

PART THREE: THE UGLY AMERICAN
HOPE AND REDEMPTION FOR ALL

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I. the Pitfall of Election 2008 and Ethiopia's Vital Interest

A. Senator Barak Obama

But then burst on the American political scene Senator Barak Obama, who single handedly created a great movement that transcended race, gender, social status, and sexual orientation and unified a people toward a new hopeful world. My first impression of Obama was formed through reading his books. I admired his great optimism and the beauty of his language. Actually, I had heard about him years earlier in 1993, but did not associate his great literary skill with his capacity as a political activist. At any rate, Obama just started a great historical turn in the life of America.

Obama is the not-so-ugly-American, who is capable of transforming the role of the



Government of the United States in the World from that of a bully to a mature and responsible member of the World Community. What we are witnessing in the 2008 Presidential nomination campaign is the power of persuasion and the vision of the transformative generation of Americans inspired and galvanized by the words of Obama, both in books and public addresses. Obama is not free from social baggage being a first generation American on his father's side and of a mixed race because of his White mother, but he has turned

these two situations into positive qualities.

It seems we are hearing the voice of reason and witnessing in the person of Obama the emergence of new generations of Americans—coming-of-age, of exquisitely beautiful new generations of Americans who seem to go beyond such contentious racist narrow view of the American identity, who seem to take “the color of water,” if I may borrow an apt phrase from a book title. [James McBride, *The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother*, Riverhead Books (1996).] In that book McBride's White Mother uttered the phrase “the color of water” in reference to God as being not black or white but all, as the color of water that picks up the hue of its container. This philosophy is radically different than the militancy of the civil rights movement; it is not accusatory and vengeful, but refined understanding of the human condition, thus is a precursor of Obama's generation of African American individuals who see beyond the injustice of white America but the hope of a just and harmonious society due to the healing power of understanding and direct actions.

The practical question Ethiopians must ask of Obama is about his understanding of Ethiopian history in particular and state formations around the world in general. If Obama is too involved with the idealism of Ionian absolutes and try to redraw the map of Africa on the basis of ethnic/tribal affinities and demographic homogeneity, then we have serious problems with Obama. As Ethiopians and recent immigrants in the United States, we are faced with multiple problems. In United States every immigrant has gone through

such process of alienation, mostly less painful and less violent than previous generations of immigrants had suffered. Nevertheless, we should not gloss over the fact of discrimination that remains directed at people with accent who are non-Caucasians, which irrevocably identifies individuals as objects of derision and violent discriminations in all transactional aspects of life in the United States.

In a recent essay, Donald Levine, the great sociologist-historian and enthusiastic admirer of Ethiopia and Ethiopians, wrote incisively indicating how greatly Obama as President would help bring about solutions to the many conflicts in between African states. He emphasized the benefits Ethiopia and its neighbors may have from Obama's restorative and healing vision.

In the primary contests, Ethiopian-, Eritrean-, and Somali-American citizens rallied in large numbers behind Obama's candidacy. They find him a leader ready to address the nation's pressing concerns and to restore a positive American presence in the global community. Without muting that enthusiasm, I want to suggest that something else which the senator represents can yield an even greater benefit for Ethiopia and the Horn. This point was broached by Teddy Fikre, in a piece on Obama in the most recent issue of *The Ethiopian American*: "The possibility of overcoming racial, ethnic, religious, and regional differences has implications in countries throughout the world." His piece goes on to note that Obama's approach encourages countries long stymied by historical grievances and unending conflicts to set aside their divisions and unite for the common good. [Donald Levine, "Barack Obama and *Ye-tebaraketch Etyopiya*,"]

After watching Obama's speech on television on March 18, 2008, which speech may go down in history as one of the great speeches on race relations, I have no doubt that Obama is the best that has happened to the United States in recent memory. The speech not only gave an accurate picture of race relations but also explained Obama's relationship with the pastor of his Church, Reverend Wright, who at times used very strong words against White rich and controlling Americans. Compared to the degree of suffering Blacks and other minority groups have endured for hundreds of years in this country, the presentations of the Reverend is just a mild chiding. At any rate, by the time Obama was finishing his speech, I saw a man being transformed into a sage, not just an American but a voice of reason to all of mankind. Would his beautiful vision for developing race relations and a virtuous society in the United States be extended to cover also ethnic relationships in the Horn Countries and else where in the World? I am not hopeful about such eventuality as a done deal. Just like other politicians, Obama's vision is essentially for local consumption, even if there may be some peripheral restorative helpfulness to solving our regional problems.

