

## The Last Warlord of IGAD? ©<sup>1</sup>

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“Whoever conquers a free town and does not demolish it commits a great error and may expect to be ruined himself.” -- Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince* (1513).

If Machiavellian city states of five hundred years ago existed under the shadows of conquest and occupation, today's modern state relations are defined in terms of civilized, and mutual, economic, security, and other national interests. These are expressed through foreign policy documents or diplomatic discussions within local or international forums. Because of their complexity, some state relationships are not readily apparent. As the only state with an unmatched global reach, the American national interest expands or shrinks with the contemporary issues it faces and is often influenced by its own vibrant domestic and associated international interest groups. The interests of most of the states in the Horn of Africa, on the other hand, lack flexibility and openness as they are determined by a close-knit and undemocratic ruling junta. In addition to their interactions at the African Union (AU), Horn of Africa states communicate ideas and discuss pertinent issues within the framework of the Inter Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). These states also participate in international systems, most complex of which is the United Nations Organization.

A key component of state relations is the objective of preventing intra- and inter-state wars, an objective that derives economic and collective security relations, not just for rulers but for the public at large. When foreign policies are not developed with the contribution of civil society or when they are poorly documented or are intentionally confounded, conflicts arise and are hard to resolve. Somalia, which sits at the literal horn of the strategic Horn of Africa region, has been a failed state for almost two decades now. During this period, it could not have a foreign policy of its own. Other states, be they immediate neighbors or otherwise, therefore, advanced unconstrained policies detrimental to the well-being of its people and its existence as a sovereign state. Since a failed state is a danger to itself and its relatives, it has been urgent to restore the Somalia state, foremost from the perspective of the Somali people, but also from well meaning actors.

In order to re-instate the Somalia state, both state and non-state actors exerted non-complimenting pressures that strived to optimize their respective interests and foreign policy objectives. The cause of the Somalia state has therefore been lop-sided and has fallen into the hands of external actors who now completely control and dominate the state and its people. Ethiopia has been, by far, the most active actor. Ethiopia's goal of legitimizing itself, by force if necessary, as the second largest homeland of the Somali people since it completed its annexation of its Somali-inhabited Ogaden in 1954 conflicted with the humanist, and Somali, irredentist nationalism. To achieve its objective, Ethiopia, since 1991, designed and began implementation of a project of ascertaining the emergence of a puppet Somalia state. Its foreign policy also focused on a program that denies the capability of the legitimate political aspirations of Ethiopian opposition groups and ethnic liberation fronts to acquire external spaces to pursue their rights when the regime denied them to express such rights from within. With the imminence of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democrat Front (EPRDF) as the ruler, Ethiopia wrote a new chapter in the history of the relationship of Somalia and Ethiopia.

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The Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) dominated EPRDF sought and, in the end, acquired a quiescent or subservient Somalia authority, a Transitional Federal Government (TFG) it painstakingly constructed that is willing to do its bidding, in 2004. This materialized because of the internal disintegration of the Somali society and the Ethiopian domination of IGAD. Ethiopia's interests in Somalia has been subsequently endorsed and supported by the United States. Since September 11, 2001, a major element of the United States foreign policy is driven by its ill-defined and, therefore as a consequence unjustly executed, Global War on Terror. Despite its poor record of human rights, governance, and democratization, Ethiopia was able to shell itself inside the efforts of the American war on terror. Under the red herring of fighting the Horn of Africa "terrorist" Union of Islamic Courts (UIC), Ethiopia, in violation of international law, *invaded* Somalia in December 2006 and installed its TFG in Mogadishu, hoping to cement its goal of total Somalia occupation. The U.S. assisted Ethiopia's invasion with air strikes that killed over seventy nomadic Somalis.

The ploy did not yield a single terrorist. Ethiopia claimed in January it will withdraw from Somalia in two to three weeks so that an AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), supported by IGAD and the AU, could take over the role of peacekeeping. It faced a stiff four-month Somali resistance, but continues to mislead the international community on the nature of the insurgency and its true motives. Most ordinary Somalis reject its self-serving public explanations of supporting an internationally recognized Somalia government with the knowledge that if Ethiopia is indeed a friend of the Somali people it would have helped its vast Somali-inhabited region. As the largest recipient of western aid in Sub-Saharan Africa for almost two decades now, Ethiopia did not build even rudimentary school and health care systems in the region and has been maintaining large military garrisons in major towns like Godey, Jigjiga, Wardher, Iimay, Dhagah Bur and Qabdidaharre. The government is not only indifferent to recurring famine in the region, but has repeatedly used ensuing chronic food shortage as levers of subjugation.

