**A Week in the Horn of Africa**

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The geopolitical makeup of the Horn of Africa (HOA) is going through rapid changes that will affect the relationships of the nations in the region for good. The changes will influence the economies and security stances of the countries in the region. It will have implication on a global scale on issues of global import.  What is evident is the fact that events, decisions and actions of one nation can influence the entire region with global ramifications. With this in mind, this report will try to highlight current developments and investigate ramifications and possible meanings for the future of the region and global its implications nation by nation.

**Kenya**

Kenya elected a President, Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta. The elections went relatively peacefully compared to the 2007 elections that rocked the foundation of the Nation. It is also apparent that the political leaders of Kenya decided to look for the best interest and stability of the nation and facilitated for a smoother transition by allowing the court to give the final verdict on election results. Therefore, Kenya’s political leaders averted potentially violent reaction of 2007 that jolted the region.

**Uganda**

Uganda’s interest in Somalia was based on dollars earned as part of AMISOM troops. Outside AMISOM, Uganda has limited national interest in Somalia if any at this point. Therefore, Uganda has changed its mind because of the rich oil deposits discovered in Uganda. In November of 2012, the outcry from the West about Uganda’s announcement of troop pullout was intense. Uganda however, is committed to pull its troops out of Somalia.

**Somalia**

In April 12, the IMF recognized the Federal Government of Somalia, and offered to provide technical assistance. The government in Somalia has been receiving considerable support from the international community. The verdict is out in the case of Somalia. While there are reports of stability there is no sign that the movement is integrated.

On April 23, addressing the parliament Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn said, “Ethiopia is anxious to pull its forces out of Somalia as soon as possible." On April 25, 2013 All Africa reported that, “Ethiopia's foreign ministry has denied there are plans to immediately withdraw all troops from Somalia, despite remarks by the Ethiopian prime minister expressing frustration with the pace of military progress in the country.”

This is raising more questions about Prime Minister Desalegn’s power and sign of serious differences within the ruling party.

**Sudan, South Sudan, (Oromia)**

April 12, President Omar al Bashir paid a visit to South Sudan and met with counterpart Salva Kiir for talks about bilateral relations, implementation of agreements they signed previously, oil revenues, and other matters of interest.

Whilst there are still pockets of unrests, the renewed relation between South Sudan and Sudan are by far the most significant. The resumption of the flow of oil is a sign that there has been a clear understanding about the importance of oil to the stability of these nations and the region. Sudan’s oil is critical for the economic viability of the nations in the region.

The interest of Sudan and South Sudan (SS) converges on oil. Oil is a lifeline to both countries. Oil means stability for both countries hence; there is no option but to come to the negotiating table and come to terms with the reality. The visit of President Bashir stands as significant development and evidence that there is will to abide by the agreements. That should also serve as trajectory to a new era of cooperation towards development, stability and growth. Many of the rebels have exchanged their guns for amnesty and there appears to be a focus towards a new direction based on peace.

Moreover, South Sudan is trying to build a nation from scratch. One of the key ingredients into making that happen is sea outlet. The Lamu rail project is designed to connect the South with Lamu port in Kenya. Interestingly, the project passes through Ethiopia on the areas that border Oromia. What that would mean for the future of the Oromo people time will tell but it is certainly a step towards freedom for those that aspire for independence of Oromia.

One thing to watch in relation to these countries is the Nile Treaty. This is an issue that these countries can have opposing interests. Sudan is entirely dependent on the Nile for its very existence and South Sudan is one of the contributing nations.

**Egypt**

On April 5, President Omar Bashir of Sudan and President Mohamed Morsi of Egypt met in Cairo where they addressed many issues of bilateral importance. Sudan and Egypt are neighbors that share long history, vast stretch of boarder-lines and most importantly, the Nile River which is a lifeline and major security concern for both countries.

Interestingly, these neighbors have never taken full advantages of their connection for economic and other gains until now. Today, Egypt is eager to blow-open its relations by opening the borders for trade. To that end, they agreed to open the rail and road connection to boost trade.

On April 15, President Mohamed Morsi and Foreign Minister Mohamed Amr of Egypt met with the Eritrean foreign minister Osman Saleh and Presidential adviser for political affairs, Yamane Gabreab met in Cairo to boost bilateral relations between the countries and discuss a number of regional and international issues. According to reports, President Isaias Afwerki is also set to meet President Morsi of Egypt soon.

