

Our Millennium VS. Meles and his Ethiophobic Syndrome

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Ethiopia is one of the few oldest independent Nations In the world and a classic example of African ideal statehood. Once a thriving Nation with decorated history that dates back to primeval times, Ethiopia, unlike the rest of Africa, is a Nation who successfully resisted against being subject to fascist European colonial ambition and their barbaric rule and still stands tall dominating the horizon of freedom-- practically dwarfing every nation in the continent of Africa and parts of the world as well; as a pre-historic superior strength and paradigm of African independence and a nation whose King once ruled as far as Egypt in the distant era of the Pharaonic empire as the 25th dynasty of Pharaohs after conquering Thebes (8th century BC), This ethnically diverse east African country is now bracing to celebrate the highly anticipated Ethiopian version of millennium, presumably , for the first time in history.

This paramount historical event marks a sensational pride celebrating worthwhile to the people of Ethiopia in particular, and also the continent of Africa in general. And this being said, this distinctly variegated historical grandeur that was passed through generations of rulers, well preserved and un-compromised, has made a sharp decline in recent years; most notably, the twenty first century in which three successive political ideologies such as the Feudalism, Marxism and Marco-bonapartism, have changed hands over the enigmatic horn of African Nation in which the People of Ethiopia have all along been direct subjects of the trios' repressive social order who have played their own role respectively in a way that is highly deplorable.

While none of these rulers can be credited for bringing about positive change on the Nation, Instead, lack of vision and social destitution are their common denominators; a perilous legacy which continues taking its toll on the People of Ethiopia, long after these tyrannical regimes are interred in to the history Books of the deceased ideologies. And obviously, the two brutal systems have now disappeared into to the oblivion while the same fate awaits the current one which inflicted a staggering damage that caused a paralyzing physical deformity on our country; and a regime whose legacy can be characterized as one of pungent which is going to leave a grisly mark that will be tattooed on the Nation's rich historical image; most notably, its territorial integrity; and unfortunately, this distasteful and undesirable grotesque is to remain as an indelible part of our history that will be passed on to upcoming generations.

History bears witness that 'lack of reform and weak economic backing' has exclusively contributed to the spectacular condensation and nose-diving fame of the Ottoman Empire who once occupied a massive territory that stretched over much of Asia, from the Arabian peninsula to north Africa, from Palestine all the way through the Balkans and parts of Russia. And from the vantage point of social anthropology, perhaps the major cause behind the decline of retrospectively strong Empires like the Hellenic Nation of Greece, that of the Romans and in recent history, the Soviet union and Yugoslavia, is the

on-going course of social transformation involving war-for-self-determination, political hostility and de-colonization in which a subject comes out strong enough to counter its protectorate through strong economy, military, and various odds-and-ends which has shaped up the geopolitical structure of the modern day sovereign states.

Another factor is: categorically erroneous and dogmatic philosophy steaming from a cavalier and incongruous-self-styled-opinion in the case of Ethiopia for instance, in which a group of corporate vandals convened overnight and decided that Ethiopia should be broken and landlocked in a bid to weaken and deprive it from having access to sea. A group who is to blame for the failure to negotiate with spirit of bona fide and produce a documented treaty consistent with Nation's growing need during the infamous Shaabia/TPLF dialogue that was held in London in 1991. Rumor has it: one of the brokers, Herman Cohen, who took part in the dialogue representing the US. State department for African affairs, strongly warned the TPLFs against making such a grave concession. But little did he know that they had already made up their mind, that "Ethiopia would be better served if it is landlocked".

At any rate, the TPLF had clearly lost sight of the fact that Ethiopia with its ever-inflating population, was legitimately entitled to have a Port of its own and to that end, they hardly made any effort to make their case in the interest of the Nation who hosted them for the last 15 years in which they led lavish lifestyle and yet they conspired in a scheme of duplicity with callous disregard and indifference to the Nation's strategic interest in which the predetermined outcome played well in to the hands of their Cousins. In fact, the recent interview of the "Guru" with woyin radio offers strong evidence that the passage of time has not diminished the long-standing love affair between the top echelon within the TPLF leadership circle and the renegade province to the north whom they favor tremendously over their host Ethiopia. Nevertheless, time can only tell as to what he meant with all that he has said during the interview. Otherwise, all one can glean from the tone of his statement is a great deal of nostalgia.