Ed Koch's article "Unconvinced by Obama's Wright Speech," (Newsmax.com) of 26 March 2008, is typical of the vengeful and biased venomous articles condemning Obama for not throwing his Pastor of twenty years overboard. Koch suffers from the Old Testament's vengefulness syndrome. He seems to be caught in that loop of retaliation and further retaliation that does not discriminate between individuals who are innocent or guilty of crimes. The kill-them-all teaching coming down from stories in Genesis,

Leviticus et cetera has no place in the modern world. This form of Old Testament solution to a complex problem or against perceived enemy, where compassion or forgiveness has no place, is not in tune with the America of the new generation of Americans who are now galvanized to take over and change the old worn out system of both race relations and the abusive role of world leadership of the United States.

By contrast, George Packer's masterfully written article "Native Son" *The New Yorker*, Talk of the Town, 24 March, 2008, is illuminative of the deeper dilemma of reconciling two contradictory primordial impulses—to lash out at past injustices suffered or to reconcile. Packer concluded his article with a note that can only be heard as reflective rather than assertive: "Obama is staking his campaign on the very point he tried to make to Reverend Wright two decades ago: that the dreams and interests of hard-pressed Americans are more important than matters of race. Democrats have been trying to make that argument for a long time, while Republicans have been winning elections. For half a century, right-wing populism has been the most successful political force in America, aided greatly by the tendency of liberals to fall into the competing claims of identity groups. Obama is a black candidate who can tell Americans of all races to move beyond race. As such, he is uniquely positioned to put an end to this era, and uniquely vulnerable to becoming its latest victim."

B. Senator Hillary Clinton

By contrast, I can imagine and assert with reason that Senator Hillary Clinton will not generate such restorative procedure and healing to the Horn Countries. I believe, with good reason, that she will exasperate the situation and turn existing border and demographic problems in the Horn into major conflicts. Considering the fact that Senator Clinton and her husband the former President Clinton are simply two sides of the same coin, Ethiopia is doomed to a prolonged struggle with Eritrea, an Eritrea favored by the Clintons. Advisors, such as Gail Smith and John Prendergast, who jointly pursued a policy line pretending to be adversaries that undermined the vital interest of Ethiopia in favor of Eritrea during the Clinton Presidency, will have a field day creating havoc in the region. *1997: The First Lady and daughter Chelsea in Eritrea, a stop on an African goodwill tour. (Picture) 1997: The First Lady and daughter Chelsea in Eritrea, a stop on an African goodwill tour. (Picture)*



NcNamee/Reuters

The sympathy I have for Senator Clinton is based on my reaction and appreciation of her will to survive in a meaningful manner after having been victimized by her husband (Bill Clinton) philandering over a period of her relationship as girlfriend first and wife and mother later. The fact remains that she is burdened by the legacy of a husband who seems to have no moral scruple in private or in public life. Of course, I did not like her demonstrated bias in favor of Eritrea and against Ethiopia, a bias not grounded in any reason. Despite the fact that Ethiopians raised over a quarter of a million dollars for her Senatorial election in 2000 she has not demonstrated in her actions or speeches how she may assist in the preservation of

Ethiopia as an independent and viable nation by restoring to Ethiopia its Afar coastal territories and Ethiopia's Territorial Waters on the Red Sea.

Even taking into account the fact that the Presidential nomination campaign brought out the ugly side of political dirty fighting by the Clintons first, nevertheless, I am impressed with Senator Clinton's demeanor in times of adversity. No matter how hard she tried to project herself as an independent modern woman, she remains a tragic Victorian figure, victim of an abusive husband. She really did not offer much in her bid for the nomination as the nominee of the Democratic Party for President, except to repeat about her experience, which is checkered with investigations and questionable role in her husband's Administration. What is tragic is that had she not been married to Bill Clinton or had she divorced him promptly when his philandering was first known to her she would have blossomed on her own as the brightest star in American political life. She reminds me of Medea of Euripides's tragic play (by the same name) forced into a horrible situation being betrayed and abandoned by her seducer Jason for another woman, the man she loved sacrificing her royal life, her country, and family.

Former President Clinton has disgraced the Democratic Party and the Presidency of the United States having been impeached by the House of Representatives on 19 December 1998, becoming only the second President in U.S. History, and the only man popularly elected as President to have been so charged. President Clinton campaign statements in support of his wife against Senator Obama are totally unacceptable and unbecoming of any individual let alone a former President of the United States. As recently as March 21, 2008, in Charlotte NC he compared the contest between his wife and Senator McCain as a contest that would represent "an election year where you had two people who loved this country and were devoted to the interest of this country, and people could actually ask themselves who is right on these issues, instead of all this other stuff that always seems to intrude itself on our politics." In other words a contest between two patriotic Americans "who love America" and then proceeded ruddily dismissing the one individual who is leading the Democratic Party race, Senator Obama, as the "other stuff that always seems to intrude itself on our politics." This was the third or fourth time Bill Clinton has made such racist and demining remarks against Barak Obama. Bill Clinton has no moral authority even to criticize a street hooker let alone some one like Barak Obama, a faithful husband and a visionary.

