

Keynote Address by President Isaias Afwerki
on the Occasion of the
34th Liberation Anniversary
Asmara, 24 May 2025



Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to extend my warmest congratulations to the patriotic Eritrean people at home and abroad, to all its friends, as well as to the free peoples of the world.

Let me further express my gratitude to all who have adorned with splendor – a splendor whose intensity and vibrancy grows each year – the celebrations of our 34th Independence Day Anniversary with a variety of programs and events, and to all those who conveyed their sincere congratulations to the Eritrean people.

As we appraise the trajectory of our independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity each year against the backdrop of the formidable process of nation-building, it is imperative to clearly comprehend, in an objective and relational perspective, the global and regional environment. Precisely because the bolstering and reinforcement of our independence cannot be seen in isolation from the prevalence of a just global order and regional architecture of mutual respect, complementarity, cooperation, stability and progress that we deeply cherish.

While our readings of the global/regional developments that transpired last year as well as in the preceding years remain valid, what is new on this auspicious occasion of our 34th Independence Anniversary is its confluence with President Trump's accession to the highest office in the United States. In view of US global standing as well as the new perspectives that have already been pronounced, serious homework is required to gauge from the outset the underlying policies, approaches and trends of the new Administration. As palpable as this vital approach remains, prudence requires patience and refrainment from premature conclusions as the dynamics of this new phenomenon remain complicated and complex.

If we take the pronounced mantra of “MAGA” – the acronym that stands for Making America Great Again – as the starting point, there are several questions that crop up before one can delve into fundamental matters of strategy, plans and processes. What are the ramifications of being “Great”? Why is not the US considered great in the first place, and why does it need to be so? And how will this cherished ideal be achieved?

In literal terms, being “Great” translates into being the wealthiest, the most industrialized, leading in technological progress, strongest in military power, unparalleled in the sphere of influence and soft power, regarded in awe by all, etc. If these metrics (some parameters can be added or altered) are taken as reference points, an objective appraisal of the status of the US in the global pecking order would involve exhaustive analysis of the Cold War period as well as the subsequent 30 years of the “unipolar” phase of reckless pursuit of dominance; (this is leaving aside the preceding centuries since the foundation of the US). This will allow us to predict what lies in the horizon in the period ahead.



As we focus our lenses onto contemporary times – the last 35 years after the end of the Cold War, when the overarching theme revolved around US’s “uncontested global preeminence and control” – the massive and galloping, over 30-trillion, national debt accumulated due to wasteful Administrations in Washington serves an eloquent indicator that merits no elaboration. Washington’s myopic and reckless postulate of “off-shoring our industries to countries – with China at the forefront – with cheaper labor and energy costs, and low consumption will ramp up our profits” had ultimately backfired to yield heavy economic losses.

Indeed, China stands today as pre-eminent in the world in terms of industrial output. Even in technological dominance, US status is not only suffering multifaceted corrosion, but future trends do not predict its return to preeminence. The US is not the most powerful country militarily – a fact corroborated by several metrics in addition to NATO’s precarious condition. The situation is not improved by showy parades of naval carriers, the demolition of small countries such as Yemen, or the sheer number of nuclear weapons. Excessive profits gleaned in a global environment – marked by the absence of healthy competition, free markets and trade as well as fair distribution of wealth and income; where a financial order dominated by zero-sum games that resorts to speculation and unethical practices of usury; the unencumbered printing of paper money; and illicit weaponization of sanctions and intimidation, etc. – are dwindling and becoming increasingly unsustainable. This current state of affairs can be expanded with extensive and detailed substantiation.

In the face of this prevailing reality, President Trump has announced policies and initiatives aimed at reducing or eliminating America's debt, reversing and rectifying wasteful fiscal expenditure, attracting and bringing onshore industries and investments that had migrated abroad as well as encouraging new ones, increasing tariffs and taxes, lowering domestic taxes, flaunting force and employing brinkmanship, and ramping up active diplomacy and public relations, etc.

