

Highlights of President Isaias Afwerki's

Interview with local media outlets



(Part I – On International and Regional Issues)

- The bi-polar, and its sequel, uni-polar global orders that prevailed in the past eighty years since the end of the Second World War did not represent the interests and aspirations of humanity as a whole for justice, peace, legality, and mutual respect; anchored as they were on rules of unconscionable exploitation of resources, spheres of influence etc. that perpetuated the domination of the powers to be. Within this wider framework, Eritrea was victimized when its right of decolonization was flagrantly suppressed in the 1940s on the altar of geopolitical agendas compelling it to wage a long war of liberation that exacted unparalleled sacrifices.
- The uni-polar global order, which was conceived as unassailable during the heyday of its accession, is now at a crucial or terminal crossroad. In spite of the collapse of the former USSR, containment policies against China and Russia have not delivered the expected results. The economic, military and technological supremacy of the US and its EU allies are indeed being superseded by other key players. In a nutshell, the tumultuous trajectory is giving way to a new transition phase whose contours have not yet fully crystallized. In this context, the marginalized peoples of the world, including Africa, who are also endowed with enormous resources, can and must play their modest role in the articulation of the new road-map for a fair and just global order.

- Africa should not be trapped in a “blame game” to rationalize its failures. First and foremost, it must extricate itself from debilitating dependency characterized by subsidy and relief handouts, which is tantamount to modern slavery. Africa has huge resources – in some case amounting to trillions of dollars – but remains handicapped by a primitive economy where value addition and manufacturing are minimal or almost non-existent. This must change and Africa should embark on incremental industrialization instead of exporting unprocessed raw materials. Brain drain, the proliferation of NGOs that do the bidding of big multinational corporations is another curse that aggravates the problem. More ominously, Africa continues to be bedeviled by parochial policies and the quagmire of ethnic cleavages which continue to fuel endless conflicts. In the event, Africa will need to create viable sovereign institutions that are not sheer replicas of other systems but that reflect its own realities and peculiarities. This is a process that must be owned by Africans themselves. For purposes of synergy and optimal results, this must be based on frameworks of regional, if not continental, cooperation and integration.
- Regarding Eritrea-US bilateral ties, Eritrea decided to “forget and forgive”, and pursue a positive and constructive policy of engagement with Washington immediately after independence in spite of all the wrongs meted to it for the previous fifty years. Unfortunately, US adversarial policies were not remedied in the subsequent years. Still, and especially during the first term of President Trump, we decided to revive our policy of constructive engagement urging the new Administration to assess and rectify the unrelenting and misguided policies against Eritrea. Although the initial response was positive, much was not achieved in the subsequent three years. The situation became much more aggravated during the Biden Administration which imposed yet more illicit sanctions against Eritrea. We intend to revive the pursuit of constructive engagement with the Trump Administration; not to ask favours or special treatment but as part and parcel of, and in conjunction with, others in our wider neighborhood, which includes the Nile Basin, Horn of Africa, the Red Sea and the Gulf Region. This holistic approach is vital as the objective

remains the remedial of misguided policies that affect the region negatively. This is also our approach with other potential partners: Russia, China, India, Japan, Latin America. etc.



- Regarding Ethiopia, the President stated that the recent letter that the government sent to the UN Secretary General falsely accusing Eritrea of stoking conflict was astounding and infantile. This was indeed a cheap lie by the Prosperity Party to cover-up its war preparations. The country remains afflicted by myriad internal conflicts and crises. The hope and optimism, the euphoria ushered in during the early years of the new government have been recklessly dissipated. What transpired after the Pretoria Agreement is difficult to fathom. Why was not it implemented in good-faith. And why unleash a reckless war against FANO? The turmoil that we see in Ethiopia today is really unprecedented. And why is the Prosperity Party agitating for war against Eritrea instead of focusing on, and addressing its, domestic problems?
- Our vision was to foster good and solid ties of bilateral cooperation. But in effect, the Ethiopian government has declared war through its provocative rhetoric. They claim they have tacit endorsement from France, the US and the UAE etc. to their war agenda; but this is not entirely true. How can anyone accuse Eritrea while procuring weapons and resorting to daily saber-rattling? This dangerous trend, which stems from the Government's desperation, must be stopped. For our part, we should not be worried. But the peoples of Ethiopia and the whole neighborhood should take stock of the situation.

- The gimmick of “sovereign access to the sea” has other geopolitical dimensions. Other powers are evidently behind this reckless adventure. We must recall that our rights to decolonization was denied in the 1940s under similar pretexts. The Prosperity Party floated at one point in time the notion of diverting all its imports through Assab while abandoning the Port of Djibouti and thereby annulling its estimated 4 billion USD annual revenues. We told them that we would not contemplate such a scheme to harm a neighboring country. Their divisive and provocative overtures to gain ports and naval base in Somaliland etc. fall into the same reckless acts. In reality, these are not the PP’s agendas, but the fantasy of the UAE President who wants to create a constellation of ports under his control all over the region.
- Our core agenda remains the promotion of regional stability and security. These are matters that constitute the agenda of constructive engagement with the US, the EU and other parties.
- We have no appetite for war. But we have fought imposed wars. We have no territorial claims or ambitions against our neighbors. But as history attests, we know how to defend our country when and if attacked. The PP is bragging about the Drones and long-range missiles, tanks etc. it has purchased and the massive wave of attacks that it will unleash against Eritrea. This is mind-boggling and can only be entertained by those who do not know history. Our response is: do not plunge the people of Ethiopia into a futile war; focus on solving your real problems. Of course, it does not mean that we totally ignore the threat. We must take the necessary precautions as one cannot totally rule out acts of folly.
- President Isaias also underlined the indispensability of functional regional integration. The track records of IGAD, other regional organizations of cooperation (RECs), and the AU may not be highly positive. But the benefits of synergy, the complementarity and interconnectedness that exist cannot be underrated. One obstacle is external interference that often undermine these efforts. Still, we need to exert vigorous efforts to advance these objectives.

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