

Resolutions Do Not Make Representative Governments, People Do! ©¹

Mohamed Mukhtar Hussein, Ph.D.²

Email: shishmoor@gmail.com

December 10, 2006

The United Nations policy towards Somalia, and for that matter the greater Horn of Africa, oscillated from “stay the course” and “cut and run” during its existence. Over five decades ago, it passed a resolution on the *federation* of Eritrea to Ethiopia. The resolution on Eritrea was not only ignored, but also legitimized the concentration of government in the hands of the elite of the then imperial regime, which were supported by far away architects of the post-colonial African state. As a result, it removed state building and internal reconciliation from the hands of the contending grass-roots Eritrean and Ethiopian viewpoints. Thousands of Eritrean and Ethiopian people perished fighting different sides of the United Nations' decision. African solution for African problems never received a fair hearing and interests hidden in the dark alleys of foreign interests dominated people's agenda. People rallied behind self-centered views of the few masked as a will of international community. It took the people of Eritrea thirty years to achieve what they wanted. That was then, an era of post-colonial squabbles and of privileged access to information, and this is now, an era of dynamic knowledge creation and sharing, the time for a de-colonized African mind to reign-- in short, an epoch where the internet has truly liberated many from the shackles of misunderstanding and suspicion.

The UN passed Security Council Resolution 1725, under Chapter VII, on December 6, 2006. The resolution resolved, among others, that the UN decides “to remain actively seized of the matter.” What exactly does this mean? According to Slate (and Michael Byers of the Duke University School of Law), “A small number of international legal experts also consider the phrase a linguistic maneuver to head off unilateral action. The theory goes that the Security Council is actually hinting to various national governments to hold off on, say, sending tanks across the Euphrates River, since the dispute is still being adjudicated. If that is indeed the case, the phrase's power seems somewhat dubious—nations routinely ignore Security Council pleas to remain idle.”

Resolutions under Chapter VII of the UN Charter are instruments meant for the international community to use economic and political sanctions with the possibility of the use of force if the council determines “the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression”. The UN invoked Chapter VII of its charter on the situation of a small number of countries during its existence. These are former Rhodesia, Sudan, former Yugoslavia, South Africa, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Angola, Eritrea, Rwanda, Haiti, Libya, and Liberia. About twenty percent of the resolutions involved Horn of Africa states, a disproportionately high percentage! Still, the Horn is far from enjoying peace, from achieving its potentiality, and from hoping for a ‘modesty destiny’ controllable to keep the interests of others at bay, or if that is not possible, to build a respectful and mutual collaboration with foreign interests. The UN has done a poor job in its operations in this region since post-colonial and post-imperial states appeared. Perhaps the UN needs to commission an assembly of wise men and mandate them to produce what I would call “The Report of the Horn of Africa Study Group”.

Resolution 1725 addresses the situation in Somalia. Among many other things, the UN provides a background of its decision, which is based on the “Deployment Plan for the IGAD peacekeeping mission

¹ This material is protected by copyright laws. It may not, therefore, be posted at websites or published in any other way without a prior written permission from the author. Individual users are granted permission for fair use.

² Dr. Mohamed Mukhtar Hussein can be reached at shishmoor@gmail.com

in Somalia”, and asserts that there is a “lack of clarity of the political agenda of the Islamic Courts”, and that there is an “uncertain situation in Mogadishu”. This claim is not factual. Given that the UN is expected to be impartial and a truth-telling organization, many wonder what went wrong here. In so many times, the Islamic Courts said its political agenda is to get rid of lawlessness, to restore people's dignified existence, to provide national security services, to negotiate with the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) on power sharing, and to ascertain that no foreign forces are deployed in Somalia covertly or overtly. And they have succeeded in many of these during their short existence. The arguments that the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) has not focused on holding a truly open reconciliation conference in the now liberated Mogadishu or that it ignored to meaningfully engage the technocrats that have been idle in the capital for close to two decades are valid. But the UN denies that the condition of Mogadishu, after more than sixteen years of uncertainty, is now as certain as any city of its size can be. Does anyone believe that there is an uncertain situation in Mogadishu now? Mogadishu seemed hell on earth in the past, but not now. Perhaps, the UN wanted to say that it does not like what it sees in Mogadishu! Why does the UN claim that it would be “seized of the matter” later when it does not want to see the truth now?