The overarching rationale and objective of these aggregate policies is to make America great, which, in his view, it is not at this point in time. It is not easy to forecast, at this juncture, how domestic issues as well as US ties with China, Russia, Europe, Asia, Latin America will evolve and pan out in the next four years, both in terms of the specific agendas as well as the collective impact of all the distinct facets of the package. As such, the scenarios envisaged will require constant monitoring and evaluation on an hourly basis within detailed reference frames. One cannot, of course, ascertain that it is "absolutely impossible" to rectify cumulative misguided policies pursued for centuries. That the task requires scaling a very steep uphill is, nonetheless, evident. More importantly, intimate knowledge of the reactions to, and engagements with, the Trump administration of the purportedly "Great" countries/governments that are the target of these policies, and gauging the trend in relation to these tendencies will be critical.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Amidst all the global rivalries set in motion during this "transitional phase" for a new global order, marginalized Africa is virtually absent in the equation. That Africa is ignored is not appalling or surprising. Indeed, in spite of its tremendous natural endowments, Africa continues to export raw materials for nominal prices while importing manufactured goods at exorbitant rates, forcing it to maintain a primitive subsistence economy and depend on relief handouts.

Perhaps, against the backdrop of Trump's indicative policies, Africa's prevalent precarious system anchored on handouts and subsidy from the US and others might face what is often dubbed as the "unintended consequences" of change. The latter could potentially open a new opportunity and impetus to the African peoples. How will Africa act in the coming four years? And above all,

what will Africa do to ensure the advent of a sustainable and fair global order? These will help us refine the policies we have already drafted on this crucial subject.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

What about the regional situation closest to us? Our permanent strategy is anchored on fostering robust ties in our region predicated on mutual respect, complementarity, cooperation, stability, prosperity and integration. The geostrategic importance of the neighborhood has always made it susceptible to myriad interferences and acts of subversion spurred by perceived imperatives of “increasing influences”. In this respect, we can look at the crises in Sudan and Ethiopia as manifestations and indicators of these machinations.

The people of the Sudan had registered commendable progress in the task of nation-building in the early decades following their liberation in 1956. But this progress was hampered from 1989 onwards principally due to the threat posed by the irresponsible policies of the NIF. When their patience was exhausted, the Sudanese people resorted to a spontaneous uprising to remove the obstacle, subsequently ushering in a period of transition. And on behalf of the Sudanese people, the Sovereign Army was entrusted with the task of transition.



But for reasons that have to do with the geostrategic importance of the Sudan, external forces bent on derailing the process begun to stoke conflict while the transition process was still in its infancy by co-opting and instrumentalizing

internal surrogates. The “transition” process became compounded and exacerbated and was plunged into military polarization and confrontation through externally incited rivalries and acrimony. These forces are engaged in managing the conflict while simultaneously funding and aggravating it through “neighboring” countries. It is the Sudanese people who are victims of this ordeal, who are shouldering the brunt of the worsening calamity. The people of the Sudan have gleaned adequate experience from the subversion that has caused this quagmire. They have begun to expand and strengthen their opposition to this subversion. The neighborhood of the Sudan has an obligation to shoulder its moral responsibility and extend unreserved support to the Sudanese people. This is a duty and not a favor by any means.

But what about Ethiopia?

The spiral of crises and devastation inculcated for eighty years – no less than three generations – by the misguided policies enunciated by Washington’s Fosters (Foster Dulles and his ilk) is well-known and fully documented to warrant reiteration here. In the same token, the grave mistakes perpetrated by leaders of the former Soviet Union under the same logic during the Cold War era is fully documented. The opportunity of nation-building was consequently denied for two generations. And after the end of the Cold War, Ethiopia gravitated towards ethnic polarization instead of building a nation anchored on citizenship. The upheavals and devastation wrought by this option does not merit much elaboration.