In an interview with Al-Jazeera's Andrew Simmons in March, 2007, Ethiopia's warlord Prime Minister, Mr. Melez Zenawi, lied about the Somali resistance to his invasion and claimed that "Somalia is not equal to Mogadishu." Mogadishu, or the *Pearl of the Indian Ocean*, as Somalis proudly call it, was, is and will forever remain a symbol of the Somali nation, a personification for an eternal unity despite current societal slippery temptations towards national incongruence, the heart of Somali identity. In addition to internal absolute control of the Ethiopian polity, Melez introduced the invasion of the sovereign state of Somalia as a way of cementing "*Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*" in Ethiopia and in the Horn and the re-colonization of Somalia. Melez insists Ethiopia was invited to Somalia and has gained the support of the Ethiopian parliament for his aggression. The massacre Ethiopia perpetuated in Mogadishu is unprecedented in this ancient city's history. It is clear Melez Zenawi is a war criminal, but the international community is silent with the exception of some European diplomats ruminating whether a Somalia government in collaboration with Ethiopia has committed a war crime. No amount of Ethiopian rationalization can hide that indeed Ethiopian occupation of Mogadishu is equal to the occupation of Somalia.

The Ethiopian regime is swimming in a mud that is largely of its own making. It, however, counts on the diplomatic cover of the West, and particularly the U.S., and is determined to reach the other bank of the muddy river unscathed, or rinsed with mountain spring water, and ready to be rewarded with more. Energized by President Clinton's 1998 labeling of Zenawi and others as a "*new generation of African leaders*", the majority of the people of the Horn of Africa now hope Melez Zenawi to be The Last Warlord of IGAD, and not the Shah of the Horn. IGAD, an organization originally conceived to tackle regional calamities for almost 200 million people, but now exclusively dominated by Ethiopia, refused to condemn recent Mogadishu Ethiopian violence, giving the impression that it can no longer solve regional problems and is forever obsolete.

IGAD has never passed the initial phases of the exclusive membership of big African men sporting naked authority. No international bloc such as IGAD is expected to succeed without the input of plural interest groups and civil society. Without a doubt, the African Union, a supra-entity of IGAD, is itself a dysfunctional organization lacking foundational societal support. Both IGAD and the AU run with large begging bowls around the world while their most vocal and superficially powerful leader members enrich themselves with Africa's resources as private property. The world is painfully aware of Mobutu Sese Seko's plunder of the DR Congo and the wasted opportunities for uplifting its citizens from abject poverty. Mobutu was not "a man of the people", but a client of invisible economic hit men that served external "investors". Without grass-roots support, IGAD, and therefore the AU, exist at the expense of the commoner, the voice-less, Africa's hell-condemned people.

In order to compete with other regional blocs, regional states should integrate their mutual economic or security interests through transparent goal- and service-oriented associations. These, however, need not be exclusive membership clubs for dictators backed by externally manufactured weaponry, but by the open membership and consent of the ruled. IGAD is now at cross-roads: Will it exist as we know it? Can it reform itself? Can it work for the interests of freedom, justice, and peace in the Horn? Will it ever listen or seek the input of civil society? It is helpful to take stock of the states that compose IGAD, their interactions, and foreign interests.

On the conclusion of the April IGAD inter-ministerial meeting in Nairobi, Eritrea suspended its membership of IGAD reasoning that it "*is not willing to endorse invasion and domination under the umbrella of IGAD and be party to the atrocities perpetrated against the Somali people in contravention of justice and truth.*" Djibouti is not expected to confront Ethiopia and may maintain IGAD membership as the last member given that it can not, in any meaningful way, defend itself from the destructive forces of the TPLF. But more importantly, Djibouti hosts the only foreign base in the Horn of Africa region at its Camp Le Monier. The US leases the base for its Global War on Terror efforts.

