



Grim future

Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia has US fingerprints

Somali women protesting against the presence of Ethiopian troops in Mogadishu.

FOR the average American, the current Ethiopian invasion of Somalia is just another military operation taking place in a distant land in the war against Islamic terror. For many Somalis, this invasion is nothing short of a humiliating catastrophe.

Last year, the Somali people allowed the Union of Islamic Courts to take power to help end the anarchy that resulted from a 15-year civil war in the battered country. Before then, brutal warlords, backed by the US and Ethiopian governments, had raped, plundered and occupied a terrified citizenry. The US asserted, without evidence, that the Islamists were providing a safe haven for al-Qaeda terrorists.

The Islamic government denied this. But Ethiopian soldiers, supported by Somalia's transitional government, recently routed the Islamists.

Ethiopia is a historical enemy of Somalia. Now US support of the Ethiopian invasion, coupled with its recent bombing raids on suspected al-Qaeda targets in southern Somalia, will only add fuel to the hostility towards the United States.

The reason the Islamists rose to power in the Somali capital of Mogadishu in the first place was because the CIA covertly financed Somali warlords, channelling hundreds of thousands of dollars over the past year to them, according to news reports.

Even Somalis who are not religious saw their own safety and security improved under the rule of the Islamists. They were willing to give them sufficient time to clean the streets of guns and violence. After restoring law and order on the streets, the Islamists could have chosen to modernize, albeit slowly, some of their interpretations and applications of Islamic Shari'a law, which are already part of the Somali cultural value system.

But now there is a danger of return to the old days where teenage boys toting AK-47s in the back of pickup trucks terrorize the local population.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, who has faced fierce opposition for allegedly rigging elections and arresting his critics, has buttressed his legitimacy by claiming to defend Ethiopia against Islamic terrorism. He is also positioning himself as a friend of the US.

The Bush Administration reciprocated by pushing through the UN Security Council the dubious resolution giving Zenawi the green light to invade Somalia.

UN Resolution 1725, adopted on 6 December 2006, authorizes a regional force from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the African Union to protect the weak transitional national government in Baidoa, Somalia, and to provide training for its forces.

Since Zenawi now oversees Somalia, any peacekeeping force entering the country would need his seal of approval. The Somali population is still armed to the teeth. If they feel humiliated and angry they could vent this anger not only against the occupying forces but also against their US supporters. Unless quickly defused, the situation in Somalia could turn into a killing field. After more than a decade of civil war, the future of Somalia again looks grim – thanks, in part, to US policy.

Amina Mire

The language of neo-colonialism

Word power

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by Mitchell & Richardson

AfriCAN *adj.* able; capable of self-sufficiency.

charITIES *n.pl.* restrictive links between a BINGO and government.

development *v.* to enable a country to owe you money.

GAP year *n.* journey taken by young Westerners to countries where they make GAP products.

tourism *n.* self-funding modern invasion force where sun-hats have replaced weaponry.

unspoilt *adj.* soon to be spoilt.