The Horn of Africa region (primarily Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, Kenya, and Eritrea) is home for many ethnic groups whose people practice moderate Islam, Christianity and indigenous religions. Even though the region is a victim of European colonialism and cold war rivalry, which forced division and misunderstanding, the people have grown wiser over the years. They have met and lived together not only in the Diaspora, but in their respective homelands. They now read each other's many online journals. If, in the past, a Somali believed Ethiopians are their eternal enemies, and Eritreans wished to remove their land from the continent so as not to be a neighbor to Ethiopia, the public intelligence is different now. An Oromo and a Somali Ogaden are now politically mature to reject a despotic Ethiopian government in favor of an alliance with their former Amhara political rivals. In southern Somalia, people revolted against their illiterate warlords and embraced a just umbrella under Islamic teachings. In the Diaspora, Horn Africans (Hornians) rage with anger directed at TPLF and its seemingly wholly-owned subsidiary, i.e. the so-called TFG. Ethiopians and Somalis categorically reject governments whose leaders masquerade as representative leaders of their respective states.

An overwhelming majority of the people of Horn of Africa as well as many international groups and states registered their opposition to the recently passed UN resolution. Several reasons for this dissent are further described and illuminated. These include the possibility of religious strife in the region, the proliferation of illegal arms trade, the exploitation of the resources of the region, the lingering short-sighted views of proponents of stability at the expense of public reconciliation and democratization, and the great propensity for the rise of some forms of instability similar to those that have characterized Iraq recently, and DR Congo and the Great Lakes region in the 1990's.

The resolution can be exploited by religious fanatics (Muslims or Christians). In this scenario, the wishes of the majority will be hijacked. As a result, death and carnage can multiply. Because of the ignorance prevalent in the region, society will be sucked into undesirable and confounding directions that make the future uncertain. The claimed objective of the resolution may not be achieved since once a religious strife takes precedence over others, cool minds will be so scarce. Hornians will in the end be the ultimate losers. Already, the TPLF-controlled Ethiopian regime began systematic exploitation of religion among Ethiopians who lived peacefully together for centuries and who have disagreed only on matters of secular politics and governance.

Melez Zenawi's recent dictation to his self-concocted Ethiopian parliament to approve his war-mongering policies demonstrated to all Hornians a mind sprinkled with evil. This is not the first time Melez spoke of an impending Armageddon and the need for invoking sectarian violence to achieve political ends and to avert an imminent genocide. He seems to think of himself as clever when he attempts to disguise his inner

self under opportunistic nationalism and piggybacks his determination behind a decision of his clapping parliament. When the people of Addis Ababa organized mass demonstrations against his junta's theft of the 2005 election, Melez accused certain ethnic groups of planning to repeat Interhamwe-like genocidal acts. So, in a sense, the dark corners of the Melez mind is exposed one more time and it seems to contemplate plans for the exploitation of religion.

The argument, if at all Melez's rants at his personal parliament could be called an argument, goes on as follows. Jihadists declared war on the Ethiopian people. By "Jihadists" he means the public revolution that carried the UIC in Mogadishu into prominence. The TPLF-controlled government of Ethiopia makes itself look stupid when it irresponsibly seeks financial and military support on the basis of terms like "Jihadists", a term conveniently used in the west to misinform. According to The Guardian (and Derek Brown), "The essential meaning of jihad is the spiritual, psychological and physical effort exerted by Muslims to be closer to God and thus achieve a just and harmonious society. Jihad literally means "striving" or "struggle" and is shorthand for Jihad fi Sabeel Allah (struggle for God's cause). Another level of jihad is popularly known as "holy war". What is condoned is defensive warfare; Islam does not justify aggressive war.'

So, therefore, it is perfectly legitimate if the people of Mogadishu decided to fight Melez Zenawi's terrorism in Mogadishu, and to strive to achieve a just and harmonious society. For over sixteen years Zenawi financed, armed, and slept with Mogadishu's notorious warlords. He also succeeded in misinforming the Americans who sided with thuggish Mogadishu warlords, and their TFG. People finally decided to get rid of Melez Zenawi's proxy terrorists in Mogadishu. Sixteen years of terrorist oppression was enough! The revolutionary public, under the leadership of the UIC, rightly declared Jihaad against the warlords and chased them out of town. Once defeated, warlords ran into the arms of Melez and demanded more arms and money from him. He not only obliged but promised he will talk with his friends in high places to legalize his covert operations in Somalia. He occupied portions of Somalia in the pretext of defending a TFG whose people do not support! As expected, Melez decided it is time to misinform the world to see UIC declaration of Jihaad on the warlords and Melez forces in Somalia as a declaration of war on Ethiopia.