Kenya and Ethiopia maintain a secret military pact against the Somali people, now almost forty years old. Even though Kenya has been moving towards reconciliation with the Somali people, it has recently relapsed and wants to keep this anti-Somali bilateral agreement with Ethiopia at heart. During the joint American fighter, Ethiopian army and TFG militia attacks of the UIC, Kenya closed its borders to Somali refugees and has set out on a journey of illegally allowing the rendition of not only foreign nationals fleeing the war, but also of its own citizens to Ethiopia. Kenya muddied its name and will forever be remembered as the first African country to contribute to the re-incarnation of the almost dead historical Ethiopian Allem Baqa secret jail, originally built by the imperial regime, the pre-cursor to today's Guantanamo Bay prison. Kenya served as an intermediate African rendition outpost. In the experiences of Somali, Oromo, and Ethiopian ethnic nationalists and liberals, the Allem Baqa prison signifies the greatest human rights tragedy of modern times.

Sudan appears to be sympathetic to the Somali national cause, but it pays more attention to internal and external pressures to resolve its complex problems, which distracts it. This distraction is even further complicated by its recent pre-occupation with its relationship with China. The South-North conflict was resolved with the Southern Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) and government peace agreement in 2005. The Darfur conflict has taken international dimensions and has spilled into a conflict with Chad. In addition to these conflicts, Sudan is also struggling with its Islamic state ideology and has faced off with the Uganda-Kenya-Ethiopia (UKE) alliance that enjoys the support of the United States. Sudan's contribution to the search for a peaceful settlement to the Somalia conflict is minimal and is constrained by the UKE alliance. However, as the only other member of both the Arab League (AL) and IGAD, along with Djibouti, Sudan missed opportunities to speak out against Ethiopia's invasion. Apart from brief Egyptian attempts to host a Somalia reconciliation conference in 1998, the AL could not go beyond issuing statements regarding the Somalia situation. The American-created Somalia Contact Group, which

includes IGAD, the AL, Norway, Britain, Italy, and Tanzania, recently sought the support of the AL for the efforts of IGAD. As a result, Saudi Arabia signaled it might hold reconciliation for the Somali people, and Ethiopia is resisting.

Uganda, a land-locked country like Ethiopia, is unable to make peace with its own people, and is more interested in adventures that can assist it in gaining favorable relations with Kenya, Ethiopia and the West, particularly the United States. Uganda has been struggling with its internal North-South conflicts in addition to its fight with the Lords Resistance Army, and would, therefore, lose no opportunity to mask itself in the hope of appearing to be a champion of peace and justice in Somalia. Uganda's leader, a former warlord, arguing against the criticism that his country is now a stooge for external interests, recently rationalized Uganda's complicity in Ethiopia's Somalia invasion in *The New Vision*: "The Western confusionists comprised two categories: the greedy rightists who push the line that the West has 'global' interests that it must defend by force on the one hand and the liberals who, among other distortions, propagate the view that Black Africans do not have interests of their own – they only exist to push the interests of others on the other hand." It is not clear if Yoweri Museveni counts the Somali, by far one of the proportionally most successful post-colonial African Diaspora, albeit disorganized, as "Western confusionists" or naive "Black Africans" who can not understand their national and natural interests. He seems to suggest that the interest of Somalia to reconcile itself is conditioned on the ideas of the remnants of Africa's Big Men. Museveni is perhaps not aware of, or refuses to listen to, the flourishing anti-colonial feelings of the Somali people at this time of their history. Uganda strives to secure externally funded projects such as those of the World Bank and the recent African Union labeled and western funded AMISOM in Somalia.

Somalia's TFG is oblivious, or does not care, that Uganda might not be a friend of the Somali people. It should be suspicious of the recent (May 2007) World Bank approval of over \$350 million in loans and guarantees for Uganda. As the only African state that has supported Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia in deeds with over 1000 soldiers, Uganda improved its relationship with the Bank, which is often criticized for insensitivity to Southern conflicts. It remains to be seen if in fact the recent Bank approval is politically linked to Uganda's compliance with the Somalia invasion.

Counting on the supportive and vocal votes of Kenya and Uganda and the absentee attendance of Djibouti and Sudan, Ethiopia is guaranteed to get IGAD to approve, consistently, Ethiopia's twisted Somalia objectives. Therefore, it is not surprising when IGAD rewards a thug's murderous behavior in Somalia and Ethiopia.