Coming back to my point, (the decline of territories) The latter has sealed the formidable fate of our country in to becoming permanently landlocked in a clandestine conspiracy that was perpetuated by these desensitized tyrannical figures who are obsessed in stripping-out our country's elaborately decorated historical outfit. And as a result, our territorial integrity has dramatically been degenerated to the extent of being landlocked. Given this demeaning scar, one wonders if there's any thing to celebrate about.

Meles' precarious economic endeavor

Failure and achievement are two parameters by which a government's competence is assessed respectively; and while progress on the economy and infrastructure has shown positive sign of improvement yet intimately tied to foreign aid. And the prospect of long-term strategy that would pave a way towards self-reliance however is non-existent; at least it cannot be realized in the foreseeable future. As a matter of fact, since 'foreign aid' is attached to a number of strings like human rights, good governance, devaluation of currency and political reform, therefore in the event the government fails to meet donor

expectation, the flourishing projects can evaporate in to the thin air instantly, just like what happened when Tony Blair pulled the plug on the direct budgetary aid in to the government's coffers and shortly, rumors started flying around that the government is running out of money to pay its employees. In fact, business ventures especially those in the import/export industry were affected to a point of stand-still at the time because of the sever shortage of hard currency-- which Meles later disclosed that he's got enough to sustain him for nine months.

For the record, the Ex. dictator Mengistu had held up for years with out direct budgetary assistance and never had a problem paying his employees each month; but for Meles' government, Tony Blair's decision had sent unprecedented shockwave that is equivalent to economic embargo imposed by the Security Council; which does not take a research economist to predict as to what would have happened after nine months even if we take Meles' claim at face value-- obviously, total liquidation of the entire system and yet given the feeble and premature economic stature, we are being told by Meles' fortune tellers that Ethiopia will be self-sufficient within the next five years; amen to that but the fact that a government who depended on foreign aid as its life-line for as long as it has held office, can bring the country into self-reliance in just five years, is nothing but wishful thinking to say the least and empty bravado at best. Self-reliance requires a daring economic scheme that the EPRDF government is not prepared to undertake. Economic scheme that focused on privatization and land reform. For instance, the Telecommunication sector, whose privatization is long overdue, is controlled by the government for political reasons dealing with 'blocking Diaspora-based prominent websites' who advocate for democracy and free speech.

The transformation of TPLF from a "Lifeboat" into luxurious-cruise-liner has created a boon of lucrative Business Empire no one knows where the money goes. But these firms and enterprises such as *Addis Pharmaceutical Africa Insurance, Almeda Garment Factory, Almeda Integrated Textile Factory, Ambasel Trading House, Berhe Chemical Axion, Desalegn Veterinary Drugs, Dinsho Trading, Ethio-Rental House, Ezana Mining Development, Global Auto Spare Parts, Guna Trading House, Hiwet Agricultural Mechanization, Mega Net Corp, Meskerem Investment, Messebo Cement Factory, Segal Construction, Sheba Tannery, Star Pharmaceuticals, Sur Constriction, Tesfa Livestock Resource Development, Trans-Ethiopia S.C. Wegagen Bank*, to mention a few, should have been transferred to individual entrepreneurs as well; but Marxism is a selfish ideology which does not encourage sharing.

The government should have devised modalities that prohibit business activities involving political entities and the absence of such type of law has created a trend of unaccountable businesses that operate behind stonewall (*lack of transparency, is what I am referring*) and no one has the "right-to-know" as to where the profit goes. But the bulk of the matter is that it is strange and unheard of for a political organization to run multimillion-dollar industry scrambling against public firms and long established businesses. How can freelance entrepreneurs thrive while being rivaled and hotly contested by party-affiliated-monopolistic-firms that operate with out legal restraint? Anyways, apart from this, the marvelous achievements, Millions of dollars worth

investment being secured every so often and so much hard currency being generated every quarter that we read about every day are merely exaggerated figures of little or no actual significance. In reality, the government is aimlessly pedaling on a stationary-bike about failed economic policies.

Given all this, one wonders as to what magic word is Meles going to use in his Millennium speech and convince us that he has made a mammoth achievement economically; and politically, that he is not the modern day Minilik in the context that Minilik was the one who gave away Djibouti and Eritrea to the European expansionists in return for Railway, in the case of Djibouti, who's failed Ethiopian merchants by imposing huge tariff knowing they have no where to go. But one thing is certain—no amount of magic word or hypnosis can reverse the dilapidated face of the Nation be it economically, politically or most importantly, historically.

