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| **US Eritrea policy, Misguided and Harmful**  **Amanuel Biedemariam**  How can Americans measure the effectiveness of US policy on a given nation? What are the benchmarks on how, or what these agendas, objectives or values are based upon? Do US have interest in Eritrea and what are these interests? How does US Eritrea relation benefit Americans and so forth…  In the US hardly anyone that can answer these questions including those in government. However, when it is an obscure country, alien to the average citizen, say Eritrea, the likelihood of Americans having knowledge is nil or slightly above zero.  These types of questions are what Americans need to ask if they want to understand why people feel the ways that they do about the US be it positive or negative. They need to take a proactive approach to have a say on US policies and their relationship with the world. That is the only way that they can control their destiny as it relates to the world. It is a way they can hold governmental and political leaders accountable. And instead of basing their views, opinions and perceptions on what diplomats, politicians, media, governmental or nongovernmental agencies say, they can decide on matters based on concrete understanding of the world first hand.  It is the only way that they can challenge the hard-to-dislodge embedded interest in Washington. These are interests of multinational organizations, interest-groups, NGO’s and powerful interests with deep penetration into government power-circles backed by powerful lobbyists with experience in global matters and, greater say on the dictates of US foreign policies. They are rich, powerful and influential. Hence, It is incumbent upon every citizen to fight for what is right.  As an Eritrean-American, one who is personally affected by US policies on Eritrea and as a longtime observer of US policies of the region; it is critical to appeal to US leaders to reevaluate US policies and change them for the better.  To understand US Eritrea policy it is important to look back at the history and the genesis of how the policies endured. It is also critical to understand what the ramifications of US policies have meant to the people of Eritrea and the region since. These policies are regionally-attuned with a broader US agenda in perspective. To understand the core of US Eritrea policies, it is always reveling to quote  John Foster Dulles who served as U.S. Secretary of State under Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower who said:   "From the point of view of justice, the opinion of the Eritrean people must receive consideration. Nevertheless, the strategic interests of the United States in the Red Sea Basin and world peace make it necessary that the country be linked with our ally Ethiopia."  The statement above, in effect, sealed the fate of the people of Eritrea immersing them to unending conflict with a neighboring country that the US linked by force, deliberately. Eritrea was dismantled as a nation systematically by destroying the civil society organizations and the parliamentary body that existed then. The rights the people of Eritrea were negated to accommodate US interests through manipulations, extortion and sheer force.  Secretary Dulles outlined US interests as, A) World Peace and B) Red Sea Basin.  The US pursued Eritrea in pursuit of global geopolitical, economic and security interests. But the question is what has changed since? Have the interests shifted, changed or stopped? How did the initial plan to subjugate Eritrea further US interests’ workout? What is US geopolitical status in the region since? Has it helped or hurt the people of the region? Did it secure or help secure world peace? Furthermore, was world peace ever a genuine interest?  The simple answer is nothing has changed. The US is still pursuing the Red Sea Basin but instead of World Peace, the theme has changed to Global War on Terror (GWOT), human rights and humanitarian agendas.  The GWOT gives US carte-blanche to infiltrate any territory that it can without having to justify or require permission as witnessed in Somalia under the pretext of fighting terrorism because The War on Terrorism has essentially nullified the War Powers Act.  The President can go to war with any nation claiming “Fighting Terror” without having to go to congress for permission. Human rights are also used to demonize nations and justify actions.  The stability and viability of the nations in the region has deteriorated drastically since the end of the WWII. Despite claims of stability Somalia remains unstable. Systemic continuous interventions by the West and Ethiopia have dissolved the public institutions that existed in Somalia to the point that the children of Somalia have gone without education for a long time. This deprivation will affect generations of Somalis. The spinoff-ramifications to the nation’s institutions and the people will linger for decades. The collective loss of life combined with persistent deprivation amounted to one of humanities greatest calamities.  The Horn of Africa (HoA) has seen a steady decline in terms of stability due to outside interventions. Instabilities in Sudan, S Sudan and Somalia provide stark examples of what external interferences can do. While there is appearance of lull, the future of the region will be bleak if US policies continue on the same path particularly against Eritrea.  US Eritrea policy has always been to subjugate Eritrea and place it under the custodianship of Ethiopia. The question is how did that strategy pan out the first time around? Eritrea was placed in a bad position and as a result forced to fight for over thirty years to become independent. The amount of human and material loss for Eritrea and the region was incalculable. It set-back developments by decades turning Eritrea into a barren land. Eritrea was stripped bare of her human and material wealth. And no one is accountable.  