Four months had come and gone since Ethiopia's fascist dictator boasted about the massacre of over 2000 Somalis using conscripted and poor Ethiopian peasants and nomads. In April, his Foreign Minister, Seyoum Mesfin, campaigned in America for more support for his regime's untenable scheme of colonizing (directly first, indirectly later, if successful) the state of Somalia. No doubt, Ethiopia will continue for some time to benefit from Somali division and the international misinformation Ethiopia and its unscrupulous supporters created in the Horn of Africa. But Britain and Italy, independent colonial states with disciplined armies and economies, miserably failed to ever lord over the Somali people after more than seventy years of colonialism. Ethiopia, with no economic system of its own to sustain colonization, can not be expected to succeed in tricking all the people all the time in its description of Somalis as "terrorists". Seyoum Mesfin claims at the end of April 2007 that Ethiopia wants to withdraw from the lands of the Somali "at the earliest possible time," but that it "cannot leave behind a security vacuum that the terrorists can fill." The people of the Horn know very well that the TPLF-controlled Ethiopian army is indeed the terrorist of the day in Ethiopia and Somalia -- precisely because the TPLF attacks its political opponents as "terrorists". But the disclosure of Ethiopia's plans seems to have been a highly orchestrated plan, in concert with local ones.

No sooner did Mr. Mesfin, who acts as the self-styled Foreign Minister of the TFG, announced his government's Somalia plans in Washington did the Prime Minister and the President of Somalia's TFG announce that they "have won the fighting against the insurgents". Ethiopia and the TFG, while in agreement on the overall grand strategy of subduing Somali aspirations for freedom, peace and justice, are indeed divergent on the description of who they are dealing with. For the TFG it is "insurgents, a sub-clan or Islamic terrorists", alternating conveniently, for Mesfin it is "terrorists or jihadists". These convenient labels are a hallmark of the leader of Ethiopia's carefully crafted misinformation and machination to model himself as the *First Shah of the Horn*. Former Ethiopian president objected to the invasion of Somalia asking in January: "The Somalis didn't attack us, so why are we fighting them?" Melez's response to this question seems to have come in April when he declared that Ethiopia is fighting one sub-clan, an insult to intelligence since this minimalist label insinuates all other Somalis accept his apparent colonial motives. Melez has now adopted the late Mobutu Sese Seko's philosophy of political pluralism enshrined in his description of the Zaire polity: "There are no opponents in Zaire, because the notion of opposition has no place in our mental universe. In fact, there are no political problems in Zaire." If Seko's then Zaire suffered from inaccessibility to information, Melez's Horn is now flourishing with hundreds of inter-networked marketplaces of ideas, created and generated incessantly.

The minimalist description of the Somali nation as *little* sub-clans is indeed a distraction for the real political situation in the belly of the fascist dictatorial empire. With the destruction of the golden democratization opportunities and the imprisonment of the leaders of the risk-taking Coalition for Unity and Democracy party, the TPLF unleashed energy into the works of freedom lovers in Ethiopia. In May 2006, while Melez and his cronies were trotting the globe drumming up support for their plans to invade Somalia, six political organizations opposing the EPRDF formed the Alliance for Freedom and Democracy (AFD): The Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), the Ethiopian People's Patriotic Front (EPPF), the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Coalition for Unity and Democracy Party (CUDP), the Sidama Liberation Front (SLF), and the South Ethiopian Peoples Justice & Equality Front (SEPJE). The goal of the AFD "is to establish a just, representative and a genuine democratic process through the convening of an all-inclusive conference where the country's problems will be discussed and resolved." Ethiopia rejected the peaceful call of the opposition AFD to heed the disaster to come and to come to terms that a country as big as Ethiopia can not afford to have a one-man dictatorship. AFD suggested it will accept the EPRDF as a competitive partner in the Ethiopian political environment. To this day, Ethiopia not only refuses to respond in a positive manner to this call, but also continues to label member components of the AFD as "terrorists". Ethiopia and its people face Herculean problems that need the attention of a free pluralistic society void of convenient labels.

