

Somalia: New Hotbed of Anti-Americanism

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Global Research, January 03, 2007

3 January 2007

Region: [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Theme: [Terrorism](#), [US NATO War Agenda](#)

The U.S. foreign policy blundering has created a new violent hotbed of anti-Americanism in the turbulent Horn of Africa by orchestrating the Ethiopian invasion of another Muslim capital of the Arab League, in a clear American message that no Arab or Muslim metropolitan has impunity unless it falls into step with the U.S. vital regional interests.

The U.S.-backed Ethiopian invasion of the Somali capital, Mogadishu, on Dec. 28 is closely interlinked in motivation, methods, goals and results to the U.S. bogged down regional blunders in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Sudan as well as in Iran and Afghanistan, but mainly in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories.

Mogadishu is the third Arab metropolitan after Jerusalem and Baghdad to fall to the U.S. imperial drive, either directly or indirectly through Israeli, Ethiopian or other proxies, and the fourth if the temporary Israeli occupation of Beirut in 1982 is remembered; the U.S. endeavor to redraw the map of the Middle East is reminiscent of the British-French Sykes-Pico colonial dismembering of the region and is similarly certain to give rise to grassroots Pan-Arab rejection and awaking with the Pan-Islamic unifying force as a major component.

The U.S. blunder in Somalia could not be more humiliating to Somalis: Washington has delegated to its Ethiopian ally, Mogadishu's historical national enemy, the mission of restoring the rule of law and order to the same country Addis Ababa has incessantly sought to dismember and disintegrate and singled Ethiopia out as the only neighboring country to contribute the backbone of the U.S.-suggested and U.N.-adopted multinational foreign force for Somalia after the Ethiopian invasion, thus setting the stage for a wide-spread insurgency and creating a new violent hotbed of anti-Americanism.

The U.S. manipulation is there for all to see; a new U.S.-led anti-Arab and anti-Muslim regional alliance is already in the working and not only in the making; the U.S.-allied Ethiopian invaders have already taken over Somalia after the withdrawal of the forces of the United Islamic Courts (UIC), who rejected an offer of amnesty in return for surrendering their arms and refused unconditional dialogue with the invaders; the withdrawal of the UIC forces from urban centers reminds one of the disappearance of the Iraqi army and the Taliban government in Afghanistan and warns of a similar aftermath in Somalia in a similar shift of military strategy into guerilla tactics.

The UIC leaders who went underground are promising guerilla and urban warfare; "terrorist" tactics are their expected major weapon and American targets are linked to the Ethiopian invasion. It doesn't need much speculation to conclude that the Bush Administration's policy in the Horn of Africa is threatening American lives as well as the regional stability.

According to the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, "Because the United States has

accused Somalia of harboring al-Qaeda suspects, the Ethiopian-Eritrean proxy conflict increases the opportunities for terrorist infiltration of the Horn and East Africa and for ignition of a larger regional conflict,” in which the United States would be deeply embroiled.

Eritrea accused the United States on Monday of being behind the war in Somalia . “This war is between the Americans and the Somali people,” Eritrean Information Minister Ali Abdu told Reuters.

The U.S administration found no harm in keeping the divided country an easy prey for the warlords and tribal bloody disputes since 1991, probably finding in that status quo another guarantee-by-default for U.S. regional interests. It could have lived forever with the political chaos and humanitarian tragedy in one of the world’s poorest countries were it not for the emergence of the indigenous grassroots UIC, who provided some social security and order under a semblance of a central government that made some progress towards unifying the country.

Pre-empting intensive Arab, Muslim and European mediation efforts between the UIC and the transitional government, Washington moved quickly to clinch the UN Security Council resolution 1725 on Dec. 6, recognizing the Baidoa government organized in Kenya by U.S. regional allies and dominated by the warlords as the legitimate authority in Somalia after sending Army Gen. John Abizaid, head of U.S. Central Command, to Addis Ababa in November for talks with Prime Minister Meles Zenawi on bailing out the besieged transitional government by coordinating an Ethiopian military intervention.

Resolution 1725 also urged that all member states, “in particular those in the region,” to refrain from interference in Somalia, but hardly the ink of the resolution dried than Washington was violating it by providing training, intelligence and consultation to at least 8,000 Ethiopian troops who rushed into Baidoa and its vicinity before the major Ethiopian invasion, a fact that was repeatedly denied by both Washington and Addis Ababa but confirmed by independent sources.

To contain the repercussions, Washington is in vain trying to distance itself from the Ethiopian invasion; U.S. officials have repeatedly denied using Ethiopia as a proxy in Somalia . Moreover it is trying to play down the invasion itself: “The State Department issued internal guidance to staff members, instructing officials to play down the invasion in public statements,” read a copy of the guidelines obtained by The New York Times.

Mission Accomplished?

“Mission Accomplished,” Addis Ababa’s Daily Monitor announced when the Ethiopian forces blitzed into Mogadishu, heralding a new U.S. regional alliance at the southern approaches to the oil-rich Arab heartland in the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq; in 2003, the same phrase adorned a banner behind President George W. Bush as he declared an end to major combat operations in the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. All facts on the ground indicate that the U.S. mission in Somalia won’t be less a failure than that in Iraq , or less misleading.

