



# NORTHERN SOMALIS for PEACE & UNITY

(NSPU)

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## A Commentary on Ato Tamrat Nega's Article on Ethiopia's Strategic Objectives in Somalia

Ato Tamrat Nega, an Ethiopian journalist, published an article titled “Meles Proposes a Two State Solution for Somalia” on [Wardheernews.com](http://Wardheernews.com) on October 28, 2007, and the article appeared on other Somali websites as well. The article informed its readers that Ato Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, having been frustrated by the worsening situation in Somalia, formed a committee of Ethiopian experts on Somalia to review the obstacles to success and propose to him viable solutions. The Committee, reportedly chaired by Dr. Alemu Tekede, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, comprised senior officers of the ruling EPRDF, several generals, as well as security and intelligence officers. The Committee tendered its report after five months of deliberations with the following recommendations:

- (a) that Somalia should be divided into two states (Somalia and Somaliland) along the erstwhile colonial boundaries and that Ethiopia should take upon itself to campaign for the international recognition of ‘Somaliland’;
- (b) that ex-Italian Somalia should retain the name of “Somalia” but be divided into four federal regions to be called: Puntland, Hawiyeland, Jubaland, and Rahanweynland; and
- (c) that the Somali Regional State of Ethiopia be insulated from such development.

The article also informs its readers that these recommendations were discussed with President Abdullahi Yusuf who rejected them, Dr. Ali Mohammed Ghedi (then Prime Minister) who at first rejected them, but then accepted just before he was about to lose his premiership, and with Mr. Dahir Riyale of secessionist ‘Somaliland’ who welcomed them with alacrity and even promised to help Ethiopia quell the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF).

Ato Tamarat's report gained wide currency in the light of the so-called Somaliland's incredibly easy invasion and occupation of the Sool region of Puntland. In hindsight, many people interpreted this development as collusion between “Somaliland” and Puntland at the behest of Ethiopia and as a prelude to restoring the colonial boundaries in order to give some semblance of legitimacy to the secession of the so-called ‘Somaliland’ and thereby facilitate the two-state solution.



Furthermore, the Ethiopian representative in Hargeisa, Ambassador Wubishet Demmisse, was reported by the secessionist press on [November 3, 2007](#) to have remarked with respect to Las Anod that “Somaliland has the right to engage and capture its territorial boundaries”. That remark seems also to have lent credibility to Ato Tamarat’s report.

We at the Northern Somalis for Peace and Unity (NSPU) have studied this matter and concluded on the strength of analysis and evidence that Ato Tamarat’s article is merely an exercise in disinformation calculated to incite Somalis against Ethiopia and lend force to the argument that Ethiopia has always been and will remain to be the enemy of the Somalis.

We should know, however, that there is no permanent situation, for all situations are fluid. It has been said: “There are no permanent friends: there are only permanent interests”. Likewise, there are no permanent enemies and, although enemies in the past, Ethiopia and Somalia have woken up to the reality that they share permanent interests. In our view, they have no choice but to live together and forge complementary economies together in order to improve the awful conditions of poverty in which their respective peoples live. That means, of course, that they have to accommodate each other. Anything other than that will only engulf the two countries in perpetual conflict and will condemn their respective peoples to chronic instability and uninterrupted economic misery.

But if, for the sake of argument, we assume that Ethiopia will embark on a misguided and unfortunate policy of divide and rule at Somalia’s hour of vulnerability as reported by Ato Tamarat and believed by many of our compatriots who are vehemently and implacably anti-Ethiopian, we can then conjure up a scenario too horrible to contemplate: first, the Somalia’s Transitional Federal Institutions (TFI) in which Ethiopia has invested so heavily will lose face and collapse immediately; secondly, the Asmara Group, the Shabaab, and the fiercely anti-Ethiopian Somalis in the Diaspora will be vindicated, coalesce and be emboldened, having found new sustenance and ammunition in that policy; thirdly, those who are in the TFI and their many supporters who believe that Ethiopia is a friend will be left with no option but to join them; fourthly, all these forces combined may then forge an alliance with Eritrea, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the ONLF; fifthly, there will be fresh cause for Al Qa’idah to feel welcome and establish itself firmly in the area; and finally, should this be the case, there is bound to be Moslem unrest in both Ethiopia and Kenya – an unrest that will also have serious repercussions in the Moslem state of Djibouti. There can be little doubt, if any, that the conglomeration of these otherwise disparate forces will engulf the entire Horn of Africa in a conflagration which is too dreadful to visualize.

We do not believe that Ethiopian policymakers are oblivious to this horrendous possibility. That must have been precisely what they feared when they decided to intervene militarily in support of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG). Ethiopia, much to its credit, has not recognized the small secessionist minority which is perched in the northwestern corner of our country when it could, before the advent of the TFG. There is no credible reason, at present, for it to alter its stance now that the TFG, albeit weak, has a voice in the UN, the AU, the Arab League, and the Islamic Conference, and given the fact that the Security Council has, in all its resolutions, come out openly and strongly in support of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political unity of Somalia. Nor can Ethiopia flout those resolutions by supporting an illegitimate secessionist regime in one little corner of Somalia without drawing attention to its own obvious vulnerability to disintegration into different independent and sovereign nationalities.



In view of the foregoing considerations, we at the NSPU cannot but regard Ato Tamarat's report inaccurate and misleading. However, the Ethiopian authorities can help clear the air by distancing themselves from the unfortunate remark attributed to Ato Wubishet Demmisse, their representative in Hargeisa; thus re-affirming Ethiopia's commitment and respect for Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

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*NORTHERN SOMALIS FOR PEACE & UNITY (NSPU) is a grass-roots Somali advocacy organization with Branches in Somalia, United Arab Emirates, Canada, USA, UK, Sweden, and South Africa. We are dedicated to the promotion of peace and unity among the long suffering people of Somalia. We believe the 'Somalia problem' can only be dealt with within the framework of a holistic strategic approach aimed at the empowerment of a central government to rebuild national democratic governance institutions and restore law and order throughout the country. NSPU believes the balkanization of Somalia is a recipe for future conflicts and a bleak future for the Somali people, who are bonded by ethnicity, language, religion, and shared centuries-old culture and traditions.*

