

# Isayas Afworki's policy: Shooting to all directions, what to achieve?

By Zeray Hailemariam 12-20-16

*This piece of article is to examine the hostile foreign policy of Eritrea, under President Isayas Afworqi, in the last 25 years: the motive behind and the realization of the intended goals. Eritrean scholars are welcomed to respond to this article critically.*

## Introduction

For the last 25 years, Eritrea is being ruled mercilessly by lifelong one man rule self-declared President Isayas Afworqi. The country does not have well defined and established courts, constitution, and foreign policy, political and economic policy. Statehood process is not yet established. There is no government but one armed political front governing the tiny bankrupt country. Hence, state building, democratization process is either denied or postponed. And, economic development process to improve livelihood of citizens is either obscured indefinitely.

Therefore, no political scientist can exactly categorize the types of government or state in Eritrea. Some attempted to equate it with the government of North Korea which is somehow wrong. In the 21 first century, be it dictator or democratic governments have defined courts, economic policies and constitutions regardless of its effectiveness. None of them exist in Eritrea nowadays. However, for scholars who closely follow the daily activities of the government of Eritrea, they usually call it totalitarian regime. Yet, an exact definition which fits the behavior and structure of the state of Eritrea is not found. To put it shortly, I call it a mafia styled regime.

Since day one, Isayas Afworqi carefully avoided having clear rule of law like constitution, court, political and economic policy knowing that he would be accountable for the massive mistakes he would commit later. For Isayas, having constitution and court, independent Medias, democratic elections would mean obstacles to do what he wants. If he had democratic elections, he knew that he could not stay in power for long. If he had court, clear constitution and independent Medias, he knew that all would turn against him knowing that it would be him the first who would commit crimes. Knowing his behavior well, he had to avoid all of them. To avoid them systematically, he had to fabricate and create possible reasons. Entering into war with neighboring countries was the best convincing reason to postpone all the question of the people.

Therefore, the hostile Foreign Policy of Isayas Afworqi starts from these calculations. After all, he knows well the mentality of his own people and comrades that everything he says are believed at least that time. He knew well that the Eritreans would say ERITREA first at the expense of human rights, rule of law and economic development! Hence, to prolong his power

and remain unaccountable to all sins he projected to commit, he had to use the mentality of his own people and comrades timely. The questions of democracy, justice, constitution, economic development, and equality of nationalities, religions, rule of law and other basic staffs would be delayed or denied if the country is perceived under war. And, those who raise the question would be labeled as BANDA, sellouts. It was betrayal but effective strategy in staying in power. A tactics used by Isayas for the last 50 years.

Expectedly, he had to provoke Sudan first. He had good reasons to trigger the war with Sudan since it was widely suspected of spreading Islamic fundamentalism in the horn of Africa that time. Thus, Isayas was taken seriously not only locally but also by Ethiopia and the international community at large. Hence, nobody suspected him of his future projects. Once, he won the hearts of the local people and outside world as a leader against any terrorism, he had to deepen and use it against others to realize his project of prolonging his power by postponing the basic questions of his people. Thus, he personally triggered the minor disputes he had with Yemen again over Hanish islands and made it serious war which helped him gain the blind support of his people though not his close comrades. His comrades knew that was unnecessary war instigated by his personal calculation. The international community had run hurriedly to reconcile the issue which Isayas wanted it to be. Isayas wants always to attract the attention of the international community at the expense of his people blood and country damage.

The offensive he projected against Sudan and Yemen benefited Isayas for seven years not to implement the much loaded demands of the people. The Eritreans could not raise questions of writing constitution, establishing courts and democratic principles since the country is under "attack" by neighbors. However, the cards of Isayas lasted not long. People had begun raising the buried questions again. He had to find other new reason to suppress the promises for long again. Ethiopia was the best candidate. This is for reasons that since Ethiopia was portrayed as 'colonialist' country in the minds of Eritreans and since the 30 years long armed struggle of Eritrea was waged against it, Isayas found best reason to blind his people.

Expectedly, Isayas sent his secret brigades to instigate war against Ethiopia via the small town of Ethiopia's **Badme** in the west direction remote area where nobody can know who started the war. I know well that even his defence minister, foreign minister and generals of the army did not know who provoked first since he did it by few loyal lower rank solders. Ethiopians were shocked. Eritrean were surprised since most trusted their leader that Ethiopia begun the war to re-take Eritrea. This tactics somewhat is easy to be taken serious by Eritreans taking the past bad history into accounts. Isayas become the happiest leader in the world by misleading his people. His Medias and cadres commenced massive false propaganda to confuse the people locally and mislead the international community to give the impression Ethiopia invaded Eritrea. It is fairly to say he won the propaganda that time. Most countries and all Eritreans

except few trusted the massive propaganda and Ethiopia was portrayed as invading country against small country.

However, when Isayas attempted to prolong the war indefinitely and in the same time Ethiopia withdrew its troops from Eritrean occupied territory justifying that it had not the intention to invade other areas but restore its forcefully occupied territory, Isayas begun losing grounds. Eritreans and the international community started staring at him, what is going on? Who had begun the war? Why Isayas? Why Ethiopia pulled its advancing troops since Eritrean troops were in no position to defend? Why why?? Now, the truth hid from Eritreans for the last 15 years is coming out. The reverse is true now that almost all Eritreans got the secret that why Isayas did that. Everything turned against him.

The main reason Isayas did invade Ethiopia was not just because he wanted it or he had land claims. Not at all! He used it to postpone the demand of democracy and constitution and stay in power unchallenged which he did it. For example, the constitution draft of Eritrea before the war of Ethiopia and Eritrea says: ***“An Elect president stay only for four years if not elected again”***. ***It further underlines: A president should be Eritrean by blood”*** Isays could not pass the two basic points. For example, it is absolutely against his ambition to be a president of Eritrea for just 4 years or more four and he is not Eritrean by blood either but Ethiopian born and grew in Eritrea. Everyone knows this.

Quickly, when a country is under sovereign attack, it is a crime to raise questions of democracy, justice, economic development etc, he declared. For this reason he stayed in power unchallenged up to now. Those who raised the question are now killed, jailed or vanished.

In conclusion, the tactics and strategies Isayas Afworki of Eritrea applied to stay in power are: provoking neighboring countries first and spread false propaganda as if Eritrea is attacked. Then by declaring state of emergency to suppress questions of constitution, democracy and development, he silences everyone and it was an effective mechanism.

The results of being unpredictable leader for the last 25 years: Eritrea is left without constitution, court and clear economic policy. The political crisis brought social crisis followed by mistrust among Eritreans, frustration, hopelessness, acute poverty and fleeing. Every month, not less than 5 000 Eritreans leave Eritrea. Eritrea's government may have committed crimes against humanity, including a shoot-to-kill policy on its borders, a UN investigation says. "It is not law that rules Eritreans - but fear," says the report, which details extrajudicial killings, sexual slavery and enforced labour.

As a result, it is second to the war torn Syria in producing refugees in the world. It is said 20% of its population migrated. It is isolated completely from the international community. Ultimately, scholars listed it in the fast falling, rogue states. Eritrea turned into hell. The one man betrayed

and killed, tortured and raped his country and people. Surely, 30 to 50 years under peaceful circumstances will take to rebuild Eritrea since serious gap of generation is created. The current generation is all completely not educated. One can imagine what uneducated generation meant for a poor country in transition like Eritrea. May the almighty God save Eritrea from being another Somalia?

***The author is a scholar of international relation and researcher in the horn of Africa. He can be reached at [zazeha@gmail.com](mailto:zazeha@gmail.com)***