

THE PERCEPTIONS AND REALITIES VIS-À-VIS THE PRESENCE OF ETHIOPIAN FORCES IN SOMALIA

ZERAY HAILEMARIAM 01/19/14



And, however, admirable the role of Ethiopia might be in itself, one cannot rectify the failure simply by chronicling the admittedly much ignored origins of quagmire realities in Somalia since the 1990s. Diverse communities demanding constitutional accommodation in Somalia state will be critical to resolve the dilemma. Ultimately, it is up to the Somali people to manage their own destiny. I have said it before and I repeat it now if there is one message I want to convey to you, one thing I want to repeat again and again, that is it. Dr. Fasil Nuhom (1991) was absolutely right when he said "There is no question that poverty is the major, major obstacle to the enjoyment of human rights in Africa. To fight against poverty is to fight against human rights". Diverse communities

demanding constitutional accommodation in one state will be critical. For the lasting stability of the region, democratisation is crucial, but also not enough. Deliverance of public services and economic development will be momentous.

Introduction

Ethiopia was among the vigorous founding member states of the League of Nations and UN respectively before the independence of African states achieved. It has wholeheartedly contributed both to the establishment of the League of Nations and the UN to realizing stability so that the world could enjoy peaceful coexistence. Irrespective of governments change, Ethiopia has been always committed towards African brothers' struggle for political independence. It is for this reason that the Ethiopian Foreign Affairs Security Policy and Strategy designed by former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi principally hub on peaceful coexistence and good neighborhood with each countries regardless of the behavior of the regimes. This policy and strategy has been implemented effectively to normalize hostilities invested by former regimes.

Practical case in point is Somalia.

Somalia has been in total political collapse since 1991 which happen to be save heaven for various colors of internationally feared hardliners. Somalia has been the breeding ground of militants since then. The Islamists in Sudan and Somali were inspired by the Egyptian Muslim brothers and schooled in Saudi religious institutions (Medhane 2004). Though the main problem of Somalia is internal in nature, but the external stimulus could not be discounted.

It has been a country where various global extremists operating their anti peace mission which consumed untold lives of people. Though there is an elected government, it could not

function well for the reason that of the extremists composed of different warlords who effectively diluted it. As a result, Somalia is labeled as 'failed state' to this date. It had been torn apart and divided by warlords who sucked the blood of Somali people. Socio-economic and political institutions were dismantled. Lawlessness, daytime naked peccates and killings became the order of the day. In Somalia, during the reign of the radicals, everything sin happened. The warlords whose hanky-panky slogan had become incontestable hyped up for power. The diffusive din of war of the extremists masked under religion motto turned out to be as a way for political power.

The fragility of Somalia and the region was intensified by the hostile foreign policy calculated by Eritrea's regimes to spread political Islam to Somalia. It was also conditioned among others by the Issayas's regional hegemonic project and economic reasons that led to regional crisis. Shooting to every direction policy of Eritrean dictators has tremendously caused the region to remain fragile. The nature of the Eritrean state and its wild ambitions to play a dominant regional role has led to inter-state wars and tens of thousands of fatalities (Medhane 2004). "Meanwhile after the year 2000 the North-East African balance of power was totally altered. Eritrea was defeated and it was no longer a significant regional actor". But its frustration could shake the region. The notorious jihadists equipped and provided with latest munitions from Eritrean regime and others began flailing to appear as formidable forces in the region. Particularly, the mafia styled government of Issayas Afworki could not even refute the claim presented against it by UNSC that it has been training, financing and directing the diabolic elements in Somalia. As a result, the UNSC sanctioned it to refrain from its destructive policy which gave the recognition that Eritrean current belligerent groups are nothing but a threat for peace and stability to the region. The sanction was a certificate given in recognition of his depraved acts he has been committing from day one of his power in Asmara.

