

A Race to the Bottom: Is Proud Ethiopia at Risk?

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Part I

Regardless of our political, religious and ethnic differences and the formidable odds Ethiopia continues to face, most ordinary Ethiopians agree Ethiopia has a remarkable and long history as a free and independent multiethnic and multi-religious nation. Although we claim and believe in this fundamental principle, we are so afraid, timid, fractured and reluctant to express **Ethiopia's inviolability** in the strongest terms possible that we are setting the country for Balkanization. For instances, those who believe in one Ethiopia, one country, one diverse but unified population in which---as a matter of right and not privilege--each person is endowed with the legal right to live anywhere safely, express, voice, participate in the socioeconomic and political regardless of tribe, religion and location have failed to collaborate and speak with one voice. It is not uncommon these days for political elites and intellectuals to speak with two voices depending on their audiences. As a result, the voices of tribalism and secession dominate the political scene. This suits the ruling party.

I suggest in the strongest terms possible that Ethiopia's loss as one country will be everyone's loss; and its durability will be in everyone's interest. Historically, Ethiopia's enormous potential to survive and thrive has been thwarted by foreign aggression, internal divisions and foreign encirclement as well by a lack of an-all inclusive, fair, just and participatory governance. This can be fixed. But it takes wisdom, will and readiness to accommodate one another for the common good. The political ethos of government change and continuity by force of arms rather than through public discourse, consensus, political pluralism and power sharing is now driving the country and its 101 million people to the bottom. From its inception, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) that purportedly spearheaded the overthrow of the Socialist Dictatorship embraced an anti-Ethiopian position dismissing Ethiopia's historical evolution as a multiethnic and multi-religion society. It has kept the **country and its diverse population on a permanent suspense**. In the process, it undermined the country's inviolability, territorial integrity, national security and sovereignty.

The TPLF's narrative in "**የኤርትራ ህዝብ ትግል ከየት ወዴት!**" 1979 ዓ.ም framed what was to emerge as consequential. The group opined that "Today's Ethiopia is composed of varied and competing regions (read nations). This composition does not at all convey the evolution of a continuous integrated, unified and shared state and central government spanning 3,000 years" that is often asserted by champions of one Ethiopia and one country. It argued the contrary, "Its current status as a country administered by one central government authority begun under Emperor Menilik. Accordingly, Ethiopia's existence as a unified country is about 100 years." This served as a prelude in asserting the notion that Eritrea has never been part of Ethiopia. "The argument that Eritrea was and is part of Ethiopia is not supported by historical facts....Eritrea was an Italian colony and has evolved as a distinct country in the process...Based on historical assessment, Ethiopia and Eritrea are distinct and separate countries. Consequently, the attempt by either country to subjugate the other is a colonial issue." The TPLF meant that Ethiopia's occupation of Eritrea is **imperialistic and therefore illegitimate**. In effect, the hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians who fought and died for Ethiopia's territorial integrity, national security including access to the sea did it in vain.

This prologue established the ground work to facilitate Eritrea's secession once the TPLF took power in 1991. The TPLF offered the EPLF carte blanche endorsement to go ahead and establish an independent Eritrea. It then justified it to the UN. Forget the façade of referendum on behalf of the oppressed people of Eritrea. Instead, focus on the **instant historian** Meles Zenawi and his letter of December 13, 1991 to the then Secretary General of the UN H.E. Javier Perez de Cuellar. "It is to be recalled that the Conference on Peace and Democracy in Ethiopia, held in Addis Ababa from 1-5 July

1991 adopted a Charter affirming **freedom, equal rights and self-determination of all peoples** are the cardinal principles governing state affairs in the new Ethiopia....the Conference formally recognized that the people of Eritrea have the right to determine their own future by themselves...that the future status of Eritrea should be decided by the Eritrean people in a referendum to be conducted in the presence international observers.” With this formal letter, Meles took the unprecedented and unilateral position by a leaders of fragmenting Ethiopia and making it land-locked. No pro-Ethiopian group would ever do this. This fundamental thesis is the one that led to the ethnic federal system and Article 39. By definition, what applied to Eritrea applies to any ethnic group with a defined territory.