Following the several and repeated disasters unleashed by Ethnic Federalism, the euphoria and optimism that the presumed “reform” engendered not only in Ethiopia but also in Eritrea and other neighboring countries seven years ago is indeed fresh in our memories.

But the external forces who were perturbed by the promising prospects were not idle. The wars they have declared against the Ethiopian people under the rubric of Prosperity (their new surrogate) in the past few years is illustrative of their desperation. The pretexts and banners are many; the reckless agendas and their pre-emptive features transparent. They include: “Issue of Water”, “Nile and the Red Sea”, “Access to the Sea”, “Ideology of Orommuma” that does not represent the Oromo people, the conundrum of a “Cushitic-Semitic antagonism”,

“Instrumentalizing the people and land of Afar as a ruse and convenient platform”, “stoking ethnic wars all over”, etc.

The purchasing spree set in motion to acquire weapons and “technology” in order to unleash these declared wars, the accompanying bravado and military brinkmanship, are all well-known and documented. The dollars squandered to enlist the collaboration of traitors and turn-coats are limitless. The tools of “psychological warfare” deployed as a third pillar so as to spread abject lies, suppress and distort truth and facts, and foment hatred and grievances are numerous too. Overt and “covert” acts of subversion being concocted against the people and Government of Eritrea are well known to all and sundry.

In conclusion: the optimistic prospects that were in the offing have dissipated. The Ethiopian people have already made their choice, and they are buckling up to strengthen their opposition. The people and Government of Eritrea do not regret the unreserved support that they vigorously extended with high hopes to the presumed Rectification/Reform because of the sudden turn of events. They do not have the appetite to indulge in platforms of lies and futile acrimony. They call on the external forces that are embroiled in concocting subversion to “fold their hands/tentacles”. As for the few collaborators and vacillating elements, they urge them “to stay away from these transgressions”.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is incumbent on us to monitor, meticulously analyze, and properly read international and regional developments and trends in order to make judicious choices that impact our own agenda of internal progress. But as the sayings of the Sage run – “Hold the yoke firm irrespective of the meanderings of the Oxen”, or, “Better to focus on the fulcrum rather than running aimlessly” – our core mission is to give our undivided focus and priority to our own domestic developments and trends.



Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our development programs which continue to be pursued in accordance with their sectoral priorities (water infrastructure, energy/electricity, agriculture, marine resources, physical infrastructure – as well as housing, transport, education, health, tourism...etc.) will be further bolstered through an Integrated Development Program that will be implemented in the Six Regions in the current year based on detailed plans and by marshalling the requisite resources. And above all, in a manner that galvanizes extensive popular participation and contribution.

The wide popular participation along with the developmental tasks implemented in the past through the Defense Forces will increase in scope and quality with better institutional organization and higher popular inputs. As I had mentioned last year, the framework launched to create a conducive environment in order to stimulate the latent potential and active initiative of our patriotic citizens abroad in our developmental agenda has not yet materialized due to delays in the data collection task that is essential for charting out tangible plans. But the concrete participation of our citizens abroad in our developmental agenda will be launched from the second half of 2025 onwards as a third cohesive pillar to supplement the architecture of the Six Regions and the Defense Forces as outlined above. This configuration does not include projects and investments in various sectors and fields that may be launched at an individual, group or community levels.

The overarching and multi-pronged goal of our development agenda revolves around the timely alleviation of the living conditions of our people, especially the

deprived segments, and more importantly, the extrication of our economy from a subsistence level towards an economy that augments our productivity and aggregate produce in a sustainable manner; that catalyzes our transition towards manufacturing and industrialization. But our development agenda is not confined to economic growth alone. The diplomatic and information/communication fronts should not be glossed over in the context of the volatile international and regional trends. Naturally, capital, other resources and facilities are vital. But the resource of paramount importance is devoted and industrious human capital. As such, we are marching forward with reassuring guarantees. And no force can impede the inexorable progress.

Our Cohesion: Our Armour!

Glory to our Martyrs that Ensure the Integrity of Our Commitment!

Victory to the Masses!