The globally composed Islamists based in Somalia were not different from any terrorists in the world. Expectedly, the Islamist courts declared jihad over Ethiopia having clearly desecrated the commandments of the Holly Quran which prohibiting jihad over Ethiopia by Prophet Mohammed. This was incontrovertibly self-evident that unveiled their literal intended flabby indecency. Least to defy it, no true Muslim believer could compromise what Prophet Mohammed said. Sarcastically enough, they did contravene and blatantly declared jihad in a country where Prophet Mohamed's followers well received. When the organized hardliners masked themselves under the Islamist courts who advocate the greater Somalia ambition occupied major parts of Somalia nearing to oust the designated government of Somalia in 2006, Ethiopian forces then entered deep into Somalia following requests from various intercontinental organizations and mainly from the Federal Transitional Government (TFG).

Here comes frustration when Ethiopia interfere

Apparently, the entrance of Ethiopia has raised some dust from a range of sections for understandable grounds. They have left no stone unturned to twist and detract the situation when Ethiopia dispatched the diligent forces. There were two ambitious groups in that hot spot. The one group is to restoring peace in Somalia and the other group is to exacerbate the situations to make whatsoever benefit out of the havoc. Considerable personalities some shrouded under the title of academician, political analyst, political party and humanitarian activist countered and went far and deprecated it as pour 'military invasion'. The irony here is that some so-called scholars and activists even went to relate it with US invasion of Iraq and portray as 'Christian state' invasion to 'Muslim state'. Some considered it as proxy war with Eritrea. Some suspected Ethiopia as a 'go and hit mission' ordered by US. Some anticipated that Ethiopia would either sink into the sand of Somalia. Few forecasted it would

aggravate the situations. Some predicted Ethiopia would be defeated. All sorts of fallacy and deride pedantic scrutiny were applied anyway.

Substantial Ethiopian legal contesting political parties even made efforts to make a passing political business out of the event to compensate their political acceptance busted at home. Their hooked power appetite conquered them to be 'fish out of water' politicians who appeared to compromise sovereignty of the nation whom they are flailing about to lead it. It did cost them much anyway. They lacked public confidence at home. All attempts tried hard to nullify Ethiopia's constructive role in Somalia went wrong. Few predicted that Ethiopia would overcome the problem and justified it as appropriate measures to break the backbone of the elements for the sake of peace in the region. Apparently, Eritrean mafias beat their war propaganda to swindle largely the Somali people and the world warning war would break out in the region if Ethiopia would interfere. Issayas wanted the extremists to hang on power for his personal calculation regardless of the cry for peace of Somali people. Until their real behavior exposed, the Islamist courts exploited this hair-splitting analysis to blind the Somali people and some Muslim communities.

However, all attempts to quash the peace mission did not hold water, if any. Let us see them one by one.

Now the jihadists are nearing to Ethiopian border to pose grave national threat. And the TFG requested Ethiopia to save it from death ghosts dressed in religious and prevarication cliché. Such impostor idiotic slogans of the elements were not new to the regime in Addis Ababa; it might have been for some people of the world. Ethiopia was well aware of the deafening war prolixity of the assembled Islamists. Then, Ethiopia had two crux grounds. It either had to fight back or submit. She had to weigh the situations with its sovereignty. Sovereignty never enters in to negotiation whatever the result would be.

Hence, Ethiopian indomitable forces had to fight back the anti peace elements before they execute their destructive jihad. Thus, they fractured and made them scattered within three weeks of fighting. Ethiopian forces went back having broken the back bone of the hazardous elements after handing over the liberated areas to the TFG forces. Few Ethiopian battalions remained to this date to maintain peace in Somalia.

The bad reasoning of relating with US invasion to Iraq

US invaded Iraqi government though UN opposed and refused to authorize it. The US accused Saddam Hussein regime of supporting Osama Bin Laden without any authentic confirmation. Saddam Hussein was neither terrorist regime nor fan of terrorism. US invasion of Iraq caused numerous innocent deaths and billion dollars worth materials and is still causing in Iraq. The US military faced pierced opposition from the Iraqi people and were sunk in the dusty they created. US did not stabilize, it rather is destabilizing it that led Iraq a place where new and old fundamentalists emerged and freely operate. Iraq became where suicide bombings and terrorism go off frequently. During Saddam regime, these were unheard off. Iraq was quite peaceful authoritarian state. And there are no grounds to confute US invasion to Iraq but it showed the irresponsibility of US for world stability. Iraq and USA never share borders. Therefore, one can say that the entry was illegal and pour invasion in nature whatever reasons presented to justify it.