It is disheartening that Meles is going to inaugurate our Millennium, a Millennium which he categorically refuses to identify with. After all, a Millennium means a thousand years but in Meles' prevaricated history, Ethiopia is only a "hundred years old" so, is this calculation error or tactical retreat from the old dysfunctional tenet? How about the Ethiopian Flag? Is it a flag that hoists overhead as a reminder to the Nation's longstanding freedom or it's just a piece of rag? There have been some cosmetic changes on our National Icons that represent our freedom, one of which is our Flag and also the Logo of our Ethiopian Airlines. This trait of systematic temperament on our prestige and historical artifact traces its root back to the deep-seated Ethiophobia that the Prime Minister holds. And in due course of time, this sorry saga is going to be reversed.

The recent election

I have said much about the election previously and this time around; I am going to leave the issue with the following metaphor, which is no brainier to figure out.

This New Yorker walks in to a Bank in New York City and asks for a loan officer saying that he's traveling to Europe on business for three weeks and needs to borrow \$5,000.00. The Bank Officer says, "The bank will need some kind of security for the loan" so the Man hands over the Key of a new Rolls Royce. The Car is parked on the street in front of the Bank, he has the Title and every thing checks out. The Bank agrees to accept the Car as a collateral for the loan. The Bank Manager and his officers all enjoy a good laugh at the Man's use of a \$250,000.00 Rolls Royce as collateral against a \$5,000.00 loan. An employee of the Bank then proceeds to drive the Car to a secured underground Parking Lot and up on investigation found that the Man was a millionaire. Three weeks later, the Man returned, paid back the \$5,000.00 with the \$18.91 interest and the Bank Manager handed him the Car Keys. Finally, the Bank Manager couldn't stand it any longer and asked him as to why he would put up such an expensive Car for collateral. And the Man smiled at the Manager and replied "where else could I park my car in New York for \$18.91 and know that it would be there when I get back". Smart Man! ain't he?

In this metaphor, the Bank Manager is Kemal Bedri Chairman of the Electoral Board. The Rolls Royce is the Prime-ministerial Seat. The Car Key is the Prime Ministerial Ticket and the secured underground parking lot is, the Military; as prescribed by the constitution under Principles for *National Defense* Article 87 # 3 “ *The armed forces shall protect the sovereignty of the country and carry out any responsibilities as may be assigned to them under any state of emergency declared in accordance with the Constitution*” Boy, did the Army “protect” the constitution by killing 198 Citizens (the 5,000.00 loan)...? And finally, guess who the “Smart Man” represents in this metaphor.... That’s him— you got it right.

Sea outlet

I have the impression that this might make Mr. Zenawi laugh profusely but with the Millennium approaching and given the spiraling influx of population that has reached astronomical proportion in the last fifteen years, the pressing issue at this point in time should not be the record amount of money that he has secured from international donors (we know that he indulges in being patronized by western donors and takes pride in it) but the pressing issue should rather be, the long lost cause of lobbying for a Port. Of course, the idea of acquiring our own Port is a hot button issue that the Prime Minister would not want to touch or even think about; but it is about time some thing is done to revive this issue. It is a time to get out of the shell of cynicism and start thinking rationally. Meles ought to break the taboo as the country has been held hostage of his outlandish philosophy that offers no remedy in this regard and yet the Nation continues to suffer with no end in sight. Politicians in the one-man parliament also tend to spend plenty of time on endless meetings of little significance while a mammoth issue of national interest such as this one appears to be padlocked indefinitely.

The war on terror has shifted the tide whereby long forgotten countries like Ethiopia are now considered as indispensable allies of world powers like the US and UK. And once you have been approved by these countries, in chain reaction, you are approved by all nations in the western block regardless of bad governance and repugnant record of human rights and the fact that Meles is serving their interest with utmost loyalty has created favorable condition which he should use this golden opportunity to initiate the case by bringing it to the attention of these “allies”. Because soon enough, this pattern is going to change and like Pinochet and Seseseke, Meles may as well be told to clean up his mess or face the consequence.

