

The Horn of Africa: Challenges and Opportunities

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The State of Eritrea
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As it will be recalled, the end of the Cold War thirty years ago had engendered much hope and optimism in the Horn of Africa. The opportunities that loomed in the horizon were indeed memorable. This was in spite of the considerable damage incurred by global rivalry in the preceding era. The joint endeavours – predicated on the twin pillars of complementarity and cooperation – that the countries and peoples of the Horn of Africa embarked on to leverage the conducive global climate for the consolidation and advancement of enduring stability and development are indeed fresh in our memories.

But, thirty years after this euphoric event, the turbulence that afflicts the Horn of Africa today is extremely preoccupying. Why?

The lofty objectives of stability and development cannot be abandoned, sidelined, or become obsolete with time and due to fluid realities. In this respect, the path and roadmap for the period ahead has to be charted out by articulating a viable vision based on a comprehensive appraisal of the underlying causes of the prevailing malaise. This assessment should be objective. It must not, indeed, be tainted by emotional approaches and considerations, or superfluous diagnosis of the principal causes. In the event, it is vital to revisit and assess the documents regarding the key milestones in the past three decades. This is a task that involves appraisals of the respective roles of the principal global, regional and domestic players and the contributions of

each category within the hierarchy of levers that each protagonist possessed and invoked.

With the end of the Cold War, principal power groups and segments in the United States who were driven by hegemonic ambitions and impulses set out to shape and consolidate a uni-polar world that would operate under their tutelage. The scheme involved parceling out the world into spheres of influence that would be controlled through handpicked surrogates or anchor States. This misguided policy perspective is one of the primary causes of the global and regional crises that prevail today. The tribulation that we see in the Horn of Africa is a conspicuous testimony to this state of affairs.

Some of the key ramifications of this misguided policy are; (1) infringement of the sovereignty of peoples and nations; (2) flagrant breach of international law; (3) interference in internal affairs of other countries; (4) resort to intimidation and the logic of force; (5) inducing paralysis of regional and international forums to render them susceptible to domination; (6) stoking crises, conflicts and polarization so as to manage the resulting chaotic situation; (7) proliferation of attitudinal and cultural norms of demonization, condemnation, sanctions, punishment... etc.

These misguided global policies, compounded by other deleterious regional and domestic policies of ethnic polarization, corruption, fundamentalist extremism, and terrorism, have wrought immense damage in the Horn of Africa both collectively as a region as well as in each individual country. The opportunities squandered have been enormous.

These unsavory events, which are corroborated by incontrovertible evidences, surely constitute aberrations that warrant effective remedies. The primary responsibility for these remedies rests with the countries of the region themselves – both at the individual country level and through collective and concerted efforts and mechanisms. This will require the formulation of a new road-map; a task that must be accomplished without compounding external interferences.

As part and parcel of its initiative of “Active Engagement” with the Trump Administration, the Government of Eritrea had submitted a comprehensive document that described – in greater detail and with corroborative evidences – the drawbacks stemming from the policies of the three previous US Administrations as well as Eritrea’s modest perspectives for remedial action. Eritrea’s considered views took into account several, and relevant, other external factors and trends although the primary focus was on the influence of US policies. In this sense, the current plea is a mere reminder and repetition of what was submitted at the time.

And in the same spirit that underpinned its policy of “Active Engagement”, the Government of Eritrea urges the Biden Administration to undertake necessary adjustments in the policies it charts out for the Horn of Africa. We hope this task will not be derailed by diversionary themes and positions.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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