*But when it comes to Ethiopia's entry into Somalia, it was neither invasion nor occupation. Somalia shares longer border with Ethiopia. It was Ethiopia targeted closely. **In the first place,** Ethiopia did not enter into Somalia to avoid the globally recognized Somali government as US did to Saddam but to eliminate the unlegislated elements that ruined the country. **Second,** it entered following the request of the Somali government and the people.*

Third, it entered because the fundamentalists declared open jihad against it. **Fourth**, the AU, IGAD and international community requested Ethiopia to play its courteous mitigating circumstance policy. In any, there is no international law that permits terrorists to freely operate or not to be hit. When evaluated objectively, Ethiopia has stabilized Somalia. It did not target civilians but elements. That is why we see Somali people well receiving Ethiopian forces where as Iraqi people receiving by throwing stones at American troops. Ethiopia has reduced the threat and brought virtual peace. Ethiopia played decisive responsibility for Somalia and the region to regain political stability through reducing a danger. Had not been for Ethiopia, the region could have been engulfed in exhaustive intra and inter-state conflicts. These upshots are self-evident which water down the claims to relate Ethiopian entrance into Somalia with the US invasion of Iraq. It was an attempt spluttered out to compare the incomparable at any rate. Generally, Ethiopia's entrance into Somalia was given different fallacy analysis though gone wrong.

Was it 'go and hit mission' ordered by US?

The Islamists did declare jihad on Ethiopia. The Islamists were beating their war drum against Ethiopia. They were claiming to annex Ethiopian Somali ethnic groups to create greater Somalia; an ambition promoted by earlier regimes. Ethiopia shares the longest border in the region with Somalia. Due to their ethnic and clan dynamics, the Ethiopian Somali were inappropriately and illegally been claimed by former dictator Siad Barre of Somalia. Because of the hit and run policies of Alittihad, the Ethiopian Somali region was left with no development hope and was suffered from the terrorist acts. Ethiopia had entered Somalia where OLF, ONLF and other Al-Qaida wing Islamist courts are based to dry up frequent threat. How could be so convincing arguing that Ethiopia was ordered by US when Ethiopia was first targeted by the extremist courts? One sane person can easily reject the baseless analysis. It, however, could be said it was contingent operation that please both countries. Therefore, the debate does not hold water. Just Ethiopia was plagued and had to defend.

What happened after Ethiopia's entry into Somalia?

The elements were reduced to the extent that they could not conduct militarily offensive or defensive tactics and are driven out of major parts of Somalia. Somali people gained the room to respire an air of peace for the first time in two decades long. Ethiopia fractured the anti peace elements which led to TFG function and take political and economic corrective measures. After all, it is because Of Ethiopia that AMISON could seat their foot in Somalia to maintain peace and stability. The Somali people inflicted by diabolical depredation of the Islamist courts dilapidates them together with Ethiopian forces. The Somali youths desist assisting and detached the detritus Extremists. Ethiopian Somali region has hosted the fifth Nations, Nationalities and Peoples celebration as a result. The unique victory of Ethiopian forces was in dilacerating the devious elements and diminishing their detestation din from the mind of the people. *Destabilization regimes* and groups were cut. All intended plans were attained.

What do the situations currently look like?

The situations in Somalia are not depressing rather promising. Currently, embassies, international nongovernmental and governmental bodies are reopening their offices in Somalia. Economic and political measures are underway to rebuilding the ruined state of Somalia. Serious national efforts are going on Somalia to fix bombed bridges, roads and houses. National reconciliation among various clans has been well on the move as to develop national trust. This is the most effective way to create majority accepted functioning government in Somalia to extenuating circumstances by segregating hoodlum

war hungry elements if peace is to prevail. Precisely, basic needed activities are being taken place in order to restore peace and stability thereby economic and democracy developments in Somalia. It is noticeably enough for those who predicted Somalia's problem is insoluble forever. To be fair again, it is headache news for regimes like Eritrea and other sadist forces who think they would benefit whatsoever out of the anarchy episodes in Somalia. Anyway, it is indeed splendid news seeing Somalia in this potential peace situation.

