

Ethiopia: The Middle East Outpost in Africa

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Events in the Middle East (Israel) have become more central in American policy than at any time in the history of America. Debates over the policies of Israel have been raging in the congress and in the White House for the last few decades. America was not certain about its position in global politics after the end of the cold war. America's role in global politics was also under attack. Post- Cold war Bill Clinton was the last president to preside over a unipolar world. American elites and politicians believed that that the unipolar world that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union and its communist ideology could bring about a lasting global peace under the domination of the capitalist world. "the post-cold war divides were a time when American foreign policy was based on ideas about the state of the country and the state of the world that turned out not to be true....despite many advantages... the broad group of Americans who concerned themselves with guiding the country's foreign policy was not very good at understanding either the state of the Post-Cold war world....the gap between the intellectual basis of American foreign policy and the forces driving world events would widen until American foreign policy became increasingly controversial at home even as it became less successful overseas," 1

American foreign policy on the Middle East shifted to Russia, India and China without coming up with any viable solution on the crisis in the Middle East. It was calculated that an improved relationship with India, China, (Indo- China) Pacific countries and collaboration with Russia "Reset" would enhance economic prosperity. "With the invasion of Ukraine, Russia effectively destroyed the European peace order. Now, Europe needs to find ways to contain its aggressive neighbor, while its traditional protector, the United States, continues its shift of focus to the Indo-Pacific.....The unipolar moment after the triumph of the West in the Cold War is over. The war in Ukraine clearly marks the end of the Pax Americana. Russia and China openly challenge American hegemony." 2 /The "persistent illusion that an Israeli -Palestinian peace agreement was just one more summit away " 2 dominated the foreign policy on the Middle East without

any serious attempt to make it a reality. What we see today is the consequence of what Walter Mead calls: “fundamentally misguided strategy and a national perception increasingly distracted from reality.”³ Successive American governments put emphasis on building new alliances, containing Russia and competing with China. “The Israeli-Palestinian conflict was seen as a lost cause, a nagging crisis that simply had to be contained if it could not be resolved. But in the same way that Russia's invasion of Ukraine shifted US priorities, Hamas's attack on Israel forced the White House to turn its attention back to the Middle East. And the US is still trapped in its old ways.”³

The great power rivalry has emerged once again as Ukraine and the Middle East explode with fears of a greater war. One year through the Ukraine war and after so much destruction the winner is the military industrial complex and the opportunity to test weapons and technology in real war. The US has shifted to the Middle East with an unfinished business behind, and congress is fighting whether to continue financing Ukraine's war with Russia. It will come to haunt it soon. “...the new war in the Middle East serves the Kremlin's interests, weakening US support for its opponent and obscuring its malignant activities. But the war has also put an end to Moscow's long-standing policy to balance its relations in the Middle East between Israel and its neighbors. As its war in Ukraine has driven Russia further into the arms of Iran, so Tel Aviv now views the Kremlin as at best a dubious mediator, at worst an ally of Hamas.Given Russia's welcome of a Hamas delegation in Moscow in October, its [refusal to condemn the initial Hamas attack](#), and its close alliance with Iran, Tel Aviv no longer considers Russia an ally and would probably reject it as a mediator”.⁴

The US has sent troops to the Middle East and deployed its largest aircraft carriers to the Mediterranean and the Pacific. Biden says that he has made “a principle-based case” for pushing back against Russia invasion of Ukraine and Chinese President saber rattling regarding Taiwan. The war in Ukraine shades some light on the emerging great power rivalry and the war between Palestinians and Israeli as a permanent threat to regional stability and shifting global alliances with consequences far beyond the Middle East to Africa.