Ethiopia’s propaganda machinery tried to spin events by releasing statements designed to instill fear, stir-up emotion, to confuse and distract from the real issues facing Ethiopia, and to entice Ethiopians into rallying behind the government against Egypt and Eritrea.

These statements were released through government/TPLF friendly sites supported by articles designed to demonize Egypt and Eritrea with fabricated stories of “[Eritrea supports Egypt’s historic rights” on the Nile River](http://tigray.net/homepage/in-the-news/3312-eritrea-supports-egypt%e2%80%99s-) and tried to misinform Eritrea’s true position about the Nile vis-à-vis the Nile Treaty.

Nile is Egypt’s life line. Any disruption to the flow of the Nile creates existential security problem for Egypt. Over the last decade, Hosni Mubarak was outmaneuvered by Meles Zenawi in regards to their status and power of influence vis-à-vis the US and Western nations. Meles was the mainstay at global high-powered international leadership gatherings. The location of the African Union being in Ethiopia also played a significant role in placing Ethiopia on a position of influence.Hence, Ethiopia was able to set the agendas and influence the outcomes using hard pressure tactics.

To the contrary, Hosni Mubarak ignored Egypt’s national interest as he pursued the interests of Israel and the US and presented hardly any challenge to Meles’s aggressive positioning vis-à-vis the Nile treaty and Egypt’s political and diplomatic global or regional influence.

That all changed with the ouster of Mubarak. The aggressive push of the Nile issue by Ethiopia has given Mohammed Morsi of Egypt a cause to rally the people of Egypt around. The Nile is a perfect reason to change the attention from the unrest plaguing Egypt. Therefore, Ethiopia’s posturing and insistence of the Renaissance Dam is the code-red for Egypt and a disguised blessing for Morsi. Hence, for the first time Egypt is aggressively reasserting its geopolitical position diplomatically by utilizing necessary advantage particularly with Sudan and Eritrea.

**Eritrea**

On April 2, President Isaias Afewerki visited with The Emir of the State of Qatar, HH Sheikh Hamad Bin Al Thani in Doha for talks on “bilateral issues”.

The US lobbied and passed a sanction measure against the government and people of Eritrea by fabricating stories about a phantom plane that delivered arms to Somali militias and other lies. Since, the Somalia arms embargo is “partially lifted,” yet, Eritrea is still under sanction.

However, the travesty of justice and abuse of international matters by super powers pervades. To retain the illegally conceived sanctions, the US/West has changed the strategy from the Somalia to humanitarian issues. The current drive to legitimize the UN human rights rapporteur on Eritrea is designed to do just that. The fact that the UN rapporteur is going to investigate Eritrea’s human rights situation from Ethiopia a country at war with Eritrea is a serious blow to UN’s credibility, process and impartiality.

Eritrea however, is in a perfect geopolitical and diplomatic position. With Eritrea, Egypt and Sudan firmly aligned based on their interests that include trade, cross border commerce, the Nile and importantly the Red Sea; all attempts to jolt Eritrea have failed and Eritrea’s prospects are better by the day.

Furthermore, the fear, according to The Office of The Director of National Intelligence, part of the US intelligence agency report entitled, “Global Trends 2030: Alternative Trends,” they reported “Ethiopia is among the top 15 states expected to disintegrate and become ungovernable in the next fifteen years,” is motivation US to look for alternative relations in the region and it appears the US has eyed Eritrea in that respect. To that end, the US is trying to ease its way into Eritrea. Recently the US reopened its embassy in Eritrea and started giving non-immigrant visas. There is also a new approach and attempt to reengage the region and particularly Eritrea.

In addition, the race between the superpowers and Eritrea’s strategic position is placing Eritrea in a perfect position. The US bet heavily on Ethiopia to destabilize Eritrea and when that failed, the US is forced to deal with Eritrea directly to mitigate Chinese advantages.

**Ethiopia**

On April 11, The Emir of the State of Qatar, HH Sheikh Hamad Bin Al Thani, was accorded red carpet treatment when he was received by Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn,

The irony, in April of 2008, the Foreign Ministry of Ethiopia released statement stating,

“Ethiopia broke off diplomatic relations with Qatar,” saying, “the energy-rich Gulf state has become a major source of instability in the Horn of Africa. Qatar has left no stone unturned to cause harm to Ethiopia's national security. All those who are prepared to foment instability in Ethiopia and undermine the country's security have been given support and encouragement by Qatar."