The TPLF then followed this betrayal by pushing and imposing ethnic-federalism without public debate. Ethnic-federalism has not resolved the national question on which the TPLF narrative is based. Instead ethnic elite politics is driving one of the most important countries in Africa and the world to the bottom by spreading and deepening hatred and division among ethnic and religious groups. In each case, not only the TPLF but each of us who acquiesced with the narrative will be judged harshly by history. We were and still are silent because we have a vested interest greater than serving the common good; or we have become privy to narrow ethnic politics and the ethos of fragmentation and Balkanization. It is political correctness and not fundamental principle in strengthening a country that rules the day. Eritrea never became Singapore. It is in fact a basket case. Its ports are being traded like a commodity to the highest bidder. Ethiopia’s nations, nationalities and peoples are far from achieving freedom, equal rights and self-determination. The beneficiaries of the model are ethnic elites who thrive on people’ miseries. The country faces more socioeconomic, political and religious problems as never before.

The purpose of this commentary is to identify the major hurdles and challenges.

The political reality on the ground suggests three intricate and interrelated problems Ethiopia and the Ethiopian people face:

- a) Narrow ethnic politics of ethnic elite supremacy, marginalization, exclusion, favoritism, profiteering and rent-seeking, organized plunder and silent “extermination of specific groups of people” in the name of institutionalizing ethnic-federalism. In short, **de-Ethiopianization**.

Well-documented ethnic cleansing and marginalization of hundreds of thousands of infants, children, women and men, notably since the early 1990s that continue unabated, attest to well-documented episodes of genocide. These episodes constitute crimes against humanity. This is also an area no one wishes to touch because of political correctness.

- b) Encirclement and strangulation of the country by its traditional enemies whose strategy is to fragment, weaken Ethiopia and deter it from achieving sustainable and equitable development for its 101 million people. This process is being broadened and deepened through proxy arrangements using ethnic and religious political elites; and
- c) The deliberate and systematic promotion of Wahhabism by Saudi Arabia is now a clear and imminent threat to Ethiopia’s national security and the peaceful coexistence of Christians and Muslims.

Very little attention is given to this threat because of political correctness again. As Alem Zelalem put it in an excellent piece, **Saudi Arabia’s Wahhabism and the threat to Ethiopia’s national security**, 2003, “Christianity, Judaism, and Islam have had deep historical roots in Ethiopia. Ethiopian Christians have a long history of welcoming and living with Muslims side by side. Intermarriages among the two groups are as common as intermarriages among various ethnic groups. Until the current ruling party took power and diminished it, Ethiopians are renowned for being the least

tribal people in Africa and the Middle East. They are also the most tolerant of different faiths. Ethiopia offered refuge to early Muslims. “The much needed protection that the Ethiopians provided to the early followers of the Prophet Muhammed, and their refusal to hand them over to their enemies, as well as the logistical support they made available to the Prophet, occupy a special place in the history of Islam. Umm Ayman, the Prophet Muhammad’s nurse, Bilal ibn Rabah, the first Muezzin who called Muslims to prayer, Caliph Omar al-Khattab’s mother, as well as Amir ibn al-As, who conquered Egypt in 640 A.D., and Abu Bakra, who led the siege on Taif, and many others, were all Ethiopians....The great majority of Ethiopian Muslims are followers **of Sunni Islam.**

The lesson I draw from this extraordinary history of mutual understanding and tolerance among Ethiopia’s rich faiths is that the country has managed to deter religious bigotry and wars that characterize many African countries and the Arab world. Mutual tolerance and intermarriages are a win-win. Millions of Ethiopians do not belong to any ethnic group and live in all parts of the country. This situation has changed abruptly and dramatically for two primary reasons.

First and foremost, Arab countries including Saudi Arabia were among the greatest supporters of the EPLF and the TPLF. No one really knows how much funding, arms, training, intelligence and diplomatic support Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and other traditional rivals to Ethiopia offered these two groups and others that still operate in the Horn of Africa. What is undeniable is that their support proved decisive. Since then, Saudi Arabia has been accused of financing terrorism in numerous parts of the world. It spends billions to spread Wahhabism, especially in the Africa region.

Historically, the Saudis did not find a willing Ethiopian government in their effort to export their culture and religion or to take over Ethiopian lands and waters through surrogates. Previous governments knew that the Saudis and other Arab countries were providing financial, diplomatic, intelligence, logistics and other critical support to the EPLF so that Eritrea would secede. As Saddam Hussein had boasted when he was in power in Iraq, Ethiopia became land locked and the Red Sea is now practically an “Arab lake.” The Port of Berbera will soon be owned by GCC member. This development poses an existential risk for Ethiopia. The TPLF core leadership and allies bear full responsibility for this existential threat.

