

ABIY-ISIAS'S CONSPIRACY BLOSSOMS NEW LEAVES DAILY

TURNING 2019 INTO A YEAR OF OUR CRITICAL GROUND GAME:

Abdu Habib

sabbahar@rocketmail.com

In many countries, including Africa, it is common for leaders to have one major scandal in foreign relations, which the press would latch and unravel. With Atse Isias, since the day the agreement of disgraceful compromises and treacherous surrender was signed with Dr. Abiy Ahmed, the Ethiopian Prime Minister, every scandal he committed, undermining the sovereignty of the Eritrean state, was soon followed by something else equally or more horrible. This is something we did not see in modern political science. Nonetheless, the oddest of all is that his supporters want the Eritrean people to believe that the Atse is doing all that out of smartness and having the best interest of the country at heart. This has produced a strange feeling among the Eritrean people: the feeling that the solid ground is giving way beneath their feet. In few words, the ocean of anger is rising, as an overt manifestation against this conspiracy and the accompanying ridiculous claim.

For people who have lived in a world of high intellectual expectations and accomplishment, smartness or intelligence (though the two concepts are slightly different) is tangible and real so that it does not reveal itself so much through grades, test scores or degrees as through the way people think, speak, behave, or do things. To make things clearer, the term "smartness" deserves further explanation here because we see it widely abused by the supporters of the butcher, presenting it as one of his major traits.

Smartness is a human attribute that enables one to observe the universe and its phenomenon rationally and makes him a generalist about everything, on the one hand, and a specialist in any specific field, on the other. We have listened to many of his speeches and interviews, and we have enough familiarity with the way he makes decisions. Consequently, we ask: ***Does he see things rationally?*** He could be a generalist about everything, though we cannot tell for sure, but the fundamental issue is: ***Did that help him visualize the past, analyze and face the present, and forecast the future on basis of the information he has gathered***

over the time? Most importantly: ***Does he understand the limits of his own knowledge and capacities and defer others when necessary?*** Add to that: ***Is he a specialist in any field?*** It is difficult to find any other specialization of the Atse except his expertise in conspiracy, wickedness, and contempt to law and order. It is always disgusting to remember that he is the only one who annually gives interviews to the only media in the country, the state-run media. This way, we could answer the two question.

Back to the claim that he is smart, we know that smartness equips the person with up-to-date precise information that would make him free from ignorance, arrogance, and all sort of bigotry. Further, the smart person understands the word “relativity” very well in every aspect of life and its surroundings. If this is smartness theoretically: ***Does a smart leader shatter the dreams of his people by failing to yield any progress in 27 years and systematically destroy everything over 100,000 martyrs had built through their blood, setting the stage for the total surrender of Eritrea’s sovereignty? Is this the successful leadership PFDJ supporters praise by singing and dancing, rubbing themselves with the national flag they have betrayed? Can’t anybody clearly see that this leadership brought the country to its knees so that people would be forced to accept Ethiopia as the only option?***

Still we have a place to make the comparison in terms of smartness. ***Is he smarter than all martyrs, his former compatriots he put in jail, or met their ultimate end there, wounded veteran fighters, highly-skilled and distinctively intellectual elites forced to leave the country to save their skin and others to kneel down to His Majesty? Is he smarter, in terms of having a national vision, concrete socio-economic achievements for the people, rule of law and justice, than Meles Zinawi who came to power at the same time?*** The answer to both questions is: Not even 10% closer. This is to say the odds that the Atse is smart and has the best interest of Eritrea at heart is virtually zero, after the 27 years of ruin and destruction that turned the country into medieval times and made our elegant, noticeably cheerful and highly-gifted people look like cave-dwellers. Look at the

recent photos of the destitute moving skeletons in the streets of Asmara and ask yourself: ***Is this the Asmara I know?***

The declared supporters of the regime and the unexposed opportunists, who hide their support, are getting restless and extremely irritated whenever they hear the word “sovereignty” these days, let alone the overwhelming argument that the Atse is working so hard, conspiring against Eritrea’s sovereignty. ***Can they really be called good Eritreans if defending the right of Eritrea to exist as an independent nation irritates them?*** Though the adversaries could depict us as obsessed with the issue, we will talk about our sovereignty and continue teaching different aspects that we have not raised yet, until the danger hovering over our country is over, with the Atse thrown to the dustbin of history, following the Mubarak’s model, the Gaddafi’s model, or the Saddam Hussain’s model. For the Eritrean people, who have no other option but end the nightmare by any means, the end justifies the means. But the fact remains that it is this knowledge about sovereignty that insulates our people against the misleading information, distortion of history, and malicious designs of the regime and its allies, Ethiopian expansionists. Now we know why they fear the word “sovereignty” as a thrusting weapon.

