Expansionism: One of the decisive factors for the downfall of Ethiopian regimes

In the previous section of our presentation we have observed how the ethnic politics or the hegemony of a minority on the majority during the Haileselassie and Derg regimes, had played a devastating role in throwing them into the dustbin of history. And currently the TPLF regime is in a deep quagmire after pursuing similar political agenda. All these regimes tried to assure the hegemony of a minority and stomp all others, taking this for granted in the process. Hence, they tried to smash essential factors that play a decisive role in the existence of a given people or nation like equality, justice, the rule of law, human rights and respect and, thus guarantee their power through the ideology of force. However, since there can’t be a strategy that can serve in subjugating people by terror and fear forever, at last the Haileselassie and Derg regimes devoid of their strength were subjected to a fate they both deserved. And we had reached a stage of the beginning of the last days of the TPLF.

Besides the ethnic politics, which has become the cause of the downfall of successive Ethiopian regimes, a greater cause of their peril has been yawning to own what is not yours or this malicious disease of expansionism, especially towards the sea up North. Expansionism and exploitation can’t be achieved through sound political approach. Unless, an outdated power-based ideology and irresponsible adventurism are employed. That is why we frequently observe the ideologies of power and arrogance to be the main tools and beliefs of the rulers of Ethiopia. Power and complacency, however, don’t have the ability to twist the truth as the history of the world has witnessed and especially as the half century long history of Ethiopia reiterates. Where there is justice there is perseverance and great challenge. The power ideology of the rulers of Ethiopia, which has been continuously smashing against justice, gained nothing but defeat solely due to this underlying fact.

Emperor Haileselasie’s dissolution of the UN-backed Federation against the Eritrean people’s choice had resulted in a prolonged bloody war during which both Eritrea and Ethiopia suffered grave human and material losses, and in the end became a factor for the Emperor’s downfall. Similarly the successor Derg regime, instead of attempting to find a political solution for the Eritrean question, created excitement among the Ethiopian people through outdated politics and false bravado and gambled with their lives and resources in the war in Eritrea. In the end, the Derg regime also met with the same fate as that of its predecessor without even coming close to accomplishing its goals. Reflecting on the experience of both the afore-mentioned regimes, a renowned Ethiopian writer, Be’alu Girma had put forth a significant advice in his book “Oromay”. In this book, the protagonist has a beautiful and flawless fiancée, which he names as the “Rose of the Hinterland”. But this individual’s obsession with another woman he calls the “Northern Star” leads him to lose both women. The author ended his book with the message that “those who want everything tend to eventually lose everything” and emplored Ethiopian leaders to realize that their expansionist dreams will amount to nothing.

In an unfortunate historical coincidence, however, after the two failed expansionist attempts to the North, the subsequent TPLF regime came to power with its own version of an astonishing and impractical political agenda. In the first part of this article, we had seen that the TPLF had from the start expansionist intentions as evidenced in the points it outlined in the infamous
“Manifesto 68”. After coming to power on the basis of the oppressed Tigrayan people’s martyrdom and considering itself firmly established in power, the TPLF regime began to take steps to create its dream Republic. To this end, the regime drew an illegal map of the fantasy Tigrayan republic by incorporating parts of Gondar, Wollo and the Afar region. What remained was the land and sea to be incorporated from Eritrea, for which the TPLF declared war on Eritrea under the pretext of border dispute.

The war between Eritrea and Ethiopia from 1998 to 2000, which had resulted in formidable human and material losses and created turmoil in the region, had been waged for two reasons. The first reason was the TPLF regime’s desire to defeat the Eritrean people and gain the sea portal its predecessors had failed to secure. The regime had hoped to come out triumphant from this war and assume the image of a champion in the eyes of the Ethiopian people at the expense of the Eritrean people’s lives, and thereby prolong its stay in power. The second and basic reason for war had emanated from the regime’s mentality. The TPLF did not believe in Ethiopian unity from the start and realizing that it cannot stay in power for long in a united Ethiopia, it had gambled with the Ethiopian people’s lives and resources and declared war on Eritrea as a final step towards establishing the dream Tigrayan republic. When on May 12, 1998, the TPLF accused Eritrea of ‘invading’ the town of Badme, the regime more than anyone knew that according to Colonial Agreements of 1900, 1902 and 1908 Badme is an integral part of sovereign Eritrean territories. But, thinking that the logic of power can cover up the truth and naively believing that ludicrous fantasies can turn into reality, the regime set out to realize its dreams by making baseless accusations against Eritrea. However, just as its predecessors, the TPLF had not only failed miserably in the war with Eritrea, but was exposed before the Ethiopian people and the world at large for the lying, scheming and illegal faction it is. As a result of this failure, the TPLF leadership was split in half and its already weak acceptability among the Ethiopian people plummeted. Bewildered in the face of these developments, the regime has since then been running towards its demise at a hastened pace.

Yet, the Ethiopian people have had a valuable lesson to learn from the experience of the three successive regimes’ (that of Emperor Haileselasie, the Derg and the TPLF) unrelenting wars for Eritrean land and sea. Because the Ethiopian people had gained nothing from the wars with Eritrea except lose the precious lives of their youths.