During its de facto rule of Ethiopia, The TPLF instituted corruption at every level of the land using fear and extermination of credible opponents in a pretext of a "war on terror" that is reminiscent of the previous Africa's Big Man lies memorialized by the late Mabuto Seso Seko's pretensions of fighting communism in Africa and the complicity of greedy and immoral western interest groups. The TPLF now controls all the sectors of the economy and has never abandoned its Marxist-Leninist ideology. The Ethiopian Airlines is a monopoly on the air travel industry and has also been expanding into Somalia. The Ethiopian telecommunications industry is similarly dominated by the government-owned Ethiopian Telecommunications Corporation, which recently signed an opaque \$200 million contract with the Chinese ZTE Corporation. The TPLF considers privatization of the Ethiopian economy undesirable. It violently holds onto inefficient and shady public companies. As a result, the consumer suffers from high costs. Comparatively, acquisition of mobile and landline telephone services, for example, is much easier and cheaper in Somalia. Somalia's telecommunication industry is completely privately-owned and is expected to grow and catch up with international standards if left without interruption by the Ethiopian occupation. The vast Ethiopian land is owned by the government. Thus, no private real estate development is authorized for local investors unless they are willing to put up with TPLF's rent-seeking

functionaries. The revenues generated by the many public companies are not accounted for publicly and are therefore guaranteed to contribute to the continued oppression of the people and the colonization of Somalia. Ethiopia, which habitually hides behind a slogan of fighting poverty, bought over \$100 million worth of North Korean weapons over the last five years.

In terms of bilateral arrangements, Ethiopia authored deceptive trade and technology agreements for the exploitation of Ethiopia's natural resources without the consent of the people of the land. The profits that accrue from the state business enterprises resulting from the international transactions are intended to be kept under the tight control of the TPLF and its cronies. Thus, while at the helm of Ethiopia, Melez is content in acting as a representative for imperialist interests in asymmetrical trade in minerals, oil and gas that do not contribute to any meaningful development. Ethiopian polity is fragmented and the regime is opposed by no less than six armed groups, but ironically Ethiopia seeks cheap credit and other economic assistance from multiple sources as if the regime is a democratic representative of the people of Ethiopia. This approach of building external alliances at the expense of internal reconciliation confirms the view of the many that Melez displays the traits of a callous leader capable of enticing foreign workers into war zones in the hope that internal political problems would somehow evaporate into thin air, and that foreign credits, be they from China or elsewhere, are useful for the development of Africa controlled with the discredited bigmanism methodology -- the idea that the interests of Europe, America, and now China, are best served by a Big Man. Ethiopia, under the control of a contemporary little Big Man, entered into agreements with many oil and other mineral extraction entities (both privately- and government-owned companies) without even the courtesy of sharing the information with the people of Ethiopia.

Ethiopia's autocratic system demolished the nascent press and media freedom enterprises in the Horn. It also systematically blocks internet journals that it deems critical of its ever worsening human, political, and environmental rights abuses. Even gentle criticisms of the behavior of the regime engender TPLF attacks on commentators and analysts, regardless of whether they live under its brutal dictatorship or as members of societies of the free world. Lately, it has been directing its client government in Mogadishu to shut down private media in order to inflict maximum massacre and destruction during the so-called mop-up operations.

The international community has a legitimate concern about dangers associated with a failed state, but it should not abandon its responsibility for the well-being of the people of the Horn, and particularly for the prevention of the impending dangerous situation in Somalia. The Horn people spoke and have been yearning for freedom from tyranny for over hundred years now. The honeymoon for the *new generation of African leaders* is over. Melez must be remembered as The Last Warlord of IGAD, and not as the First Shah of the Horn! Essentially, for peace and justice to reign supreme, international laws must be enforced consistently. IGAD and the UN must come clean and demand that Ethiopia immediately withdraw from Somalia. IGAD and the UN must also show in good faith a willingness to correct past mistakes. The European Union and the United States must re-review the utility of sinking more economic and military aid into the bottomless coffers of an EPRDF that refuses to stop the de-humanization of its political rivals and to reverse the slippery slope of destroying life and property under a bogus terrorism narrative. There must be a robust investigation if Ethiopia committed war crimes in Mogadishu. Most fruitfully, as Ethiopia is expected to become one of the most populous states of the world, the international community must help it to stay the course of democratization and to develop mature comprehensive peace agreements with its political opponents. For Somalia, help is needed for an honest restoration of the dignity of the Somali people and the sovereignty of their state. Somalia should not be a cash cow for predatory states and self-styled actors. Real reconciliation among its people can only be achieved with the genuine participation of its people, and not with a TFG monopoly on the political space, as Ethiopia wants for its client.