Africa and American Policy

Africa has taken a back seat in global politics and American policy during the last decades. Biden announced that the US is “all in” on Africa's future during a

meeting with 49 countries and the Africa Union at a three day summit in Washington DC. This was an awakening after years of watching helplessly China spread its influence in Africa. Chinese trade with Africa is four times that of the USA with Beijing as an important creditor to most of African states. Many African countries are joining the BRICS and creating distance from the USA. USA's influence on Africa is the lowest ever. *The BRICS bloc met for its annual leader's summit in Johannesburg, South Africa on August 22–24, 2023. The highlight of the fifteenth summit was the agreement to admit six new member countries: Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia.*

“The slew of applications to join the BRICS is clearly a symptom of a deeper malaise. The West’s proclivity to deploy unilateral financial sanctions, abuse international payments mechanisms, renege on climate finance commitments, and accord scant respect to food security and health imperatives of the Global South during the pandemic are only some of the elements responsible for the growing disenchantment with the prevailing international system. 5

BRICS is becoming a more attractive alliance for many developing countries than the current world order. “Even the profile of the new members suggest that the system is headed for something beyond traditionally “acceptable” partners in the eyes of the West. The presence of Iran especially and the reactions to it in the coming days will be interesting to follow.”6

Most of the conflicts in Africa have not been taken seriously by the USA. With thousands being killed regularly as a result of internal conflicts, in an ever growing number of African countries, none seem to attract the attention of nether the mainstream media nor the policy makers in the USA.

“Peace and security in the Horn of Africa isn’t a priority for the Biden administration. Despite a rhetorical commitment to a rule-based international order, Washington has neither protected Africa’s painstakingly-constructed peace and security architecture nor brought the Ethiopian and Sudanese crises to the U.N. Security Council.”7

Peace in Sudan has fallen apart. With support from UAE, Sudanese paramilitary leader General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti (leader of RSF) is expected to declare a government. Hemedti is an ally of Eritrea. Hemedti seems to be closer to Israel than Abdelrahman Al-Burhan, President of the Transitional

Sovereign Council of the Republic of the Sudan. Israel had offered to mediate between the two warring parties. Before the military took over, Sudan has supported the Palestinian cause. Over the years, Sudan's shift away from the anti-Israel axis was widely welcomed by Israel. "We need Israel, Hemedti claimed in October 2020. "Whether we like it or not, relations with Israel are tied to removing Sudan from the U.S. list of states sponsoring terrorism," 8

It is amazing how often Americans become enamored with one African ruler after another, only to become disillusioned soon afterwards. When a new African ruler talks preferably in English, about human rights democracy and corruption, and holding elections, the Americans are immediately lovestruck and taken in at first, whether it is with someone like Mugabe, Kagame, Salva Kirr, or now Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia. But initial hope soon give way to bitter recriminations between Washington and those regimes. While all those men, in their own mind, are fighting for political survival amid the most complex ethnic tribal and regional forces, the Americans in almost ideological manner reduce it all to issues of voting, human rights and anti-corruption" 9.

I have escorted senior American officials for a meeting with President Mengistu of Ethiopia. I have been amazed how quickly these officials change their minds after speaking to Mengistu, used to be known as a bloody dictator, though now Abiy Ahmed has come to the top of the list as the most evil divisive and bloody leader in contemporary Africa. Mengistu's demeanor, calm collected and very friendly approach was only a façade. They failed to see the devil in him. They did not bother to look into that. It was the same with Susan Rice's attachment to Dictator Meles Zenawi. He was the architect of the current chaos in Ethiopia. Susan Rice was charmed by his language and smart approach and his bravado. Again she also failed to see the evil in him and allowed him to continue committing the crimes against humanity which broke apart Ethiopia. To date after his death in 2004 and knowing fully well the consequences of his evil policies, she remains to be an ardent supporter of Meles and his successor, who has taken his legacy to another extreme. His successor Abiy Hamed has become the master- mind of the genocide of Amharas. Ambassador Mike Hammer, the American envoy for the Horn of Africa seems to have been trapped by the charm and blatant lies of Abiy Ahmed. Abiy has carefully constructed a personality that would make it possible for him to charm vulnerable foreigners. Ambassador Mike Hammer took too long a time to decide that no peace can come to Ethiopia under the leadership of Abiy Ahmed. Abiy belongs to the ICC. I hope Ambassador

Hammer will realize this sooner than later and not be a victim like his predecessors, Herman Cohen and Susan Rice, if he has not already.