The U.S. foreign policy has sown the seeds of a new national and regional violent hotbed of anti-Americanism in the Arab world, the heart of what western strategists call the Middle East, by succeeding in Somalia in what it failed to achieve in Lebanon a few months ago: Washington was able to prevent the United Nations (UN) from imposing a ceasefire until the Ethiopian invasion seized Mogadishu; the Lebanese resistance and national unity prevented

the Israeli invaders from availing themselves of the same U.S. green light to achieve their goals in Beirut.

In both cases, Washington involved the UN as a fig leaf to cover the Israeli and Ethiopian invasions, repeating the Iraq scenario, and in both cases initiated military intervention to abort mediation efforts and national dialogue to solve internal conflicts peacefully.

In Somalia as in Iraq, Washington is also trying to delegate the mission of installing a pro-U.S. regime whose leaders were carried in on the invading tanks to a multinational force in which the neighboring countries are not represented, only to be called upon later not to interfere in Somalia's internal affairs, as it is the case with Iran, Syria in particular vis-à-vis the U.S.-occupied Iraq.

The Bush administration has expressed understanding for the security concerns that prompted Ethiopia to intervene in Somalia . So once again U.S. pretexts of Washington 's declared world war on terror were used to justify the Ethiopian invasion as a preventive war in self-defense, only to create exactly the counterproductive environment that would certainly exacerbate violence and expand a national dispute into a wider regional conflict.

Real Security Concerns of Ethiopia

Regionally, the U.S. pretexts used by Addis Ababa to justify its invasion could thinly veil the land locked Ethiopia 's historical and strategic aspiration for an outlet on the Red Sea by using the Somali land as the only available approach to its goal after the independence of Eritrea deprived it of the sea port of Assab .

Agreed upon peaceful arrangements with Somalia and Eritrea is the only other option that would grant Ethiopia access to sea - whether to the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and Bab el Mandeb or the Arabian Sea, and through these sea lanes to the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. This option is pre-empted by the empirical dreams of Greater Ethiopia that tempted the successive regimes of Emperor Hailie Selassie, the military Marxist rule of Mengistu Haile Mariam and the incumbent U.S.-backed oppressive regime of Meles Zinawi, which were deluded by the military means of the only country with a semblance of a nation state and a military might in a regional neighborhood disintegrated into the poorest communities of the world by tribal strife left over by the British, French and Italian western colonialist powers; hence the Ethiopian wars with Eritrea and Somalia.

The Eritrean fear of an Ethiopian invasion of Assab via Somalia is realistic and legitimate, given the facts that Ethiopia's borders are, like Israel's, still not demarcated, its yearning for an access to sea as a strategic goal is still valid and its military option to achieve this goal is still not dropped because of the virtual state of war that still governs its relations with both Somalia and Eritrea. Hence the reports about the Eritrean intervention in Somalia, denied by Asmara, and the regional and international warnings against the possible development of the Ethiopian invasion into a wider regional conflict that could also involve Djibouti and Kenya.

Internally in Ethiopia, the successive regimes since Hailie Selassie were dealing with the demographic structure of the country as a top state secret and incessantly floating the misleading image of Ethiopia as the Christian nation it has been for hundreds of years, but hardly veiling the independent confirmation that at least half of the population are now Muslims, a fact that is not represented in the structure of the ruling elite but also a fact that

explains the oppressive policies of the incumbent U.S.-backed regime.

Here lies the realistic fears of the Ethiopian ruling elites from the emergence of a unified Somalia and the impetus it would give to the Ogaden National Liberation Front, which represents the 1.5 million Muslim tribesmen of Somali origin who inhabit the 200,000-square-kilometer desert region occupied by Addis Ababa and led to the 1977-88 war between the two countries and remains a festering hotbed of bilateral friction.

A united independent Somalia and a liberated or revolting Ogaden would inevitably deprive Ethiopia of its desert corridor to the coast and have at least adverse effects on/or imbalance altogether the internal status quo in Addis Ababa . True the potential of infiltration by al-Qaeda is highly probable with such a development but it is only too inflated a pretext for Addis Ababa to justify its unconvincing trumpeting of the “Islamic threat” emanating from the ascendancy of the UIC in Somalia .

Ethiopia’s justification of its invasion by Washington’s pretexts of the U.S. war on terror is misleading and encouraging Addis Ababa to justify its invasion by the “Islamic threat,” leading some UIC leaders to declare “Jihad” against the “Christian invasion” of their country and in doing so contributing to turning an Ethiopian internal and regional miscalculations into seemingly “Muslim-Christian” war, which have more provocateurs in Addis Ababa than in Mogadishu.

The sectarian war among Muslims fomented by the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq within the context of “divide and rule” policy could now be coupled with a “religious war” in the Horn of Africa to protect the U.S. military presence that is “defending” the Arab oil wealth in the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq against a threat to its mobility from the south, a war that could drive a new wedge between Arabs and their neighbors, in a replay of the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, and in tandem with a 60-year old Israeli strategy of sowing divide between them and their Ethiopian, Iranian and Turkish geopolitical strategic depth.

However this U.S.-Israeli strategy is certain to backfire. Somalis could not but be united against foreign invasion in a country where Islamism is the essence of nationalism and where Pan-Arabism could not but be a source of support as the country is too weak and poor to be adversely affected by Arab League divides; they are in their overwhelming majority Muslims with no divisive sectarian loyalties and no neighboring sectarian polarization center as it is the case with Iran in Iraq; the “Christian face” of the invasion would be a more uniting factor and would serve as a war cry against the new American imperialistic plans because it is reminiscent of earlier “Christian” European colonial adventures.

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