Undeterred by the odds however, the people of Eritrea managed to eject Ethiopia out of Eritrea by force. Furthermore, Eritrea penetrated deep into Ethiopia, yanked the system out and ascertained independence. At that time, the farsighted leaders of Eritrea did the right thing by keeping Ethiopia intact since they believed that the interests of Eritrea, Ethiopia and the world is served well by a united and strong Ethiopia.  For period of about seven years peace reigned in the region. There existed a new era of cooperation among the nations and the people of the region giving people hope that lasting peace could be achieved. That however, was short-lived. As soon as Eritrea asserted independence by releasing her currency, the race to undermine Eritrea’s independence started with full force.  Under the pretext of a border dispute a full campaign was conducted to undermine Independence taking the lives of 20,000 Eritreans and over 100,000 Ethiopians during the wars of 1998-2000. The war ended by cementing a final and binding Algiers Agreement that allowed for the drawing of the borders. However, in breach of international laws, with full support of the US, the minority regime in Ethiopia flouted international agreement it signed and declared a new war it named, “No War No Peace ” designed to methodically weaken Eritrea into submission.  Wikileaks made public how US and Ethiopian authorities collaborated to undermine Eritrea at the UN, AU, EU, IGAD and all over in pursuit of the illegal sanctions. To suffocate Eritrea economically, politically, militarily and diplomatically nothing was left unturned. They targeted every aspect of Eritrean life including the youth, social, ethnic and religious fabrics. They used every power at their disposal to weaken and un-seed the government of Eritrea. They failed.  In the process, the US gave cart blanch to the minority regime of Meles Zenawi to impose its will on the people of Ethiopia. The only time the US came hard on the regime was when Ethiopian forces used Humvees to attack civilians in 2005 protests creating a PR nightmare for the image of the vehicle and its association with US troops.  Unchecked military, financial, political and diplomatic support for the minority regime meant that it is free to do as it wishes. It gave the minority regime unchecked powers to create ethnic based system that it can manipulate using divide and rule system; financial prowess used to manipulate individuals and to buy influence using big name lobbyists; political cover in the hill that overlooked gross human rights violations including genocides in the Ogaden, Gambella and the Amhara regions of Ethiopia, as well are ethnic cleansing in an effort to clear communities to sell farm-lands to multinational organizations; immunity from war crimes for mutilating civilians in Somalia; cover from international laws for breach of Somalia arms embargo and for invading Somalia; cover to imprison individuals, quell decent and other-freedoms using the guise of terrorism; and cover to build Tigray the home-base of the regime by funneling funds from national coffers giving it disparate advantages over the rest of the nation…    The US accorded the minority regime many advantages. The regime received access to the G8 and G-20 meetings; made the regime representative of African countries on important global matters and placed them on a position of international influence. Using the AU headquarters in Addis as advantage, the regime used the support of US diplomats to manipulate African leaders and used these advantages to pursue the regimes interests that serve narrow agendas at the expense of regional and continental interests.  What that did is create a spoiled child concerned only about what the West have to say and not concerned about the constituencies it is supposed to serve or the neighbors it supposed to work with. The wellbeing of the people of Ethiopia and the region became inconsequential to the regime. As a result the regime finds itself in isolation and under pressure from within and with its neighbors.  Furthermore, US hostilities against Eritrea and joint US/Ethiopia campaigns are ongoing unabated to the detriment of the people of Ethiopia and the region. Ethiopia is a fractured-glass- bottle filled with toxic materials ready to shatter from external and internal pressures. Many studies including US National Intelligence Council Global Trends 2010 have reported about Ethiopia’s fragility.  For decades the US pinned Eritrea using Ethiopia. However, what the US is currently pursuing is a threat to the very existence of Eritrea. If the US wants stability of the region and give Ethiopia chance to remain intact the demarcated borders must be respected. Ethiopia, a client state of the US must be made to respect the Algiers Agreement a treaty it signed, complete the Hague decision and exit sovereign Eritrean territories. Ethiopia must realize it cannot negate a treaty it signed because nothing can change that.  Eritrea won independence with blood. Eritreans have paid dearly in order to be where they are today. What US need to understand is no matter what is done to undermine Eritrea’s independence at the UN and other avenues; the people of Eritrea, cognizant of the games at play, and armed with decades of experience, have rebuffed the trickery outright.  The US has pushed Eritrea as far as it can and found walls it cannot penetrate for decades. In the process, the situation in Ethiopia has deteriorated to the point that if unchecked it will be uncontrollable. The most important fact in this is that the US must be clear that Ethiopia cannot survive at the expense of Eritrea.  The US must ease the tension and back off-to allow Eritrea and Ethiopia to resume natural relations as sovereign nations. The leaders of Eritrea have ascertained that they want a united and strong Ethiopia. To the contrary, the regime in Ethiopia have stoked fire everywhere in Ethiopia and the region that it is now a liability to the US and thus easy for the US to place the neck of the criminal regime on the table to maintain US interests and to save Ethiopia and help bring stability in the region. It is high time for US to reevaluate its position and work with Eritrea for the sake of all involved.  [Awetnayu@hotmail.com](mailto:Awetnayu@hotmail.com) |