Across Africa American politicians have avoided themselves from seeing the truth about leaders and their policies. As a result, today there are only a handful of countries that have some form of democratic political system. Many African countries are run by dictators as we witness more frequent coup d'états across the Sahel. Whatever happens in these countries they are inconsequential in global affairs so long as the governments align themselves with the interest of successive American governments. Many ask: Is it true? 'Does the US government actually oppose dictatorships and champion democracy around the world, as we are repeatedly told?'

"According to Freedom House's rating system of political rights around the world, there were 49 nations in the world, as of 2015, that can be fairly categorized as "dictatorships." As of fiscal year 2015, the last year for which we have publicly available data, *the federal government of the United States had been providing military assistance to 36 of them, courtesy of your tax dollars. The United States currently supports over 73 percent of the world's dictatorships!*"¹⁰

The US State Department has traditionally limited African issues to Africa Bureau, envoys and junior officials. "But for as long as the U.S.'s Horn of Africa policy is handled by the Africa Bureau at the State Department — whose diplomats scarcely get the time of day from their counterparts in the Gulf Kingdoms — Washington's views will remain all-but-irrelevant. The Horn of Africa doesn't make the cut when staffers prepare talking points for President Biden, Secretary of State Antony Blinken or national security adviser Jake Sullivan to speak to their Arab counterparts. It's a prioritization that leaves the region in a deepening crisis, at the mercy of ruthless transactional politics.'¹¹ In this kind of situation the voices of American individuals not the institution becomes a policy on which the fate of many African countries depend on.

The Middle East War and Horn of Africa

Africa's divisions regarding support to Israel are rooted in the history of the liberation movements during which time African countries were aligned with the PLO and received significant support.

In July 2022, South African Foreign Minister [Naledi Pandor called](#) on the United Nations to declare Israel an “apartheid state”. Amid Russia’s war on Ukraine, as Western pressure grew on South Africa and other nations in Africa and Asia to condemn Moscow’s actions, [Pandor pushed back](#), asking why Western capitals weren’t willing to apply the same principles of international law when it came to Israel’s occupation of Palestinian lands. Still, that vocal diplomatic support for Palestine masks a more complex relationship between African nations and Israel – one that has rapidly grown in recent years, reshaping the continent’s approach to the Middle East.¹²

As the war goes into its fifth week [Egypt](#) is reinforcing the border area with tanks and troops, determined to keep Palestinians away. Domestic problems have caused a lot of stress to the regime in Cairo as Sisi heads into an election in December. “Critics have accused Sisi of [piggybacking](#) off public anger over Gaza to improve his approval ratings. He [called](#) for nationwide protests in support of the Palestinian cause last Friday—a rarity given his yearslong clampdown on political activism.”¹²

Experts also fear the conflict could motivate Islamist militant groups in Africa to capitalize on public anger over the humanitarian crisis to garner support and legitimacy. In Somalia, for instance, the al Qaeda-affiliated group al-Shabab [held](#) pro-Palestine protests. As FP’s Lynne O’Donnell [reported](#), “Somali-based terrorist group – in particular has seized upon the Israel-Hamas conflict to embed its own narratives within wider pro-Palestine grievances and build proverbial bridges between the plight of Muslims in both Gaza and in Somalia.”¹³

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi [said](#) on X that Israel had “crossed the red lines, which may force everyone to take action.” Syria and Lebanon’s Hezbollah have vowed to enter war unless Israel stops invasion and bombardment of Gaza. Many experts believe there is [little desire in Washington and Tehran](#) for a regional conflict. But the scope for miscalculation is huge, and the intensity of Israel’s bombardment of Gaza, which, according to Palestinian health officials, has killed more than 10,000 people, including thousands of civilians and children, could easily push the situation spiraling out of control.

“Israel has sent Navy missile boats to the Red Sea to bolster its presence there following missile attacks from Iranian proxies in Yemen.”¹⁴ Yemen is one force to reckon with along the Red Sea.

