bush Administration, was advancing to take control of Mogadishu. He watched poor young Somalis looting personal belongings of their poor fellow citizens in Mogadishu. The bare-footed skinny looters in dilapidated clothing were seen carrying rather dirty and stained old household furniture depicting abject poverty of their owners. What a contrast with the looting seen in New Orleans after the devastation by hurricane Katrina ? the looters were husky individuals carrying brand new high-value items including wide screen television sets. He was deeply saddened by the level of relative poverty in the Horn of Africa where scarce resources are spent on expensive war machines to destroy lives and property of the poor, thus plunging the region into further misery and uncertain future.

At this juncture, this writer would like to recall the superior bravery, discipline and acumen of the Ethiopian Battalion (Kagnew Shaleqa) that fought in the Korean War of 1950-1953 under the banner of the United Nations in the name of collective security. The same bravery and skill was demonstrated in the first half 1960s by another Ethiopian Battalion in the Congo in the aftermath of its independence under the leadership of Patrice Lumumba seen as a communist leaning to the Soviet Union for support. The USA was the main protagonist in both wars as it is now in Somalia behind the scenes. The political wisdom that led Ethiopia into the wars in the Congo and Korea is questionable, but the world-acclaimed gallantry of our soldiers comprising all of the various nationalities of Ethiopia was admirable.

It is ironic that a standing Ethiopian army established to deter external aggression was readily available to fight wars far away abroad and suppress dissent at home. Crushing legitimate internal dissent became increasingly acute and ruthless reaching its apex under the regime of the tyrant Meles. And, sadly, Ethiopia which was poor during the Korean War is much poorer now. There will be much to do in reconstructing the Ethiopian army.

The involvement of Ethiopian forces abroad did not bring benefit for our country from powers that orchestrated that involvement. For example, USA did not reciprocate in our hour of dire need when Dictator Siade Barre invaded our country emboldened by the refusal of the Carter Administration to supply military weapons for which the deal was concluded and payment was made. There is no guarantee of a reciprocal assistance in the future. So, alliance with a superpower will always end up with the tiny partner losing its stake entirely ? a lesson that successive leaders of Ethiopia never learned. However, there is hope now that the Ethiopian people at home and in the Diaspora have come of age to fight for their national interest first and foremost. The distinguished leaders in Kaliti prison and the voters at the epic election of 15 May 2005 deserve credit for this irreversible awareness.

Meles, at the inaugural meeting of the Ethiopian Millennium Festival National Council, ?predicted? that ?the country's new millennium will have to be a millennium, in which Ethiopians would reclaim their rightful place in world civilization? as if he did not: limit the history of Ethiopia to 100 years; collaborate with Shaebia to dismember Ethiopia; cause the current political upheaval in the Horn of Africa. It appears that the lying tyrant is sending a veiled message that his intention to invade Somalia is to bring back the past glory of Ethiopia by reclaiming the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea Coast as her boundaries. He also said that ?the new millennium will have to be an era of prosperity for Ethiopia? ? as if his party did not confiscate all private property including land from the peasants. He boasted that "The new Ethiopian millennium will have to be an era in which democracy and good governance shall prevail?, as if he did not dismantle all pillars of democracy in Ethiopia; as if he did not incarcerate the very best democrats and advocates of human rights like the distinguished leaders of Kinijit Party ever to emerge in the Ethiopian political scene. Meles is gravely mistaken if he thinks the Ethiopian spirit of patriotism will be aroused by his deception. Meles, the brutal killer of peaceful demonstrators and jailor of precious democratic leaders, is now a known quantity as a liar and master of deception who has lost the trust of the Ethiopian people. He has lost the support of the Ethiopian people; he is internally at war with the Ethiopian people and externally at war of his own creation. So, one would expect history to repeat itself once again that Meles would soon follow Mengistu?s fate, but God only knows his eventual destination.

Meles and his cohorts habitually use deceit and lie as potent tools of their trade to stay in power and exploit the poor. It is a curse that the top echelons in the TPLF spearheaded by Meles are notoriously adept at spewing ?mother of all deceits and lies?. Bereket Simon is the chief of propaganda of the corrupt clan transmitting lies and deceits as easily as he inhales and exhales air. These lies and deceits will end in this era of ?Dawn of Freedom? envisioned and articulated by Dr. Birhanu Nega.

As he writes this piece, this person sees Abraham Lincoln, the emancipator of slaves in the USA, standing tall on a high moral ground with his immortal words: "and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth?"; he sees the charismatic President John F. Kennedy with his famous words in his inaugural speech: "And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man?"; and goes on to say in the same speech: "Now the trumpet summons us again?not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need; not as a call to battle, though embattled we are - but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation" - a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself?"; he sees the charismatic Bill Clinton with admiration for his philosophy of "The common good" and his amicable standing among African Americans; and he sees one of the greatest statesman of the contemporary world, the very truly celebrated son of Africa, Nelson Mandela, who had the magnanimity to forgive his Apartheid incarcerators for 27 years of his prime life. On the other hand, he gets dismayed that President George Bush has so far failed to deliver on his pledge to end the US government policy of the past 40 years of doing business with dictators. He is dismayed at the condoning of the Bush Administration of the heinous crimes of the terrorist Meles who lacks the quality even to tolerate peaceful opposition. It is his fervent prayer and ardent hope that Democrats and Republicans in the new Congress will seize the opportunity to restore the moral leadership of the USA in the international community so that, in the words of President Kennedy, citizens of the world will be able to "struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself". All of these enemies of man are rampant in Ethiopia "the USA should seize the moment to help alleviate and eventually eliminate these enemies and earn the respect and enduring friendship of a strong, united, prosperous and democratic Ethiopia. For us Ethiopians it is time to ask what more we can do for our country " socially, economically and politically.

The tyrant Meles has no place to hide his lies and heinous crimes. The Western world should renounce his illegitimate regime and dump him for his iniquities; Ethiopians should unite to expedite his removal from power before he inflicts further incalculable damage to the national interests of Ethiopia. It is time to convert weapons of destruction into ploughshares and develop our beloved Ethiopia. For this to happen, the immediate and unconditional release of the distinguished leaders of CUD Party and indeed all other prisoners of conscience, in Ethiopia must be priority number one - not to mention the subsequent urgent need for national dialogue for peace and reconciliation excluding the tyrant Meles and his cohorts who in the opinion of this writer must face justice.

LONG LIVE ETHIOPIA!