This raises many questions: A) did Qatar change its relations with Eritrea?  B) If not, does it mean that Ethiopia has changed its view about the relationship of Qatar and Eritrea and, why etc…

These visits triggered speculations about shuttle diplomacy and rumors that Qatar is working behind the scene to mediate between Eritrea and Ethiopia amongst other things.

Amidst these developments, Ethiopians in the Diaspora took to the streets of Europe and North America opposing the land grab in Ethiopia and the selling of bonds to help build the Renaissance Dam of Ethiopia claiming,

“It is illegal to sell stocks and bond in the U.S. without first obtaining the necessary permits from the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). However, the Ethiopian regime has been defrauding Ethiopians in the U.S. by selling the so-called “Nile River Investment Bond” for the past two years.”

According to Ecadforum.com and other Ethiopian sites, on April 21, Norway police in Stavanger were forced to stop a fund raising event organized by the Ethiopian embassy representative Abay Mebrat Beyene to sell Nile dam bond. In addition, thousands took to the streets on Oslo Norway opposing the ethnic cleansing or evictions of Ethnic Amharas from their home and farmlands. Ethiopian authorities have been receiving similar reception everywhere they travelled. In South Africa, Foreign Minister Tedros Adhanom was chased-out and had to hurry out embarrassed dropping his wallet. The question: are these developments just nuisances or a reflection of bigger problems in the nation?

In Ethiopia, thousands of ethnic Amharas have been forcefully evicted from the Benshangul region in Western Ethiopia. Masses of unassuming people including vulnerable women and children have been uprooted and forced to leave their livelihood in the most callous circumstances. This forced eviction was confirmed by international news agencies including the Voice of America.

This is not the first time that such forced and ethnic based eviction was carried out targeting the Amharas in Ethiopia. Last year, thousands were also evicted from Maji Guraferda a location in Southern Ethiopia in a similar action taken by the local authorities. It also happened in Gambella prompting Genocide Watch to release statements.

On April 15, in Washington, DC, Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia (SMNE) addressed the United States congressional committee led by Congressman Christopher Smith, Chairman of the U.S. House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations and members of the subcommittees briefing on land grabs in Africa.

Ironically, the land grab, the ethnic cleansing of the Amharas and the Renaissance Dam is intertwined since the main tributaries of the Nile or the Blue Nile is located in the Amhara region where the uprooting of ethnic Amharas is taking place. These farmers are the true owners of the land and know nothing else other than the farmland they tilled for decades if not centuries. This area is also experiencing public unrest.

As The Office of The Director of National Intelligence reported, Ethiopia is loose on-the-seam politically, diplomatically, economically, socially, ethnically, militarily and regionally. Ethiopia is the epicenter, a country where all the issues of the region converge and not necessarily for good or for the interests of the people and countries of the region.

The ruling party, the TPLF/EPRDF has bet all its powers on serving the interest of international power-players at the expense of the people and the countries of the region. They pursued a narrow ethnic interest at the expense of all other ethnicities and the national interest of Ethiopia. Led by the late Meles Zenawi, the TPLF/EPRDF, believed they can control the region by controlling the agendas of the region and Africa as they attempted on many issues including the global climate issue and used it for their own advantages. TPLF used any leverage at their disposal to gain advantage in order to assert influence over the issues and leaders of the region.

The best illustration of this is Sudan’s President Bashir and the fact that he was held hostage by ICC’s arrest warrant. Meles used the African Union offices headquartered in Ethiopia to his advantage and manipulated the political environment of Sudan. However, as history shows, no nation can control global agendas because it is impossible to control events.

Another example: initially, Ethiopian Muslims demonstrations were a perfect fit for the narrative of radical Islam threatening to destabilize Ethiopia. TPLF did not envision that these protests could turn against it creating unpredictable political and security challenge for the nation. The Renaissance Nile Dam project is also another issue receiving stiff opposition worldwide rendering TPLF agents immobile and unable to give their spiel.

Furthermore, no one envisioned Kenya and Uganda pulling away and, in turn the West taking control over security matters in Somalia negating Ethiopia’s predominant political agenda of using Somalia to control the agendas of the region.