The Houthis* are part of the Iran-aligned Axis of Resistance, which is hostile to Israel and the U.S. and includes Lebanon's Hezbollah and Iran-backed militias in Iraq. The Houthis govern parts of Yemen including the capital Sanaa, which is more than a thousand miles from Israel. The Houthi militia claimed an attempted attack on southern Israel on Tuesday, saying it had launched a “large batch” of ballistic and cruise missiles as well as drones toward Israeli targets. The Iran-backed militia carried out the attempted assault in response to what it called “brutal Israeli-American aggression” in Gaza, the Houthi military spokesman, Yahya Sarea, said on the social media platform X. Mr. Sarea said the attack was the third operation conducted by the Houthis “in support of our persecuted brothers in Palestine,” and threatened further missile and drone assaults..

The Israeli military said its aerial defense system had intercepted a surface-to-surface missile fired toward Israel “from the area of the Red Sea.” It said it had also intercepted other “aerial threats” in the area, none of which entered Israeli territory. “The Houthi movement in Yemen shot down a United States drone on Wednesday night, more than a week after effectively declaring war on Israel, raising fears of a regional escalation.”¹⁵

Ethiopia: The Outpost

With a population of 120 million, projected to reach 130 by 2030 it is the second most populated country in Africa and the most militarized. It is the a critical power in the Horn and with a population in crisis it is considered to be the biggest threat to stability in the Horn of Africa. The combined population of the countries of the Horn cannot match the numbers that are fast growing in Ethiopia. Kenya has approximately 52 million, Uganda 45 million, Sudan 43 million, Somalia,15 million, South Sudan 11 million , Eritrea 3 million and Djibouti one million. Together the Horn makes up one fifth of Africa’s population. All except Kenya have experienced civil war.

Ethiopia and its Judo Christian traditions have survived since the birth of Emperor Menelik the First, the son of King Solomon from the Queen Sheba the Queen of Ethiopia and Yemen. It is told that Menelik later went back to Israel to bring the

Ark of the Covenant containing the ten commandments: the foundation of Judo Christianity. The Ark is now believed to be at the church of Tsion in Axum, Ethiopia. Christianity arrived in the 300 AD in Ethiopia and quickly spread. In 451 AD the Ethiopian church began to follow the tradition of the Coptic (Judo Christianity: recognizing Jewish scripture to constitute the Old Testament of the Christian Bible) in 615AD The Prophet Mohammed sent his relatives to seek refuge in Ethiopia to escape persecution in Mecca and thus Ethiopians became the first people to accept Islam beyond the Arab Peninsula. Islam spread fast in Ethiopia and Ethiopia today is considered to be the only non-Muslim non-Christian nation in North East Africa bordering the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. The effort of Arab nationalism to make the Red Sea an Arab lake failed because of this religious demographic make-up of the region and eventually the collapse of Arab nationalism .

The Ethiopian Jews known as Beta Israel are biblical and have their origin in the 4th century AD. They are descendants of King Solomon who refused to convert to Christianity. Over 200 thousand Beta Israelis have migrated to Israel and have become a formidable community defending the biblical rights of the Jewish people.

“Ethiopia is an outpost of Middle Eastern and Semitic civilization on the continent of Africa”¹⁶ with its language, religion and cultures of the Northern highlands related to Hebrew and Arabic. The age-old Ethiopian kingdom of Aksum, its orthodox Christianity influenced by Greek Hellenism, twice sent its troops across the Red Sea to become masters of Yemen. Today this ancient nation is in an existential struggle to keep its unity as ethnic hostility rips apart the ties that have bound the people for such a long time.

Mrs. Alice Nderitu the United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide stated recently : “The incident reports that we see coming out of Ethiopia are deeply disturbing and constitute a call for action,” she said. “I want to particularly draw the attention of the global community to the continued presence of risk factors for genocide and related atrocity crimes in the country.”

Nderitu said there are reports that entire families have been killed and relatives have been forced to watch horrific crimes committed against their loved ones, while whole communities have been displaced or expelled from their homes.