To be honest, sovereignty is under threat in the 21st century because we see European Union forcing small countries to do what large countries want. Their justification is international organizations and agreements are incompatible with the concept of national sovereignty. This is what Ethiopia of Dr. Abiy Ahmed is currently propagating and trying to do with the countries of the Horn of Africa: creating the “sovereignty of the Horn of Africa”, with Ethiopia’s domination, at the expense of the national sovereignty of other states. Just monitor the visits of the hopeless neighbouring African tyrants and where they take them for an orientation tour to create the temptation to accept constraints on sovereignty on the national level in favour of fake prospects of collective economic growth. It remains to be seen whether this will work, but my feeling is that it will not, given the expansionist aspirations of the Ethiopian state, lack of transparency in the secret cooperation agreements with tyrants terribly hated by their own peoples,

while preventing the peoples of the region from participation in the decision-making process and control. Even in the European Union, where democratic institutions exist, it has become pessimistic to create “European sovereignty” when we see the pendulum is currently swinging towards the national direction.

In short, we tell the expansionists that it is through the use of their sovereignty that states enter into international or regional arrangements. This will lead us to the questions: ***Why is sovereignty still relevant though we speak about globalization? Why do we have fears that regional arrangements could serve as the tool of the big or strong to dominate the weak or the small?***

Though there are positive bloodlines in our region of the Horn of Africa, national sovereignty hugely matters, and without it, the dominant country in the regional grouping (in this case Ethiopia) will destroy humanity just to enable their identity and national interests to dominate. One would ask: ***Would we be happy to see Eritrea merged into one large uninspiring landmass without identity?***

As sufficiently stressed above, sovereignty with its characteristics detailed in my previous articles and those of others, is very real. Nobody could erase it because it is closely associated with culture, and the way different countries aspire and plan the socio-economic development of their respective countries, and execute their plans, according to the particular conditions and realities on the ground. However, this does not mean that regional arrangements could not be useful. They would for sure, provided that they take place under certain conditions. Here we raise the critical question: ***What pre-conditions should exist in order to have cooperation or economic integration with Ethiopia and others, for that matter?***

Of course, if there is a fair play, executed through genuine and transparent process, based on real public consultation and participation in decision-making, as we will show below, we can retain our sovereignty and at the same time be a part of a greater Horn of Africa. If the conditions we list below are in place, the regional arrangements and national sovereignty would not be mutually exclusive. In concrete terms, to benefit from regional arrangements and to avoid been taken advantage of, we believe the following pre-conditions should exist in Eritrea:

- An elected constitutional government, with equally important and independent branches, namely: executive, legislative and judiciary.
- An independent mass media that has an influence on the ethics of public life, as a watchdog monitoring the conduct of government officials.

Nonetheless, what we see going on today under the scheme of “Madamar” is the opposite of what we understand to be a mutually beneficial economic cooperation or integration because none of the above conditions exist in Eritrea. The Atse’s choice is clear: Eritrea should die so that Ethiopia lives. Following the same line of thought, and that is the original script the Atse is executing, what the Ethiopians want are agreements that totally leave out the Eritrean people and put them in total darkness from what is going on. Things are artfully designed this way. Ethiopians know dictators could easily be compromised, not representatives of the people or democratically elected officials. This is surgically done in a meticulous way, keeping the agreements secret from the people, the owners of the country.

In fact, Ethiopians are not hiding their ulterior motive behind the so called “peace agreement” with Eritrea. At the same time, Atse Isias is not hiding the motive he shares with them either. In this connection, we should not be naïve enough to take what we hear from the Ethiopian leadership as a slip of the tongue. They are said intentionally and on basis of a well-thought of conspiracy plan in which other regional powers and their Western masters participate. This is their way of gradually preparing us for what they have in store for Eritrea, telling us in small doses what will come. It is a clear message for those whose ears are ready to listen. But basically we ask ourselves: ***Does the Ethiopian way of giving hints by drops soften the coming blow? Can we ignore the danger coming from Ethiopia while it is staring at us at the face?***