Bill Clinton is a disgraced President who repeatedly lied to the American people, cheated on his wife several times over the course of their marriage, sexually abused a young White House intern using the prestige of his Presidency, et cetera. No matter how hard I tried, I just could not erase this horrible image of Bill Clinton sprawled with his pants down with Monica Lewinski in the Oval Office, defiling the most sacred ground in the American Government. Even way before he became President, he has a streak of questionable moral standard. After all he left to Europe when brave men and women were being shipped out to fight an unpopular war in Vietnam. And yet, he was willing to bomb foreign countries when he was sitting in the oval office as president years later destroying buildings and innocent lives.

The most important question to me is not who would promote the interest of the United States, but who would serve Ethiopia's vital interest. Barak Obama or Hillary Clinton? In fact, such is the only question of interest to me. Looking over the records of both Republican Presidents and the Democrat Presidents since the end of World War II, Ethiopia's vital interest seems to have been best served when it is subordinated to America's Republican Presidents than with its Democrat Presidents. Thus, even though my whole emotional being bleeds for Obama for President as the most inspiring and capable candidate, my rational self would support McCain, the least inspiring and war-monger candidate, but with uncompromising zeal to using force against all fundamentalists in the region. For Ethiopia sake in order to gain a breathing space after the departure of Meles Zenawi, and in order to regain our footing as a nation we will be better off if the President of the United State considers Ethiopia an ally in the fight against fundamentalists in the Horn region rather than try to impose its ignoramus idea of "democracy" supporting every little group fighting for independence from the Unitary state of Ethiopia. I have never claimed to be a Solomon in my judgment on such matters, but I know what it means to love a country.

It is reasonable to ask why I would make such agonizing choice between an obvious candidate who could deliver good and balanced governance, for another candidate who is bent in using destructive force. There is a great theological aphorism I heard when I was quite young as to why the Christ chose to save mankind by sacrificing himself: "*Wolde le Segaw Adela!*" [I wish our great scholars from the Church would let me know who made that statement.] Even though the full import of that beautifully crafted verse may be lost in translation, what is meant by the verse goes like this: "*Even the God-Christ after all was biased toward his blood relations because of his mother being a human being, not a deserving lot i.e. Mankind, in trying to save mankind from eternal damnation*". And I, a mot in God's eye, would rather compromise that which could have benefited the United States in the long run, for a temporary relief for Ethiopia.

II. "Snake Oil Salesman" Economic System

Unchecked capitalism is possible only under a form of moral degeneration within a corporate body that eats at the very foundation of society. Capitalism that does not answer to some moral principles is not possible in a world with a conscience, and if such is the case it will only be true of a society in steep moral decline and in a process that will end up in destruction. Thus, when one discusses the virtue or demerit of capitalism, it is within such understanding and dealing with issues of magnitudes and degrees et cetera and not as some form of an absolute. To me, great wealth represents tremendous degrees of immoral activities and criminal acts at some point during the creation and accumulation of that wealth. And every wealthy person must be suspected of moral degeneration and criminality, and the onus is on such individual.

The American economic system, despite its obvious and ostentatious success, has very serious problems. The top one percent of the population owns 34% of the wealth with the next 10% owning 55% of the wealth in the United States. In other words, about 11% of the population of the United States owns almost 90% of the wealth in the United States. For example, "Microsoft CEO Bill Gates has more wealth than the bottom 45 percent of

American households combined.” According to *Forbes* list of billionaires of 2008, Bill Gates is the third richest person in the World, the first being Warren Buffet another American. Such inequitable and unequal distribution of wealth in any society is not conducive for long term stability and peace. The Vatican has issued a revised additional list of Deadly Sins. The “List of Sinful Acts” now includes “Being obscenely rich” and “Causing social injustice” in addition to five more dealing with “a resonance that is especially social.”

Moreover, there is at least one situation that “being obscenely rich” does not automatically make one sinful. I would make a crucial distinction between being rich in the United States and being rich in Ethiopia. Even though Warren Buffet and Bill Gates are “obscenely rich” individuals, they are also the most generous human beings known to history. They have allocated billions of dollars of their wealth to foundations established with the sole purpose of doing charitable work around the world. Private charitable foundations are uniquely American institutions engaged in redirecting the great wealth of “obscenely rich” Americans into the service of the American people. Both Warren Buffet and Bill Gates have donated billions of dollars to non-profit foundations to combat AIDS, poverty at home and poverty around the World. There are no comparable charitable foundations sponsored by Ethiopia’s exploitative rich men and women in Ethiopia, and organized charitable work is not much of a factor in the redistribution of wealth among all Ethiopians. The way wealthy Americans dispense their wealth is quite different than how wealthy Ethiopians hang on to their wealth all the way to their death beds.