Having facilitated the secession of Eritrea, the TPLF invited the Saudis to Ethiopia and offered them a blank slate to own lands and to promote their culture and their version of Islam. Whether deliberate or not, the new ruling party failed to recognize the distinction between short term financial and diplomatic gains that accrued to it; and the long-term strategic losses Ethiopia would incur. Ultimately, the TPLF will lose if Ethiopia loses and disintegrates. Whether intended or unintended, the fact remains that the TPLF made the disastrous and inexcusable mistake of abandoning Eritrea and followed this **historical and inexcusable blunder** by allowing the Saudis and others to penetrate Ethiopian society. In the words of Alem Zelalem “Today (unlike previous regimes, he meant), Ethiopia is ruled by a sinister, treacherous and cynical clique that has no obligation to the maintenance of the unity and territorial integrity of the country, and still less, to the defense and security of the Ethiopian state.”

Remember the TPLF went to war against its former ally the EPLF and won the battle at a loss of tens of thousands of Ethiopian and Eritrean lives and at a cost of billions of Birr. What did it achieve and do at the end? It failed to restore at least Assab to its legitimate claimant, Ethiopia. In effect the TPLF lost the meaningless and costly war. It also created animosity among the brotherly and sisterly peoples of Ethiopia and Eritrea who would be better off without dictatorial regimes.

Who is accountable for Saudi’s Arabia’s penetration?

There is ample evidence showing that it is the TPLF government led by the late Prime Minister Meles who invited the Saudis and then begun to worry about potential risks once the roots of the damage were implanted into the society. “Who opened the doors of Ethiopia to Wahhabism? Who authorized

Saudi Arabia to do what it is doing today in Addis Ababa and in the provinces of Shoa, Wollo, Gondar, Arusi, Wollega, Jimma, Harar, Sidamo, and indeed in the entire south?" The Saudis are well-known for using their petroleum dollars to bribe anyone or any group to achieve their strategic objectives. "How much bribe did the Saudis have to pay to the corrupt and criminal authorities, who were brought to power with Saudi finance? What is even more surprising is that they wanted to build a mosque in Axum – a city where hardly any Muslims live. By opening Ethiopia's doors to Wahhabis, the ruling clique in Ethiopia has been collaborating with international terrorists."

Ironically, WikiLeaks quotes a 1997 American embassy report that says "FEW ISSUES ARE OF GREATER LONG-TERM CONCERN TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA (GFDRE) THAN THE THREAT OF MILITANT POLITICAL ISLAM.

AT PRESENT THE GFDRE FACES LITTLE INTERNAL THREAT FROM ISLAMIC EXTREMIST GROUPS, BUT SPORADIC VIOLENCE BETWEEN GOVERNMENT FORCES AND ISLAMIC MILITANTS HAS TAKEN PLACE ALONG THE BORDER WITH SOMALIA, AND ISLAMIC EXTREMISTS ARE BELIEVED RESPONSIBLE FOR A SERIES OF RECENT HOTEL BOMBINGS AND AN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT ON AN ETHNIC SOMALI MINISTER." How can one be certain that there are no "sleeping cells" of fundamentalism and terrorism in Ethiopia waiting for the country's ethnic-political system to unravel? The late Prime Minister was right to worry about something that his own party created. But why did his team invite the Saudi's and Wahhabism in the first place? To what end did the current regime politicize religion?

What specifically did the Saudis do?

I recall traveling to Nairobi, Kenya for the World Bank and running into numerous young white robbed persons on flights from London, Frankfurt and Cairo. Their destination was Addis Ababa. When asked why Addis, the typical answer was "mission." This reminded me of the old colonialists who sent missionaries with their Bibles to convert Africans. These twenty-first century travelers were not tourists and had in their possession huge amounts of money to bribe, build and preach. I learned then that Nairobi was a hub for these new missionaries primarily from Saudi Arabia in route to Ethiopia. WikiLeaks has confirmed this. "SOME MONEY IS ARRIVING FROM ABROAD. THE NUMBER OF MOSQUES IN ETHIOPIA **DOUBLED OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS.** FUNDED IN LARGE PART BY PRIVATE MONEY FROM SAUDI ARABIA. PRIVATE SAUDI BUSINESSMAN **MOHAMMED AL-AMOUDI** HAS BUILT SEVERAL MOSQUES AND KORANIC SCHOOLS, INCLUDING A NEW COMPLEX IN THE AFAR REGIONAL STATE. WHEN the American AMBASSADOR ASKED LOCAL RESIDENTS IN HOSAINA, A ZONAL CAPITAL IN THE SOUTHERN PEOPLE'S REGION, WHO WAS FINANCING CONSTRUCTION OF A HUGE, NEW MOSQUE, THE LOCALS PROFESSED NOT TO KNOW."