What do the Somali people say about it?

It was not without reason that the news of Ethiopian forces would join AMISON has been well received by the international community and largely by the Somali people. Somali current Ambassador to Ethiopia in his exclusive interview with WIC last week stated that the peace loving people of Somalia have appreciated the news. According to him, the Ethiopian forces that played decisive role in dismantling extremists and rebuilding Somalia's national effort to peace and development will unmistakably help AMISON to finish the mission in shorter period of time. "There are number of reasons why our people and government are happy", he continues, Ethiopians forces are well aware of the intention and mission of Alshebab and realities of Somalia, second they are aware of the culture and behavior of our people, third they are brave enough to secure peace. Fourth, they are ethically accepted by our people. Fifth, they are loved and involved in helping people out of their military mission. Therefore they will effectively be of assistance of our country". They are not peculiar about realities in Somalia. Ethiopian forces' task to alleviate tranquility and solidarity in the region in general and in Somalia in particular was second to none.

Ethiopian Ambassador to Somalia Wondimu Asamnow in his part had to say this. "The people of Somalia deem the Ethiopian forces as god sent savior of peace. "Business and investment are booming". He said Alshebab has no any militarily grounds and could not conduct militarily offensive. The only thing Alsheba can do is to commit suicide bombing tactics because it does not require much people to conduct since it has no the capacity to fight as military wing as before.

Ambassador Ahmed said both countries are heading to economically integrate by healing the scars left by the former regimes. Thanks to Ethiopia, Somalia is better off. We have solid confidence on Ethiopian brothers that they are heartily devoted for peaceful coexistence. "The Ethiopian authorities firmly believe that the region cannot remain stable without securing Somalia. The threat Alshebab left in the mind of the people is even fading out and people are enjoying in Mogadishu. The good thing is that both Ambassadors revealed that the Eritrean regime is getting weaker internally which in turn contribute to go Alshebaba weaker and weaker. They attributed the sanctions put on Eritrea. This showed that how much the Somali people have realized the taste of peace they gained in the last few years". All possible sources of Alshebab are drying up since its base areas were taken over. Ethiopian forces are alert and capable of deciphering the movement of Alshebab.

What must be done to sustain peace in Somalia?

The current realities in Somalia can simply invalidate the debates presented by the above mentioned groups. Therefore, from the realities on the ground, it is easily possible to cut the entrenched claims of different interested groups that 'Ethiopia invaded Somalia' not to stand by its legs. Ethiopia was not meddling in the affairs of Somalia but helping them up on brotherly request. There is no one who can speak of the truth than the Somali people. Ethiopia has proofed that it has no any ambition rather than facilitating the peace situations that Somali brothers aspire for and defend its national security from the Anti peace elements. Ethiopia has done its part for world peace anyway.

Anti peace elements are marginalized and vomited out by the people. Today, Somalia might need financial and material help from the international community to rebuild its ruined infrastructures. Who knows that one day a peaceful Somalia may help others when they are in need? There will not be peace if the other side of the world is unsecured. Coordinated efforts are needed towards Somalia. Development must be put in place to create job for youths. If the youngsters remain hopeless, it will be an opportunity for extremists to recruit them again. There is no question that poverty is the major, major obstacle to the enjoyment of human rights in Africa. To fight against poverty is to fight against human rights (Dr. Fasil Nuhom 1991).

And, however, admirable the role of Ethiopia might be in itself, we cannot rectify the failure simply by chronicling the admittedly much ignored origins of Somalia's quagmire realities since the 1990s. Diverse communities demanding constitutional accommodation in one state will be critical. For lasting stability of the region, democratisation is crucial, but also not adequate. Equitable deliverance of public services and economic development will be significant. Ultimately, it is up to the Somali people to manage their own destiny. I have said it before and I repeat it now if there is one message I want to convey to you, one thing I want to repeat again and again, that is it.

The writer of this article can be reached at zazeha@gmail.com