



A Reset of U.S. Policy Toward Ethiopia is Long Overdue

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It is our sincere belief that the ad hoc American foreign policy toward Ethiopia since 1974 has been disastrous for both countries. The impending departure of Amb. Mike Hammer as the U.S. Envoy to the Horn of Africa and the election of Donald J. Trump as president provide a great opportunity to reset U.S. policy toward Ethiopia in particular and the hopelessly destabilized Horn of Africa in general. Ethiopia, the anchor state of the region, must be rescued from two competing dictatorships in a manner that honors the democratic aspirations of the Ethiopian people and the enlightened interests of the American people.

The United States has regrettably pursued a highly militarized approach of “our man in the presidential palace” at each critical point for systemic change in the past. As in the Cold War period, this mindset remains opportunistic and views the region as an appendage to U.S. policy toward the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean.

U.S. policy toward the Horn of Africa understandably embraces multiple and conflicting objectives, including the promotion of peace and security through counter-terrorism engagement; protection of the strategic Red Sea and Indian Ocean trade routes; promotion of regional dominance by establishing military bases; shoring up client regimes through security, soft financing, and humanitarian assistance; promotion of economic development and mutually beneficial trade; and containment of global competitors, especially China and Russia.

While these geopolitical goals are understandable, the unprincipled and imperious posture of the U.S. and the E.U. betrays the professed commitment to human rights, the rule of law, and democracy building. Nor has this hegemonic mentality saved the two Sudans, Somalia, Eritrea, and Ethiopia from degenerating into failed states. Well over a million have died over the past five years, the world’s worst famines are underway, and many more millions displaced as a result of incessant civil wars, all of which are making Rwanda a child’s play.

We wish to note here that the United States abandoned and unfairly punished the Ethiopian people for the misdeeds of a brutal military dictatorship that lasted 17 years (1974-1991) by facilitating the takeover of the state by three secessionist groups claiming to represent Eritreans, Tigreans, and the Oromo. Following the secession of Eritrea in 1993 (which landlocked Ethiopia), the Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF) instituted exclusionary minority rule in the form of an

ethnocratic constitution, blatant ethnic favoritism, widespread use of violence to suppress dissent, and unprecedented land grabbing. To have the U.S. look the other way, the TPLF offered itself as a dependable ally against terrorism in the region by occupying Somalia and offering soldiers-for-hire in several African countries in the name of peacekeeping.

After the TPLF mafia was ejected from Addis Ababa in 2018 by a faction led by Abiy Ahmed's Oromo mafia, it tried to regain power by triggering a civil war in late 2020, which it lost at the cost of devastation for the Tigray, Afar, and Amhara regional states. The U.S. envoys, in a bid to save the TPLF, pushed for the Pretoria Agreement on cessation of hostilities in 2022 as a linchpin of American policy. While this initiative silenced the guns, the key terms for ensuring durable peace (disarmament, demobilization, reconstruction, and transitional justice) remain unimplemented two years later.

More tellingly, the fateful exclusion of the Amhara regional militia (who fought valiantly with the Federal forces to restore illegally annexed Amhara districts and push back the marauding Tigrean forces) from the Pretoria Agreement rendered it less than useless. Fearing uprisings from the long maligned 50 million-strong Amhara throughout the country, the Oromo supremacist regime of Abiy Ahmed unleashed a more ominous civil war in the Amhara Regional State (with a population of over 30 million) in May 2023 and elsewhere in the country. The pretext for selective and unprovoked attempt to disarm the Amhara militia while ignoring the large Oromo and Tigrean militias has triggered a fierce popular resistance that threatens to disintegrate the country.

The avoidable uprising of the Amhara Fanno movement has, in just a year and a half, liberated 90 percent of the countryside of the Amhara Regional State. The Ethiopian Army, on the verge of defeat, as it engages in illegal police functions to protect the regime, has launched an air campaign with drones and bomber jets that have indiscriminately murdered civilians, committed mass rape of women, and devastated schools (leaving some 6 million pupils out of school) and hospitals. The ground forces routinely use indiscriminate killings, mass rape, mass arrest, and mass looting as instruments of state terrorism. All these acts of state terrorism have involved ethnic cleansing, war crimes, and genocidal acts with impunity.

Sadly, the international press has resorted to a conspiracy of silence about the plight of the Amhara people. This baffling response is not about the lack of evidence. The Ethiopian Human Rights Council, Amnesty International, the U.N. Human Rights Council, the State Department's annual human rights review, and Human Rights Watch have issued blood-curdling reports.

We, therefore, ask the U.S. Government and its allies to end the lip service and endless firefighting to reset the Africa policy in favor of a win-win approach. Our recommendations are as follows:

1. Regime change: The removal of the unhinged Abiy Ahmed and the ruling party. The U.N. Security Council must forward to the ICJ and the ICC senior members of his government for war crimes, ethnically motivated political violence, and genocide;
2. Political settlement: Give official recognition to the legitimate self-defense by the Amhara Fanno against displacement and extermination by going beyond empty calls for dialog to offer a genuine peace deal, a DDR (disarmament, demobilization, and

- reintegration) program with transitional justice, and constitutional reform that would lead to internationally supervised free and fair elections; and
3. Support for the democratic opposition: The U.S. can serve as a facilitator of democratic transition by openly supporting the besieged Ethiopian civic movement and the opposition political parties calling for systemic change to end polarization for good. In this regard, the Ethiopian Diaspora can provide counsel and serve as a bridge between the two countries to extricate the country from a political and economic quagmire.

Thank you.