When you are in a position to build Mosques and Koranic schools in places such as Aksum where there are no Muslims, your ultimate objective is conversion. For this to happen, you must persuade and buy local official support and endorsement. Fortunately for the Saudis and others, there are numerous profiteers in Ethiopia.

I remember at the time that funding sources included Libya, Iran, the Gulf Cooperative Council Countries (GCC), Iraq, Pakistan, Egypt and Sudan. The target population in Ethiopia were primarily poor and destitute communities in need of goods such as foods and services such as health and education. It is in this environment of social vacuum where fundamentalism and terrorism thrive and take institutional roots. As mentioned above, the late Prime Minister Meles acknowledged at the time that one group "AL-ITTIHAD DRAWS SUPPORT FROM LOCAL COMMUNITIES BECAUSE IT IS THE ONLY ORGANIZED GROUP IN a POSITION TO PROVIDE NEEDED" material support and urgent services to the population. "THE EXTREMISTS RECEIVE FINANCIAL AND OTHER SUPPORT FROM IRAN, IRAQ, SUDAN, LIBYA, AND PRIVATE DONORS IN SEVERAL GULF STATES." So, the problem was known more than ten years ago.

Incidentally, there is also a direct correlation between religious and cultural promotion and foreign investments from these countries that now includes Turkey. What I can surmise is this. The situation may be contained and subdued for now. However, in the long-term this penetration poses an enormous threat to Ethiopia's national security and the peaceful coexistence of its Christian and Muslim peoples. Reliable sources indicate the existence of "sleeper cells" in Ethiopia. These cells are seemingly peaceful and law abiding. Persons affiliated to these cells are highly and systematically organized. Many consist of armed groups waiting for the right opportunity to act. Some experts suggest that one such "window of opportunity is civilian unrest." This may be debatable for sure but cannot be dismissed outright. Another is foreign provocation or aggression. This is not debatable. Read Egyptian newspapers!

Who is in charge of government and state when all of this is happening?

Without doubt, it is the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). The TPLF commands overwhelming and singular policy and decision-making power and authority over the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front's government. It continues to commandeer intelligence, security and defense; and the country's budgetary and human capital resources. It enriches its cohort of supporters (both domestic and foreign); and suppresses the hopes and aspirations of the vast majority of the population. It determines "war and peace." It invites in anyone who has money and global or regional influence. It has a low regard for Ethiopia's territorial integrity and sovereignty and the peaceful coexistence of the country's mosaic of nations and religions. Given its proclivity to dominate at any cost, the TPLF has literally undermined **Ethiopian nationalism** and diminished the social, cultural, spiritual, economic and political bonds and cohesion of Ethiopia's diverse population. The TPLF dismantled Ethiopia's highly integrated national security and defense infrastructure and institutions and created a TPLF dominated intelligence, security, defense and foreign relations architecture totally dedicated to the party.

Potential conflicts between Christians and Muslims operate within this repressive and oppressive environment. The TPLF has politicized faith as much as it has politicized ethnicity and defense. Some say this politicization has provided fuel to those determined to divide the population as never before. Witness the burning of churches, homes and properties reinforcing fear, and mistrust and unnecessary division. The politicization of ethnicity and religion are both corrosive and dangerous. What is needed a unity of purpose and a collaborative effort among Ethiopia's elites to promote, nurture and institutionalize genuine equality among ethnic and religious groups as well as to create a solid foundation for the formation of a multinational and multi-religious democratic Ethiopian state and government that includes everyone and excludes no one. This challenge cannot be left to chance. Why genuine democracy now?

