**The Horn of Africa Imperatives**

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The key question regarding the Horn of Africa is what the desired outcome for the region is. The answer for that are peace, stability and direction towards sustainable development. The question then becomes, who has the interest for peace in the region. That requires honest assessment by all involved humanitarians, peace-loving people, national and regional as well as international actors. Ultimately however, the people of the region will have to decide who is for peace and who is not. So who is for peace in the Horn of Africa (HOA) and who is threatened by peace in the region?

In an interview with EriTV, President Isaias Afewerki of Eritrea made the following remarks regarding the situation in Somalia. “Most people ask and presume that all the interest on Somalia is based on the riches that Somalia possesses. They think it is about oil, uranium or the strategic Indian Ocean location that Somalia owns etc… However, many fail to realize that the main interest stems from the fact that they see a united Somali-Nation as a big threat.”

To examine it further, a look-back at developments since World War II and can discern one fact; i.e. those that got involved in the region are primarily involved for their own interest and not the interest of the people of the region. This is true for Italy in Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia; true for Great Britain that was entrenched in various parts of the region including Kenya and Sudan in major ways. The United States, the Soviet Union, France and China have been deeply involved in the region and remain seized to date.

However, throughout the decades, none has brought peace or the semblance of it. To the contrary, the sufferings of the people increased tremendously to the point of genocides even holocaust considering the suffering, displacement and lives lost over the decades. The suffering competes with major human calamities of world history. But who is counting? Who cares about the lives of the millions of families?

One constant, Western power, in order to pursue their interests always enlists leaders that are puppets. That strategy has been very effective for them thus far. The failures of the various regimes in the region reflected the geopolitical juxtaposition. The fall of Ziad Barre, the deterioration of Somalia and, the fall of Mengistu Haliemariam of Ethiopia are the byproducts of the Cold War. Similarly, the current problems that permeate in the region stem from Western interference in large part.

The question is what is the interest of foreign powers in the region? Key fact, historically, the interest of Western powers has always clashed against the interest of the people in the region. The interest of the people is governance under sovereign nations that are representative of their needs and national aspirations in peace. But that is under constant assault making it harder for nations to remain intact as sovereign nations as in the case of Somalia. Many nations like Sudan are under constant threat by actors that would like to see Sudan divided and weakened further. Nations that are united and responsive to the needs of their constituencies represent a threat to Western interests seeking full control of the region to further their geopolitical aspirations. Hence, to look at one issue in isolation and debate it may be counterproductive. One must look at the situation within global context to make sense of what is taking place in the region.

**A Snapshot of the Current Geopolitical Realities**

A quick glance at the current geopolitical makeup of the Mediterranean Sea easily reveals that NATO nations have controlled the regional realities entirely with one exception, Syria. In North Africa, one can argue from Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya as well as Egypt are under control of Western led NATO circles. NATO controls Southern Europe and Northern African countries from the Mediterranean. As it currently stands the Chinese, Russians and others are outmaneuvered from the region except in Syria. In the Red Sea, an area that starts in South Eastern Egypt and ends at the gates of the Indian Ocean; the US is deeply entrenched in most countries that surround the sea from Saudi Arabia, to Yemen, Egypt and Djibouti. The only countries remaining are Eritrea and Sudan. In Sudan China is the key player. While there are signs that Eritrea and China foster close relations, it is hard to tell the extent. However, it remains clear that the West is intent to remove China’s influence from the region. In order to attain that goal the West needs to control Eritrea and Sudan at best or, destabilize them in the least to gain the geopolitical supremacy of the Red Sea.

This is a scheme designed to give the West almost absolute control of the Mediterranean and Red Sea waters. The extension reaches the Indian Ocean to the strait of Hurmuz where another geopolitical juxtaposition is taking place. The focus of the West is to minimize the influence and reach of China, India, Russia and others who can compete against them. The West led by the US and France are firmly planted in Djibouti and would like to have the same presence in Yemen, a choke point, in one of the busiest and most important waterways of the world.

To attain their geopolitical goals these powers are using all advantages at their disposal. This includes their positions at the UN Security council; their military, political and economic powers; as well as the media and PR prowess that enables them to peddle favorable opinions. These powers are brutes. They care-not about the kids, people and the future of the region. They care-not about the sovereignty of the countries involved. They care-not about the traditions, norms and religions of the countries. The more the people depend on them and the weaker the nations, the better opportunity it is for them to manipulate. A repressive and a non-representative government is a government of choice. The criminal sellout Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia is the best example.