Arms merchants and shadowy business figures are lurking in the shadows and are ready to take advantage of the situation. In this scenario, again, the interest of the people goes into the back burner and once this condition matures, the killing fields will multiply. The region will misallocate sorely needed resources that will now be apportioned for arms purchases. In addition, employment of children in the fights and the arms proliferation that ensues will put less priority on human development than on destruction and mayhem.

The world saw the dominance of narrow international agenda in the last few years. The futility of unilateral international action has been shown clearly in the recent release of the report of the Iraq Study Group. Sure, international terrorism is a menace to world peace. To fight terrorism, however, credible powers with genuine interests must not only collaborate, but they must also encourage participation of civil society. To say Melez Zenawi, whose government terrorized its people, can be an ally in the fight against terrorism is to be unrealistic. Melez calls a "terrorist" any political group that disagrees with his irrational execubrance in the creation of ethnic puppets supposedly representing ethnic states. His TPLF is the only nationalist party allowed to freely assemble and organize political views in Ethiopia. According to the Iraq Study Group, "The United States should immediately launch a new diplomatic offensive to build an international consensus for stability in Iraq and the region. This diplomatic effort should include every country that has an interest in avoiding a chaotic Iraq, including all of Iraq's neighbors. Iraq's neighbors and key states in and outside the region should form a support group to reinforce security and national reconciliation within Iraq, neither of which Iraq can achieve on its own." There is no reason to believe this is a bad policy for America's interests.

If the US is moving into a direction of reconciliation and away from obsession with unilaterally and externally supported stability, then why should the international community turn a blind eye when Melez refuses to reconcile with his own people? His negation to talk peace and development with his adversaries such as the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD), the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), and others should not be left unchecked and obscured in his Somalia adventure. The danger in the recent Somalia resolution lies in its attempt to allow Melez to invade Somalia, or to “ease into it”, gradually. A free hand for Horn of Africa's neighborhood bully lessens the importance of good governance and human rights. Transparency, accountability, and participation of people in the affairs of their governments can not be replaced with less important causes such as dictatorial stability, which anyway leads to instability.

Ethiopia's government needs to account for torching Fooljeex in the Ogaden, for the loss of life and property in Oromia, and for the wanton destruction of the lives of almost 200 peaceful demonstrators in Addis Ababa before it is allowed to dictate the outcome in Somalia's political conflicts. It also needs to tell the truth and admit that it has damaged the nascent democratization process during the 2005 Ethiopian elections. In the end, nonetheless, Hornians must be shown, in good faith, that there are no hidden agendas to loot the resources of Ethiopia and Somalia using Melez as a tool and the UN resolution as the vehicle to legitimize what has been clearly documented as a despotic regime. Reconciliation in the Horn is more important than stability.

There are those who believe that Ethiopia is the key to the stability of the Horn of Africa. In their mind, blind support for anyone sitting in Addis Ababa's Palace or Baidoa's Villa Somalia, for example, is a sound international policy. No questions on good governance, people's participation in government, and economic development leadership need to be raised as long a self-serving stability argument can be floated. Instead of helping people get on their feet, it is fancier to claim to have provided such demeaning assistance as food aid. Stability in the Horn of Africa is not dependent on the creation of a mirage, a falsehood, and, therefore, an easily refutable western-supported government shell controlled by a proxy leader who has no mandate from his or her own people. Why insult the intelligence of the more than 120 million people who call the Horn home? The oft-claimed position of the West of supporting democracy and human rights and the resulting “stay the course” policy of accepting dictators as “leaders” has turned into a music played for over fifty years, frustrating the poverty- and fear-stricken people of the Horn of Africa. Dictators bring instability, not stability. Real reconciliation and democratization is what is needed in this region.

“I think the choice of doing nothing is really not a choice at all,” John Bolton, US Ambassador to the UN, stressed on the eve of the passage of Resolution 1725. True! But, the choice of arming an unpopular TFG and increasing the support of a TPLF regime, as Hornians suspect the intention of this resolution is, is really not a choice at all! The US and its allies must genuinely start to help democracy-building and to abandon relying on dictators. Superpowers have had enough of befriending dictators in the Horn of Africa during the cold war and the people of the region are really sick of the return of shallow policies that do not benefit them. The international community needs to be seized of the matter – the matter of telling dictators to go, of respecting the real public positions, of taking notice of the emerging cross ethnic solidarity among the Horn people to oppose autocratic rulers, of disarming warlords, and of supporting representative governments and the democratization of the Horn. For, resolutions do not make representative governments, people do!