Democracy reinforces mutual tolerance

The only road-map in averting the three critical problems identified above is political pluralism that mirrors Ethiopia's diversity. Over the past quarter century, one observes a continuum of repression and exclusion unprecedented in the 21st century. Among other things, TPLF's anti-democratic and anti-people and anti-Ethiopian initiatives is the art of perfecting an anti-democratic political tradition of conspiracy and mistrust. This diminishes productive economic and social capital immeasurably. Because the TPLF did not trust Ethiopian faith institutions—both Christian and Muslim that operated and coexist side by side-- it opened-up the country's womb for penetration by the Saudis and others. Because of its fear of conspiracy from within, it underestimated the shadow of conspiracy from without. By conspiracy I mean that this or that group or this or that ethnic group is waiting for the opportunity to carryout revenge against the TPLF and the nationality it purports to represent. This narrative dominates the mental model of those who govern through force rather than public participation and consent. What is generally true on the faith side of the divide and rule cycle is equally true on the ethnic and defense sides. For example, the TPLF extends the mischievous

and dubious assertion that, if they take power, the Oromo are ready to exterminate Amhara and vice versa. I do not buy this. Sadly, some ethnic zealots fall into this trap and burn Amhara businesses, kill innocent Amhara nationals and evict thousands who are not murdered. In Gambella, ethnic groups who have cohabited the land for generations take arms against one another. In the Gondar region, citizens have been forced to assume new identities and to fight one another. Security and defense forces watch Ethiopians kill one another. This artificial system-driven division creates a social and political vacuum for land annexation and marginalization. So, who benefits from this mutual destruction? Ultimately, no one except those in power.

Why spread pessimism?

If you are only accountable to yourself and to your party, you can afford to spread mistrust and pessimism. Sadly, the TPLF is brilliant at creating and promoting mistrust among victims. Mistrust that if this or that political group—whether multiethnic or ethnic or a blend—takes political power the country won't survive and the growth work that the current ruling party has initiated will dissipate. This deliberate and strategic narrative reinforces and exploits the pessimism and fear that characterizes Ethiopian society irrespective of ethnic or religious or class or gender or demographic affiliation. Everyone is mistrustful of everyone else. This is why the spy network of 5 to 1, that is, one person monitoring and spying on five people works well. This is true whether we are referring to Tigray or Gambella or Amara or Oromia etc. In today's Ethiopia, fear and mistrust do not have boundaries. They do not have boundaries in the Diaspora either. The masters of deceit have exploited the psychology of pessimism, conspiracy, mistrust and fear in order to rule without challenge. The saddest thing is that the rest of us fall victim to this sinister trap. We are driven by TPLF's agenda at our own peril. We lived in an environment of fear under the Socialist Dictatorship for 17 years. We continued this fear culture under the TPLF/EPRDF for a quarter of a century—a **total of 42 years.**

In the process of this fear and mistrustful political and social culture, those of us who defend genuine equality through inclusion, a level playing field for every Ethiopian, the rule of law and political pluralism for a multiethnic suited for a multiethnic country are becoming quite irrelevant relative to the challenges Ethiopia faces. Why? Among other things, we have incapacitated ourselves by focusing on the wrong problem, namely mutual mistrust and fear. Because we have failed, we mistrust and demonize one another and refuse to talk to one another. How can we resolve problems without the courage to meet and talk to one another? Independent observers agree that those who oppose the ruling party and entertain a better alternative for the country guide conversations, relationships, alliances and activities by embracing and reacting to the TPLF agenda of hate, division, mistrust and conspiracy.

If we are unwilling to learn from one another, at least we can heed to Albert Einstein's wisdom in solving problems. "We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them." Or paradigm of thinking must change in fundamental ways.

The TPLF agenda of ethnic divide and rule, demean and perpetuate hate, intimidate and crush, forcibly evict and or make people disappear, buy and bribe, endear and entertain the foreign community at public expense etc. served well for over 25 years. The struggle in Oromia, Northern Gondar, Gambella, the Ogaden and other places has changed the reality on the ground. The government has abandoned its responsibilities to the public. Most visitors repeat the same story. "There is hardly a credible government that functions," they say. In private, some Ethiopian experts say that there are in fact two governments in Ethiopia today.