“The suffering of innocent civilians should never be accepted as inevitable; rather, it must reinforce our commitment to ensure that impunity does not prevail and that all possible prevention actions are prioritized.”¹⁷

“A report by the UN’s International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia earlier this month found that all eight of the common risk factors and the majority of the specific risk factors for atrocity crimes are now present in Ethiopia.”¹⁸

These are the strongest contributing factors that increase the likelihood of genocide in any society according to the Genocide Convention. But in reality genocide, in the strictest definition of the Convention has been taking place in Ethiopia over the last 5 years. But this is the furthest that the UN can go because it has not been allowed to conduct investigation on the various credible reports obtained from sources on the ground. Amidst the ongoing genocide of Amhara people, unprecedented instability and intense war between government and Amhara peoples Fano in the Amhara region; the regime is bracing for yet another war with Eritrea.

Ethiopia has amassed troops presumably to invade Eritrea, with stated objective of taking over the port of Assab. “Ethiopia’s tone on access to a seaport is either a distraction from domestic policy failures or the start of another regional war”¹⁹ Abiy’s intention to wage war on its neighbors cannot be more clear. He stated in public addressing :

“The lack of access to harbors “prevents Ethiopia from holding the place it ought to have. If this is not going to happen, there will be no fairness and justice and if there is no fairness and justice, it’s a matter of time, we will fight.” He invoked a 19th century Abyssinian warrior who had proclaimed the Red Sea as Ethiopia’s “natural boundary.” It’s drawn an angry response.

Somalia said its territorial integrity is “sacrosanct.” Eritrea, which gained independence from Ethiopia in 1993 after a bitter three-decade war, described the comments as “excessive,” adding that all countries in the region were “perplexed.” Djibouti said its territory was unquestionable, “neither today nor tomorrow. In a neighborhood that’s been wracked by conflict for decades — and continues to be so, with Sudan in the midst of its own civil war and Somalia

battling Islamist militants — the remarks seem an unwise course for Abiy to chart.
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The leaders in the region see Abiy Ahmed as the problem child of the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia has objected to the Israeli invasion of Gaza as stated by the Prime Minister. Anti-Semitic activities are fast spreading in the country. Unlike the 1967 war when churches opened and prayed for 24 hours a day with churches wide open and bells ringing throughout the day and night until the war was over. Times have certainly changed. Eritrea's position is more clear than ever. It is anti-Yemen which is an arch enemy since independence. There is a visible Israeli and American naval and intelligence presence in the Red Sea along the Eritrean Coast and possibly in the Dahlak archipelago.

The Horn of Africa is set to be the extension of the Middle East theater with a possible global security threat. While the Gaza Israeli war may end, the one that may start in the Horn might eclipse the current Israeli Gaza war and last longer with disastrous consequences. In Sudan Abdel Fattah al-Burhan is being supported by Egypt while Hemedti is aligned with Israel, Eritrea and the UAE. Al-Burhan recently resumed diplomatic relationship with Iran and remains Iran's closest ally in Africa despite majority of Sudanese being Suni Muslims. These separate alliances is a cause of concern. Yemeni Houthis are becoming more involved in the war. There might be another round of war between Yemen and Eritrea as tensions rise in the Red Sea and between the two nations. As the existing civil war in Ethiopia transforms into cross border conflict, it builds a perfect storm for a proxy war with all the complex alliances in the region. There are six military bases in Djibouti. The Horn was one of the most complex security zones in the world already. With this new crisis a show down in the region is unthinkable.

Abiy Ahmed must be stopped since he is the most reckless and most irresponsible leader in the region who is likely to ignite war in the Horn of Africa. With all the shifting alliances in the Arab World and the high stakes involvement of both Russia and China, it is difficult to predict what comes next. The war has already had global impact in less than a month since Hamas burst across Israel's security wall in more than 20 places. Besides the USA, Iran, China and Russia's firm presence in the region makes the stakes higher. There is an international consensus that the longer the war in Gaza plays out, the greater the potential for wider consequences well beyond the Israeli or Palestinian borders: most certainly to Africa.....END.....

* The Houthis aim to govern all of Yemen, and external anti-imperialist movements against the United States, Israel, and Saudi Arabia. They have launched repeated missile and drone attacks against Saudi cities. The conflict is widely seen as a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

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