In fact, there is a deliberate move to negate sovereignty altogether. It is unfathomable to call for a regime change in China or the US. Yet, these powers are flouting the idea of regime changes in countries of interest through the UN. The ICC has become yet another tool. Regional organizations like the Arab League can lead opinions that recommend changes in countries of their respective regions as in the case of Libya. The UN, AU, and EU etc. dictate Somalia’s leaders… The stick is sometimes direct and at times provided through puppet regimes as in the case of Somalia through Ethiopia and Kenya.

**Unsustainable Aspirations**

One of the most telling example of how ineffective this failed brutal scheme is the case of Somalia. The people of Somalia have faced years of assault from many angles. Yet, no force or international interferences have swayed the people from their national One-Somalia aspiration. The people of Somalia are proud people that have proven to be formidable. This is not to discount the loss of lives, the destruction of their ways and means.

The current situation in Egypt and Yemen show the futility of Western designs. Egypt is a lynchpin to the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. It is also strategically significant for the West and Israel. Yet, no interference can guarantee their interest. To the contrary, the situation is changing against their interest because it is clashing with the interests of the people. The primary interest of the US- Israel-led West is security and resource greedy geopolitical agenda. In the past, it relied on loyal militaries that ensured Western interest. However, once the Mubarak regime fell, the Military entrusted to run the country failed to deliver on domestic matters. It even failed on the very issue they were supposedly experts at, security. The military failed the people when a soccer stadium became a place of death to many. Time will tell what will come of the people’s firm determination to determine their own future. Will the West accept the people to go through their own revolution and come out victorious? Not likely.

Yemen is in the same situation like Egyptians. The West, while pressing for a regime change in Syria is making every effort to accommodate the regime in Yemen against the will of the people that want to clear-deck and start fresh.

This happened in Ethiopia in 2005.The opportunity for a peaceful change was quashed by a rogue mercenary regime. At that time, the concern of the West was not the people rather it was the Humvee’s image that Ethiopian troops used to quash the demonstrators. This is a reminder that those who support the regime will keep supporting it against the aspirations of the people.

This is the current reality in the Horn of Africa. The aspiration of the people clashes with interests of the powers that are not concerned about them. Any movement toward a genuine change is quashed with the help of the West. Absent of a peaceful change chaos ensues as in Somalia.

**Thence, what is the answer?**

It is when people recognize the force of peace and support them. It is by making sure that people understand that peace will reign only through unwavering commitment to peace. It is by making a stride towards development under any circumstance. It is by identifying the forces that can bring peace and working with them to ensure it. It is through facilitating people-to-people relation that can withstand the test of time. It is through education that a strong foundation for the next generation is set. It is by recognizing good. By committing to trade and respecting sovereignty etc…

One of the best developments of the last three years has been the fact that Eritrean and Ethiopian communities in the Diaspora have come to a mutual understanding who is for peace and who is shunning peace. While the strategic relation is on its infancy, one of the best outcomes of this understanding has been the fact that no energy is wasted at each other. In fact, there have been steady developments towards a greater working coordination against Meles Zenawi. Additionally, one can comfortably claim that opinions regarding many matters affecting the region have crystallized to the point that the views are similar throughout. For example, it is no longer a debate whether the West is for democracy or not. Similarly, there is a crystal clear understanding how unjust and rigged the international system remains.

**Conclusion**

This is truly a historic moment and opportunity for the Horn of Africa to come together in ways unseen and unheard before. Over the last six decades, millions of people have suffered to the point that life has lost its meaning completely. The problem, there is no end in sight. The global actors that play part in this holocaust are determined to pursue their agendas at the expense the people of the region indefinitely. After China and Russia vetoed a resolution on Syria, the new Cold-War era between the West and China/Russia started earnestly. That means a region trapped between international ping-pongs one more time as in the previous Cold War.

Hence, this historic opportunity accords the people in the region and Diaspora a choice whether to work for the interest of these powers or the interest of the people of the region. It accords all, the opportunity to work either for peace or the hegemonic interests of West. In this tag of war, there is and has been history of trends to show who is or isn’t for peace in the region. The people of Eritrea have demonstrated a great deal of wisdom and hospitality for the people of the region without exception. That trend ought to be encouraged and exploited as a tool moving forward. There is a great deal of misinformation, deliberate distraction of views and opinions contrary to the realities described above. As Malcolm X said, “If you are not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing.” So, stand for peace, justice and each other for the sake of the suffering people!

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