Therefore, it is accurate when The Office of The Director of National Intelligence reports that Ethiopia will be ungovernable in 15 years. Because, there is no way that the TPLF/EPRDF can control Ethiopia a nation as ethnically diverse, a nation that is fragmented by regions with discontented populace suppressed and ethnic cleansed for years by selling international agendas. Furthermore, there is no military power that can muzzle a nation indefinitely.

**Summary**

The current developments in the region reflect the real interest of the countries and the stake holders involved. Over the last 15 years, the West, led by US have dominated the agendas and issues of the region and used their agents to infiltrate the region as witnessed in Somalia. The US used the specter of terrorism to infiltrate Somalia while at the same time punishing any State with different views as with Eritrea which they slapped with sanctions based on fabricated accusations and lies. The US also pursued its agendas with tenacity and used all the countries in the region to focus on the single issue of Somalia. Uganda, Kenya, Djibouti were pressured politically, militarily, diplomatically and economically with Ethiopia taking the lead.

That changed instantly when the US realized that Ethiopia failed to deliver on Somalia and Eritrea. Therefore, after decades failures the US/West have taken ownership of the Somalia issue. The UK reopened its embassy and the business of running the new Somalia appears to be in motion. These changes have affected the region by freeing the nations of the region to pursue their agendas.

For decades, under constant US pressures, the national interest and agendas of the nations of the region was placed on hold like a dormant volcano. That could give false impression that all is safe and good. The reality however, this active volcano is revealing itself in a magnificent way. This is neither a prophecy nor a prediction of what will happen.

Ethiopia is the epicenter, the volcano from which all the lava is flowing. From inside Ethiopia; the issues of the people of Oromo, Ogaden and Gambella are simmering; the unanswered issue of Ethiopian Muslims will evolve; ethnic cleansing of the Amhara people has created a spontaneous rebellion with potential to spillover etc…

Regionally, the issue of Nile is certain to push Egypt into finding ways to destabilize Ethiopia. The occupation of Eritrean territories by Ethiopia is time bomb that could ignite at any given time because the border issue is sovereignty matter for Eritrea.

These realities are generating serious concerns in the West for fears that Ethiopia could implode. To mitigate the hastening of the decline the West is putting pressures on Ethiopia to vacate Eritrean territories which in turn prompted the TPLF to talk about Eritrea and peace for the first time in more than five years. The regimes stand on Eritrea until now has been regime change prompting the question what happened to that agenda?

The reality, Ethiopia has become the albatross on the US’s neck. On May 3, the US State Department was compelled to rebuke Ethiopia’s Human Rights abuses publicly. To date, the only way the TPLF/EPRDF survived was by selling instability, conflict, fear of terrorism and stability. They told the West, we are the glue that holds Ethiopia together. However that is further from the truth because the ruling party failed to create strategic partnerships within Ethiopia. The Amharas, the people of Oromo, Ogaden, Gambella, Somalis and Afars detest the ruling party. Egypt, Eritrea, and Somalia would like to see the ruling party long gone.

The upper hand Ethiopia had as the number one boots provider of the region particularly in Somalia is minimized by the fact that the West has taken ownership of the issue of Somalia. In short, the stability of the region is a threat to the TPLF/EPRDF’s very existence. For a regime that breathed Western donation, any pullback of funding is life threatening. The reality dictates however; at this juncture, it is a must time for the West to choose between saving Ethiopia or, saving TPLF at the expense of Ethiopia and the region. Hence, saving TPLF is not priority. Therefore TPLF is doomed. The only question, will they follow on Derg’s footstep and exit in peace or drag the people of Tigray into a genocidal path.

**Conclusion**

The HOA is not as important as the Indian Ocean or the Red Sea to the international community. In order to play their roles correctly Egypt, Sudan and Eritrea have begun to collectively assert their roles within their strategic interests based on the Nile and the Red Sea. This will change the geopolitical dynamics of the region. On the other side Kenya and Somalia must work together to ensure stability. The competition between the Superpowers will also play a significant role.

The US could no longer use military might to assert influence when China is exploiting dollars and sending engineers to build infrastructures for access. Hence, the days that the TPLF controlling African agendas is gone because the US must compete in every African nation.

Therefore, the people of the HOA must collectively work to push the criminals of the region the TPLF of the cliff so the true interests of the people in the region can be realized.

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