



OEA Statement
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When did Kenya Lose Its Independent Foreign Policy?

What is wrong with Kenya? When did it lose its ability to formulate an independent regional policy? The Kenyan people have always resisted foreign domination, whether it came from across the seas or across the border in the rough neighborhood they live. In the crisis-ridden Horn of Africa, the Kenyans have managed to successfully resist hegemonic designs of the neighborhood's Western-enabled aggressively expansionist bully, Ethiopia.

However, lately we have seen some disturbing signs that undermine this proud legacy of resistance and independence, signs that echo the diabolical ploys of the minority regime ruling Ethiopia today targeting Eritrea and the Eritrean people—an equally proud people who have paid a great deal in blood and treasure to get and preserve their independence.

Kenyan authorities seem to be repeating, sometimes word by word, groundless charges against Eritrea and the Eritrean people fabricated and orchestrated by Ethiopia's dirty trick operatives in and outside of the country.

At a recent summit of IGAD, the regional organization that is serving as Ethiopia's primary regional tool for mischief, Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki urged the group's executive council to pay close attention "to the growing destabilization activities in the region, associated with Eritrea." Adding, he said, "This is a matter of serious concern and it is my hope that this Summit will focus some attention on it in view of the need for *collective security* and sustainable peace" (emphasis ours).

This week, the Kenyan authorities have been throwing out similar allegations against the young African nation based on charges brewed, fermented and disseminated by the minority regime in Addis Ababa which seems to have staked its survival on damaging Eritrea's national interest. The recent allegations deal with Eritrea delivering planeloads of arms to an extremist Somali insurgent group in Baidoa, in southern Somalia.

There are two issues the Kenyans are not considering here. First, any fair-minded person can see that these allegations are beyond ridiculous because they assume that the young Eritrean nation which is trying to recover from decades of destruction of its economy by Ethiopia has the stealth technology one would need to escape the regional and international surveillance programs that are in place in the Horn and fly three jets in and out of southern Somalia to deliver arms.

Second, it is preposterous to try to link Eritrea and the Eritrean people to extremism. The Eritrean people have been fighting extremism since the mid-1990s when bin Laden set up shop in neighboring Sudan. Eritrea was in fact his first target. It is still fighting against two of al Qaeda's cells that bin Laden created in the 1990s—the Eritrean Jihad Movement and the Eritrean Islamic Salvation Movement—that Ethiopia has been coddling as part of the so-called alliance it finances and trains to destabilize Eritrea.

As Americans of Eritrean descent, we have a vested interest in seeing peace, stability and security returned to the Horn region. But, scapegoating or trying to isolate Eritrea is no way of getting there. We feel every nation in this subregion of Africa has a responsibility to shoulder in this regard by, for starters, not serving as an echo chamber for the multitude of dirty trick artists that the minority regime

of Ethiopia has deployed as its main strategy to stay in power. Finally, the Organization of Eritrean Americans (OEA) strongly feels that it is extremely reckless to keep throwing groundless charges against a sovereign nation in the most volatile region of Africa. It is bound to exacerbate the already tense relationship between the nations, leading to more conflicts in this war-ravaged region.