Ethnic schism and disunity

I have always wondered as to what would our country look like if she had a patriotic leader who governs the people based on unbiased constitutional guidelines and with fair sense of regularity; and one who puts his country’s interest, of high priority. In this case, American Politicians are ideal example of patriotism and the determination to protecting their country’s interest at any cost, *which the word ‘patriotism’ is in no way appealing to Meles*. But when it comes to America’s interest, American leaders can go as low as

consuming their own spew. However, this does not mean that they are just in their policies and tend to give some thing out of petty. No, that's un-American in character.

Case in point, the current development testifies the fact that the Bush administration is desperately trying to break the deadlock situation with Iran and jumpstart a dialogue at any cost, because the heat in Iraq is too intense to ignore prominent regional powerbrokers like Iran, a country, long declared as part of the "axis of evil" along with Syria and North Korea by President Bush; furthermore, the speaker of the house Nancy Pelosi, has recently flown to Syria leading a delegation of Senators to try to coerce the Syrian government into controlling the flow of Arab fighters across its border with Iraq.

But the thing is, when Whitehouse fails, Capitol Hill acts and as long as they secure America's interest, they don't care whom they are negotiating with. 'National interest' is their top priority than individual ego and they have always maintained the balance between national interest and domestic policies feud stemming out of policy differences to a point, at times, you hardly see the difference between the two parties. HARMONY is the catchphrase here. But the situation in our country is extremely opposite. In fact, it does not cross my mind that it is easier to bring heaven and earth to close proximity than comparing the current political dynamics in Ethiopia to that of the US; but I am merely trying to make a contrast between the self-destructive behavior that is breaking our Nation versus the American opportunistic foreign policies whose objective is nothing but America-first which is highly commendable in a world where only the fittest survives.

Take for example the infamous Article 39, which is defined as follows in a purely Marxist style.

1. Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession.
2. Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has the right to speak, to write and to develop its own language; to express, to develop and to promote its culture; and to preserve its history.
3. Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has the right to a full measure of self-government which includes the right to establish institutions of government in the territory that it inhabits and to equitable representation in state and Federal governments.
4. The right to self-determination, including secession, of every Nation, Nationality and People shall come into effect: (a) When a demand for secession has been approved by a two-thirds majority of the members of the Legislative Council of the Nation, Nationality or People concerned; (b) When the Federal Government has organized a referendum which must take place within three years from the time it received the concerned council's decision for secession; (c) When the demand for secession is supported by majority vote in the referendum; (d) When the Federal Government will have transferred its powers to the council of the Nation, Nationality or People who has voted to secede; and (e) When the division of assets is effected in a manner prescribed by law.

5. A "Nation, Nationality or People" for the purpose of this Constitution, is a group of people who have or share large measure of a common culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identities, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory.

Article 39 defiantly stands in place of a law that supposedly defines "cession" as a crime equivalent to treason and this wicked article was originally devised to secure Eritrea's independence and fifteen years after Eritrea is gone, Article 39 is still lingering as a symbol of schism in the shadows of Meles' corrosive agenda. How bizarre! Long after Marxism was declared 'irrelevant' by Nations like Albania, who once fostered it as their guiding principle, this rotten ideology has yet found a safe heaven and revived veneration and continues to inspire devotees like Meles and his underworld comrades at the expense of our Nation. These Recluses of Marxism are hardly susceptible to change and seem to live in a state of historical amnesia not having the slightest clue that they are left behind years away from today's free world.

This is not to say that some one does not have the right and freedom to ascribe to any sort of ideology that he/she may choose and a personal choice in this regard, should remain strictly private but to forcefully impose it onto the larger domain against the people's wish is an outmoded tyranny and callous infringement of the Nation's sovereignty that has no justification what so ever. No one is going to ask Meles to abolish Article 39 as he will never do it because that's where he stands as a "leader" who is hell-bent to break the country in to a severely weak proportion. But with utmost certainty, not only is this divisive Article going to be neutralized unceremoniously, in due course of time, time will also come where Meles' bogus constitution will be discarded in to the dust bin and replaced by one that serves the Nation's interest; not individual hedonism; a constitution that encourages unity, peace and inter-tribal cohesion instead of hatred and discrimination in which certain ethnic group thrives while the other barely survives.

