

State of Affairs That Caused Anxiety

History has repeatedly taught us that when an irresponsible mind, tainted with backwardness, hatred, resentment and revenge, seizes power it tends to suffer from complexity and end up taking miscalculated measures of grave consequences. The US administration exploited the similarly contaminated TPLF psyche to spur an unjustified war on Eritrea in May 1998. From the economic perspective, the year 1997 was an important stage for Eritrea as it had entered a new and significant chapter by issuing its own national currency for the first time in its history. And because this enabled Eritrea to adjust its economic progress through its own fiscal policy, the historic event meant an added economic freedom to the political freedom. But this development was not welcomed by those quarters that were already discontent of Eritrea's independence in addition to its exemplary independent political stand and economic growth. Therefore, the provocations gained momentum and hostilities that incited military clash escalated.

The system that the US administration and the TPLF engineered to derail the Government of Eritrea from its path of development, was the provocative act of dislocating Eritrean citizens living in the border areas and settling TPLF soldiers in sovereign Eritrean territory. Notwithstanding this transgression, the Government of Eritrea, fearing it would jeopardize the friendship built during the long liberation struggle and subsequent good neighborliness between the two countries, chose to look at the matter in a spirit of patience, understanding and responsibility. It also insisted on the formation of a joint committee that would look into the "border problem", if such an issue did indeed exist.

The US Administration didn't have issues regarding the border; its sole intent was to disrupt the promising economic growth of Eritrea. Therefore, when the Eritrean envoy entered Addis Ababa following a scheduled appointment by the committee formed at Eritrea's request, that very day, May 6, 1998, a military assault was launched upon unsuspecting members of the Eritrean Defense Forces in the Badme area.

Still, even after such an unprecedented attack, the Government of Eritrea chose not to publicize the matter and urged for a quick and peaceful solution of the matter. But against all Eritrean appeals for talks, the US Administration, as ever adamant to disrupt the exemplary Eritrean progress as swiftly as possible, urged the symbolic TPLF Parliament, who had no any prior information whatsoever pertaining to the border situation, to declare war on Eritrea on 13 May 1998.

In an emergency meeting held on 14 May 1998 in the wake of this sudden war declaration by the TPLF Parliament, the Eritrean Cabinet of Ministers, contrary to what countries do in similar situations, didn't respond with a war declaration. It instead proposed the following framework for the solution of the problem:

1-Immediate negotiations involving a third party because border disputes cannot, and should not be, resolved by military means but through peaceful and legal means, and avoiding the logic

of force;

2-To avoid any unnecessary violence, the demilitarization of areas under “dispute”, making them free from military presence of both countries and open to observers;

3- The demarcation of the boundary according to pertinent colonial treaties to be carried out by the UN Cartography Unit;

Had these salient points by the Government of Eritrea been accepted in the very beginning, the heavy human and material losses, incurred by the people of both countries as the consequence of war, would definitely have been avoided. The development endeavors of both peoples and the peace and stability of the region as well wouldn't have been disrupted and disintegrated to its present condition.

But the US Administration, whose primary objective is to instigate conflicts and then supposedly deal with crises, hardly heeded the Eritrean proposal. It instead rushed to aggravate the situation posing as mediator. The task was given to the then Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, who started commuting along with Rwandan delegates, to chase the peaceful solution away while allegedly working as mediator. She asked the Eritrean government for unjust and unfeasible compromises saying that “Due to the fragile political situation in Ethiopia, the war could cause Ethiopia to disintegrate...” and further complicated the problem that could have been easily resolved. She attended the Summit of African Leaders at Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso in the first week of June 1998 and went as far as trying to convince the Organization of African Unity to pass a resolution condemning Eritrea. But she didn't succeed.

In line with such diplomatic maneuvers, the TPLF regime attacked Zalambesa, Bure and other Eritrean positions while the US sent secret cables alerting diplomats stationed in Asmara to evacuate, thus creating conducive ground for Ethiopian fighter jets to bomb Asmara on 5 June 1998. The spontaneous counter measure of the Eritrean Air Force however alarmed Washington, which realized that a continued air strike would leave Ethiopia disadvantaged. President Bill Clinton therefore brokered an air raid moratorium, compelling both sides to sign a partial agreement of cessation of hostilities.

Back then, the Government of Eritrea had asked for a comprehensive agreement of cessation of hostilities in lieu of a temporary and provisional agreement. But the US Administration had no intention of ending the war, and under the pretext that “... the Ethiopian government is not yet ready to accept a comprehensive agreement of cessation of hostilities...,” it brought the partial agreement as a means of stalling until weapons donated to Ethiopia reach their destination. Consequently, exploiting the time bought with the moratorium, the US Administration provided Ethiopia with huge financial, material and intelligence assistance and in the 6 months that followed, it prepared the TPLF regime for a large scale offensive.

Aside from all this, the US Administration set out to upset relations between the two peoples, which was just getting normalized following a bitter war, and in a bid to inflict hatred and animosity between these two neighborly peoples, it encouraged the TPLF regime to deport Eritreans residing in Ethiopia. And accordingly, over 70,000 Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean

origin were deprived of their lifelong properties and were inhumanely deported from Ethiopia and an unforgettable crime was committed on peaceful people.