

Taking a Superpower for a Ride

Ghidewon Abay Asmerom

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It is hard to imagine that a Superpower like the U.S. can be easily duped by dubious players, but that is exactly what has been happening with U.S. foreign diplomacy for decades. Many state leaders, interest groups and individuals have been taking American power, influence and wealth for a ride and exploiting America to suit their various and dangerous agendas. Many times, when you see long-term American interest being compromised and sacrificed for the sake of short-term report embellishing, pocket padding, and personal vendettas, you cannot help it but lament as to where competent and clean diplomats have gone.

Over the years regimes and individuals have used different cards to get full and blind U.S. support. During the Cold War the card was "fighting Communism". This card had been adroitly exploited by many. For example Ethiopia and Indonesia were given full U.S. support and blessing to illegally annex their neighbors (Eritrea and East Timor in that order). In the process millions of innocent Eritreans and East Timorese were subjected to brutal occupation and oppression. South Africa's Apartheid and Southern Rhodesia's (today's Zimbabwe) Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) were justified and provided with U.S. and UK veto shield at the UN Security Council for decades for the sake of this "anti-Communism" card. Zaire's Mobutu, Chile's Pinochet, and others were also graced with unwavering U.S. support, no matter how repressive and despotic they were, because they had the crucial ace of "anti Communism" slogan up their sleeves.

Starting in the mid 1990s, but more so after 9/11 the phrase "war on terror" has worked like a charm for all those who want to entice the U.S. into their side. The heinous crimes against humanity that were perpetrated in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998, and New York and Washington on 9/11 are now being exploited by different nations for their cryptic as well as obvious agendas. The desire to win the "war on terror" has clouded U.S. foreign policy. One group that is taking the U.S. for a ride and duping U.S. Africa policy leadership is the minority regime in Ethiopia. Should U.S. long term interest be sacrificed trusting certified liars like Ethiopia's Prime Minister Meles Zenawi who are only bringing the ace of fighting terrorism in order to continue their illegal occupation of Eritrean territories, the chaos in Somalia, and the subjugation of Ethiopia's non Tigrean people to untold horrors? It is a question that deserves an urgent attention.

It has to be emphasized the sanction the U.S. is threatening to impose on Eritrea through the UN Security Council is not about Somalia, the welfare of the Somali people, peace in the Horn of Africa or the long-term interest of the U.S. and its security. The often cited reason, the baseless allegation of "Eritrea has been militarily aiding Somalia insurgents" has been handily discredited. Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, the Somali version of Iraqi's Ahmed Chalabi, couldn't produce an iota of evidence for his lies. Like the now infamous WMD charges in an earlier push for sanctions and action through the UN Security Council the charge against Eritrea is also a pure hoax. It is a shame President Obama's foreign policy team hasn't learned a lesson from previous administrations' policy blunders.

Instead of admitting the accusation against Eritrea was a pure fabrication and thinking out of the box to solve Somalia's problems, now the music has changed. The world is being told the chief reason for the sanction on Eritrea is now "Eritrea is providing logistic, financial and political support to Somalis". The logistic support that has been cited as an offence is the peace conference for the reconstitution of

Somali that Eritrea convened in 2007. It is to be remembered, the president of the current incarnation of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, was elected at the Asmara conference to spearhead the healing of Somalia. Two years later, the U.S. and Ethiopia, the very powers that ousted him from power during their 2007 invasion and occupation of Somalia, have picked him as their sole man that can save Somalia.

The other charge against Eritrea is that of giving financial support to the Somalis. Everyone knows Eritrea is in no financial position to aid Somalia. Every precious dollar Eritrea has, is getting directed to critical projects in food security, health and educational infrastructures. Thus the finger of accusation for financing the chaos in Somalia needs to point somewhere else.

In addition to Ethiopia, another group suspected of financing the war in Somali, according to the New York Times from December 12, 2009, consists of “Somali contractors” and “*Somali businessmen, who have been working for years with the United Nations World Food Program to deliver emergency rations*”. Again, according to the New York Times these same war profiteers had “*recently led the American government to delay food shipments to Somalia at a time when millions of Somalis are a few meals away from starvation.*” —Jeffrey Gettleman, NYT, December 12, 2009.

It is not farfetched to assume that these people are in bed with some corrupt officials at the UN, Addis Ababa and Nairobi. As the NYT article put it, we can say these financiers of war have “marafiki” (Kiswahili word for friends) at high places. Is it any wonder then these forces would shy from trying to scapegoat Eritrea? The threat of sanction against Eritrea is thus being orchestrated by people who are interested in covering the behinds of their “friends”. Here is how one of these is boasting of taking the U.S. for a ride:

“Allah has finally come to our rescue. We’ve served as cold war proxy battle ground, as a regional battle ground, and we’ve been in a civil war. We appealed to everyone to help us, but no one came. So finally we appealed to Allah. We asked him to give us oil, so as to interest the Americans, or else we said, we need a couple of fighters from Afghanistan. So now the Somali’s have a weapon: We are a staging ground for the fight against global terrorism. After so many years, with our piracy and our jihad we are finally able to project fear”. — Jon Lee Anderson, The Most Failed State, The New Yorker. Dec. 14, 2009.

As for Eritrea it does not have oil and is not ready, out of principle, to take in the U.S. for a ride. That is why it is being blamed and targeted. The secular government of Eritrea is doing its best to keep Eritrea’s exemplary harmonious coexistence of its Christian and Moslem population. For this it has long been in the crosshair of international terrorists. What is more outrageous is when the U.S., a country you expect to understand and sympathize, a country that has been also a victim of terrorism like Eritrea, is leading the campaign to put sanctions against Eritrea. Why? because Eritrea’s enemies have duped the U.S. Eritrea was the first victim of Osama bin Laden, long before he set his sights on the United States. Eritrea deserves help not such a treatment by the US. That is why this unjust threat of sanction should be opposed by all who are genuinely for peace and security, as well as by those who want to defeat international terrorism. A superpower like the U.S. should no more be taken for a ride by those who are not genuinely for peace.