The case of Anwak is a classic example of Meles' outright favoritism of the ethnic Newer over the patriotic citizens of Anwak. The transmigrating ethnic Newer are of Sudanese origin yet they are highly favored by Meles and used as instrumental to keep the Anwaks in check. Also there is a striking similarity in the volatile Borena sub region. The ethnic Garre for instance, are originally from Somalia who served Ziad Barre by guiding Somali soldiers into Ethiopia's vulnerable positions during the Ethio-Somalia war in 1974. And ironically this particular ethnic group is empowered over the rest of the Borena Oromos who are indigenous to the area. Ethnic Borenas have their own bylaw called the Gedda, which is used to govern and resolve broad based tribal conflict arising from grazing-land and cattle rustling.

Given the inaccessible nature of the area to the conventional rule of law that corresponds to the central government, the Borenas have always been able to resolve their differences

on their own through the beautiful Gedda system; but again, due to their deep-seated patriotism, the saintly people of Borena Oromos are harassed, discriminated and wrongfully associated with the OLF. Although the area is prone to frequent tribal conflict, it has been noted that the Meles administration has constantly been playing a destabilizing role among these tribes and like the Newer, the Garre clan are used to keep an eye on the OLF. For instance, one report that was made by IRINI in Jun last year says as follows: *"The conflict started after the Guji, whose woreda [district] has recently been expanded by the government, started to claim land that previously belonged to Borena," an official of a local NGO, who asked not to be named, told IRIN by telephone from Yabello. "Thousands of people have been displaced." The federal police were not immediately able to confirm the clashes"*

The Nation has unduly been battered by simmering ethnic tension that was systematically instigated by the pyromaniac Leader who in a normal circumstance, should have served the Nation as a figurehead of peace and unity; but under the guise of "recognizing certain ethnic group" fire of intolerance and hatemongering was deliberately ignited across the Nation for the last fifteen years; fire, that can take generations to extinguish. The Amharic language, a language with a long established national status and widely used as a medium of communication across Ethiopian's diverse ethnic divide for generations, has also been restricted to its respective habitat, the Amhara zone and the capital Addis, just because some one hates the Amharas and had to do this to set the record straight and in so doing, Meles has successfully severed an age old communication link between fellow Ethiopians therefore in modern day Ethiopia, if one is to travel from one to another "federal state" especially those in the south, one has to use sign language; a primitive way of communication between two people of no audiological impairment.

Not only that, majority of the young generation, which was born with the advent of EPRDF in 1991, does not have the historical background to articulate the Ethiopian history even if we can assume that Ethiopia is "hundred years old" according to the Wonanes' diluted history who, ironically have made a change of heart and are getting ready to take part in the Millennium celebration. They can be there physically but in reality, they are uninvited guests. It's amazing that these fellows have no sense of shame that they can just change their Hat and join the crowd as if nothing happened.

The once strong patriotism and the passion to protect the Motherland, for which Ethiopians are fiercely uncompromising, has mutated into a crude hatred that has reached epidemic proportion; and It took only fifteen years to completely vandalize one of the oldest relics and historical heritage our forefathers had to offer. The Eritrean leader got it right when he said "we have given them a homework for the next hundred years". This was his "thank you" souvenir for the freedom that was handed on to him in a silver platter through the sacrifice of innumerable Tigrayan warriors. What does the Ethiopian Millennium mean to the TPLFs? And what would Ethiopia look like today with out the TPLFs?

In light of the current social discord and ethnic tension that has mushroomed in the Nation as a result of these divisive elements, the lost cause of unity can be resuscitated by a future democratically elected government, under the following terms.

1. Abolishing Article 39 along with its divisive extension in no uncertain term.
2. Bringing the current federal cartographical demarcation and the redistricting in all five States and localities to the statuesque with the exception to the federal system itself.
3. Setting up a team of National reconciliation commotion.
4. Invoking National reconciliation that is inclusive of all the disenfranchised and marginalized Tribes, Sub-tribes and Clans and creating a conducive environment to settle differences progressively that would bring about peace and harmony amongst the diverse ethnic groups.
5. Holding a dialogue with all armed insurgents except for those who have link to global Islamic fundamentalism.

Last but not least, we all, the Children of Ethiopia have a dream about the inevitable restoration of the Motherland whereby Ethiopians from all walks of life—Muslim, Christian, animist-- Ethiopians from every ethnic background shall one day come together as one to revive the old passion anew, and burn the Effigy of hatred and social injustice. A dream, which all patriotic Ethiopians have been pondering about day and night, shall one day come true. And from the ashes of Marco-bonapartism that has torn our country apart, shall raise united and prosperous Ethiopia.

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