One government for the outside world, especially the West and the UN system to see and engage. This government receives bundles of monies, weapons, intelligence and diplomatic recognition. Why? Because it serves as a policeman in the Horn of Africa, sending troops to fight and die in Somalia and South Sudan. They say that the country is more stable than other neighboring countries such as

Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan and South Sudan. Notable is the fact that the Ethiopian government service in the spirit of “collective security” is highly prized by the government of the United States and the UN system. Ethiopia’s long standing relations with the United States has also been strengthened and prolonged because of the fight against terrorism in the Horn. Ethiopia is essentially a “buffer state” against the wave of extremism and terrorism. In my estimation, all this is being done at an enormous cost to the Ethiopian people, especially to the millions who continue to starve; and the millions whose human rights and freedoms are suppressed. The answer to this dilemma is not ethnicity and ethnic division, but collaboration and unity to save the country from collapse and its 101 million Ethiopians from continued misery.

It goes without saying that this (serve the US and the UN) external façade of strength and stability understates horrific and relentless internal repression and suppression. Subduing the population by force, does not, however, mask the reality with regard to the second type of Orwellian state and government in Ethiopia. This state and government that is buffeted by foreign military, intelligence and financial assistance has the capacity to deploy a massive intelligence, security, special police and defense network to crush and contain all forms of dissent anywhere in the country. My point here is that Ethiopia’s territorial integrity and national security and the security of vast numbers of people have become secondary compared to the primacy of domestic peace, stability and regime continuity.

Whether internal or external the government’s primary function is to maintain law and order, peace and stability all done in the name of national security as well as sustainable and equitable growth. Incredible as it may seem, paid for by the Ethiopian people, the country-wide network of repression operates exclusively on behalf of the TPLF pyramid and its political as well as its massive economic, financial and natural resources, investments and long-term interests. Ensuring the safety of party and private property is central to the security concerns the ruling party has in mind.

It is natural that the interests of foreign investors are also served in the process. One does not operate without the other. It is generally true that, under normal circumstances, all governments, whether democratic or dictatorial, have responsibility to safeguard private and investment properties. The TPLF/EPRDF and its foreign and domestic supporters say that protecting personal, private and investment property during crisis is performing an essential public service considered to be the norm in most law abiding nations. The current state of Ethiopia run by the TPLF/EPRDF is far from being law abiding and civilized. It is not the rule of law that governs. It is sheer force and the application of force that rules the day. If we ask the question “Whose property and for what social purpose is the ruling party protecting?” protecting, we will gain insight into the dilemma Ethiopians face. If we ask the question “Does the same regime protect the lives and properties of Ethiopians in Gambella, the Omo Valley or specific groups of people such as the Amhara when they are forcibly evicted from their lands, homes and other properties?, we will discern the contradictions and the self-serving nature of protecting investment property. I believe a rule-abiding government must protect all personal, private and investment property without discrimination and exclusion. A regime that breaks its own laws does not have the moral authority to defend anything.

While the TPLF/EPRDF is efficient in responding to internal crisis by protecting its own and foreign investment properties and persons, its actions are consistently opportunistic, political and differentiated.

For example, the federal government has failed to protect the people of Gambella from external assaults, the snatching of children and cattle, massive displacements and dislocation and internal blood-letting. It has equally failed miserably from protecting Amhara from personal attacks, destruction of property and decimation of churches. In many instances, these incidents take place in broad day light in the presence of security and defense officers. This is the reason why the regime is not trusted by the vast majority of the population.

Fragility is real

Recurring and rapid deployment of massive force whenever and wherever popular dissent arises, most recently in Oromia, reveals unreported and underreported public suffering, human killings, dislocation and massive property damages that entail fragility. These have become the norm in Ethiopia. Donors and friendly governments such as the United States continue to defend and finance stability and continued skewed growth in a country where millions are suffering each day.

I have argued repeatedly that, a key measurement of growth is the socioeconomic and political wellbeing of ordinary citizens, job security, food, shelter, personal safety and the like. Sadly, Ethiopia does not score high in this area. I will illustrate this point using one example.

According to Becky Carter's and Brigitte Rohwerder's February 2016 report "**Rapid Fragility and Migration Assessment for Ethiopia**," Ethiopia continues to bleed from human capital flight or exodus at a level never seen in the country's long history. Do people abandon their commitment to Ethiopia's longevity and durability when they leave in droves because of repression, dislocation or lack of job opportunities? NO! They carry this tradition and value with them.

The challenge and or gap is in translating this commitment to Ethiopia through unified and collective action.