The danger Ethiopia constitutes is not ignored by Eritreans in Diaspora but they are engaged in different activities to be the voice of the voiceless against the brutal dictator, while defending the sovereignty of their country from Ethiopia’s encroachment. There is an amazing and well-coordinated campaign going on

mostly among the facebook community of our young men and women, as a push to spread the word about their stand on what is going on in the country and its suspicious relations with Ethiopia, saying enough to miseries and pain for our people and demanding the resignation of the Atse, each one concluding his/her message by nominating friends to do the same. This campaign and the vigor with which it has been conducted have secured the participation of diverse contingents of our society in Diaspora. It is exerting a remarkable pressure on the regime and the cronies of the dictator, convincing some of the rational supporters, who had been growing weary of the Abiy-Isias's drama, to defect and join the campaign. These 'facebook youth', as we sometimes call them, are incredible and amazing young men and women who know what it means to fight for the people and they are determined to continue until our people get the solutions they need. This campaign, together with protests to appeal to the international community and other diverse activities, make up a part of our game on the ground for the critical year of 2019.

Other than the activities raised above, there are groups and civil organizations saying enough to the regime, raising the bar to ask the dictator to step down and hand over power to the people. The harshest of all were the two messages from the wounded veteran fighters, who in their second message demanded the physical liquidation of the Dictator. This deserves special treatment in this piece because of the following reasons:

- The proposal is coming at the most critical time of our history, even more critical than the period of the struggle against the oppressive Ethiopian occupation.
- A call to resort to homicide is the first of its kind, as a proposed solution from a collective, at least to my knowledge.
- It is coming from the most respected survivals of the war of liberation, carrying the effects of lost limbs of their bodies, as their medals of honour.

This takes us to the question: ***Is homicide of dictators justified?*** To answer this question, we need to see the circumstances under which it is justified. Here the pre-condition is put in the form of the question: ***Does it prevent greater harm to the innocent people?*** We are confident that our wounded veteran fighters are sane, sober and thoughtful enough to see that the butcher poses an imminent threat to the life and well-being of the people. This was the way Americans justified the assassination of Ben Laden in 2011. We understand that homicide may not sit well with some Eritreans. I do not like it either, but we should not forget that Eritrea is not Sweden or Canada, where people could remove a leader they find working against their interests or the interests of the nation, through the ballot box. Taking all these into consideration, the questions that come into our mind here are:

- ***What do we do in Eritrea to remove the leader whose indefinite stay in power would mean the death of additional tens of thousands of citizens in prison, in deserts and seas, shot at border crossings, become victims of direct physical liquidations under any pretext, mysterious disappearances...etc.?***
- ***Should we leave the wicked and the brutal Dictator continue committing such dangerous crimes and wait until he dies or hands over power to his son, as many tend to believe would do?***
- ***Don't we, as people, have the right to self-defence as codified for states in article 51 of the UN Charter?***

To cast more light into these questions, it is appropriate to share other human experiences concerning the assassination of a dictator. The most relevant historical example we could cite would be the position of the German citizen of the Nazi era, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, on Hitler. When Nazi oppression worsened in Germany and Bonhoeffer became aware of the potential wickedness and brutality of Hitler, he stepped up his activism to stop him and was involved in a failed attempt to assassinate

Hitler. He justified the plot as a consistent measure with his Christian faith, saying the following:

“If I see a madman driving a car into a group of innocent bystanders, then I can't, as a Christian, simply wait for the catastrophe and then comfort the wounded and bury the dead. I must try to wrestle the steering wheel out of the hands of the driver.”

Interestingly enough, when the plot failed and he was exposed, Bonheoffer got out of Germany by June 1939, making it to the United States. However, he returned to Germany after few weeks. He said the following to justify his return to Germany:

“I have come to the conclusion that I made a mistake in coming to America...I shall have no right to take part in the restoration of Christian life in Germany after the war unless I share the trials of this time with my people.”

To drive the desired points home, we wrap up this interesting issue by asking the following remarkably teasing questions as additional insights:

- Are Atse Isias's wickedness and brutality committed on the people who had been exhausted by 30-year war of liberation less harmful than those of Hitler in Nazi Germany? Whose play book is he using when it comes to the establishment of concentration camps and techniques of torture? Does the absence of gas chambers make difference when the end is one and the same: the deliberate killing of innocent people?
- If the same type of wickedness and brutality against humanity deserved assassination in 1930s, why assassination becomes immoral in the year 2019? Did the human lives savagely ended by the deliberate crimes of dictators drop in value now?

- If Bonheoffer, an ordinary German citizen, was so patriotic to stop Hitler in order to save lives from his wickedness and brutality, why our wounded veteran fighters who had lost limbs of their bodies and had buried their compatriots during the 30-year war to save their people from the scorched-earth policy followed by Ethiopia do not have the right to resist Dictator Isias, in the way they see it appropriate, and save the rest of their people from death and destruction?
- If Bonheoffer with his 1930s level of consciousness takes the risk of returning to Germany while Hitler was on power, in order to share the trying times with his people, do we have the right to celebrate the victory against Dictator Isias and his criminal gang tomorrow without playing our role in the activism of resistance now?

Moreover, there are two more issues that need to be raised before we wrap up this piece. Both could be brought under the theme “Reform” because they share one common thread.

The first is the rumour that the Atse is going to hand over power to his son, Abraham. This is a suggestion of “reform”, if at all we assume it came out of a genuine intent, that the old should leave power to the young, though this particular notion follows a family dynastic line. Since every reader’s guess is as good as mine, I would not worry about the source of the rumour and why it sprung up multiple times whenever the struggle against the Atse increased heat and showed remarkable progress.

I would say off hand, the source of the rumour fails to hide their stunning level of superficial knowledge and plain ignorance about the wishes and dreams of the Eritrean people, showing their contempt and conceit. This makes us look down on them, whoever they are. Though the level of stupidity or naivety of the source

and the promoters of the rumour is shocking, it does not deserve any comment except reminding them, with a touch of cynicism that, if Atse Isias claims decent from the Ethiopian Solomonic Dynasty that ended in 1974 by a coup, it could only be restored in Ethiopia; not in Eritrea, which is a sovereign state. Further, we would advise them to remember, and if this is new to them to study the saying, "The apple does not fall far from the tree." This could be seen as a badly-worded remark but it is to urge them, as an Eritrean, to learn and evolve through the learning curve.

The second issue is the call for reform by some genuine Eritreans, following the Ethiopian pattern. Here the demands are known because we have heard them repeatedly (No need to recycle). They are good and nobody disagrees on them, but we should not forget whom we are addressing. Just we need to remember: *Why were the G15 members thrown to jail and why are those surviving still languishing there waiting for their slow death?* This is to conclude that, first, we are demanding the impossible, and second, we are lowering our bar. It is not the time to present demands to the brutal criminal gang that had heard the same demands for over two decades and ignored them with contempt and arrogance. The time to repeat the same demands has already passed. It is time to press and struggle to force the Atse to step down so that we could secure the implementation of those demands and others we stand for. That is why the Sudanese protesters, who started with simple demands related to their livelihood, have now changed their chants to forcefully demanding the Dictator just to step down, as they put it in the chant: "Tasqut Wa Bus".

The multi-faceted and naked Abiy-Isias's conspiracy is daily unfolding with new details. From the diplomatic shuttles we see daily, people could guess that something is coming and they smell it, though

everything is going under the curtain. We can see that Isias wants to stay in good grace of Abiy and his team, at the cost of the sovereignty of Eritrea. However, he is creating his own demise day by day. If I were to write a book entitled: *"HOW TO DAMAGE YOURSELF"*, I would include what Atse Isias is doing chapter and verse. But as to Dr. Abiy whom we used to think will open the eyes of the peoples of the region and we prayed for an Eritrean Abiy to spring up one day, now we learn that was not the case. We see him crossing the legal and the ethical boundaries when it comes to Eritrea and strengthening the hand of Dictator Isias, siding with him against the Eritrean people and their legitimate struggle.

I would add one cautionary note before I wrap up here. Our people did not get here by accident. They fought for it for thirty years, and they will protect their major achievement, the national sovereignty, like the apple of their eye. There could be some setbacks for the time being. Nonetheless, the two conspiracy partners are not going to win because they have already planted the seeds of public resistance, and they are watering and nursing the seeds daily. Accordingly, they have already handed the Eritrean people a hammer to use it against them. Though they could get the support of some regional and Western powers that have vested interest in our Red Sea coastline, their conspiracy could not prevent the year 2019 from turning into the year of our critical ground game. To the contrary, they facilitated it. Their conspiracy is coming back to bite them.=====