The American system of credit based economy is a work of great wonder to me. The total debt of the United States as of February 25, 2008 is about 9.3 trillion dollars and increasing at an average daily rate of one and a half billion dollars. [http://www.brillig.com/debt_clock/ as retrieved on Feb 21, 2008] The value of the dollar has decreased by sixty percent since 2000. The United States consumes over 800 billion dollars worth of services and goods each year more than it produces. [<http://boom2bust.com/?s=foreigners> as retrieved on Feb 8, 2008.] That represents the trade deficit of the United States. It has also a very modest reserve asset in foreign currency and other securities of about seventy one billion dollars worth. Considering the deficit and the stratospheric national debt, such reserve amount is not that significant except as a stabilizing tool in the foreign exchange markets around the World thereby encouraging more American debt-holders. In all fairness, such a nation burdened with such financial pressure should go bankrupt. And yet almost every country that has anything to sell is scrambling to sell its goods and hold on to United States debt instrument in exchange for selling its goods and services to the United States.

What I find most amazing and amusing too is how foreign national leaders of China, Japan, Saudi Arabia, et cetera, who pride themselves for their business acumen (and some for their astute economic policy and international relations) could be so gullible, in fact, stupid in their acceptance in exchange for their products and services little pieces of engraved paper they call “hard currency.” On the other hand, the products that the United States imports from China, Saudi Arabia et cetera require long hours of labor, the sweat and blood of hundreds of millions of citizens, and represent real wealth/value. Those

nations are exchanging their products and services for trillions of those pieces of paper, which they hoard in vaults. While those senile national leaders are counting little pieces of paper, the smart Americans are using the products imported from those countries for the improvement of the quality of life of millions of Americans. Americans use such imported products for building universities, filling pantries with overflowing food items, providing cheap energy for each family et cetera. By contrast those nations who are hoarding pieces of little engraved papers are simply holding in their hands pieces of paper and are not utilizing in any productive or useful manner their earned value to benefit the citizens of those nations. I ask you, where is the wisdom in this?

Is the collection of little pieces of engraved paper no different from a bower male bird collecting little pieces of colored things to lie out in front of his gate like structure to attract female birds? Even worse, often, those countries do not even possess such currencies but electronically inscribed of numbers in ledgers. If the case is such that a nation, at any given time, is holding billions of dollars or any other hard currency in its vault or in entry in its account ledger year in year out, it means that much of its wealth is not in play. And as far as its wealth is stashed as little pieces of paper in vaults or number-entered in account ledgers, there is no value being utilized to benefit its citizens. In absolute terms that much wealth does not exist.

The ultimate “snake oil” salesman at one point was the now deceased Milton Friedman (1912-2006), along with his critique Paul Krugman. Of course, Krugman is the quintessential soft-hearted economist despite his gruff. He is not a monetarist even though he pretends to be one. Friedman was a charming and likable person, who also received a Nobel Prize in 1976 for his monetarism. Here is the ultimate “snake oil” that Friedman and colleagues articulated promoting the illusion of creating something of value by controlling the circulation of small pieces of paper with fancy pictures called currency or money, which pieces maybe dubiously attached to something of value or corresponding service or product or precious metal. The United State Government has a monopoly on the printing of such pieces of papers, if anyone attempts to print such pieces of paper, there is a stiff penalty. Monetary policy works by keeping the supply and demand for money at a level that supposedly would create some balance of positive economic growth both anti-inflationary and immune to recession.

If we use the standard imposed on poor nations by the World Bank and the IMF demanding disastrous devaluations of local currencies, then one may claim with justification that the monetarist policy of the Federal Reserve on rising or reducing interest rate was a scheme to avoid the honest devaluation of a currency. By simply manipulating the supply of money by controlling the interest rate it charges central banks (affecting retail banking), the Federal Reserve believes it can control inflation and stimulate productivity. What the poor nation of the World are forced to devalue their currencies so that the falling dollar that has lost its “intrinsic” value could be used to buy the same amount of goods and services from such nations. In their function, it seems that both the World Bank and the IMF are the arms of the United States Federal Reserve and its Banking system; therefore, their major work is manipulating through loans the

movement and direction of the currency market, capital and financial market, and the protection of the dollar.

The inherent weakness (and not so apparent problems) of the monetary systems of the World is acutely and honestly discussed in a fabulous book by Charles R. Morris, *The Trillion Dollar Meltdown: Easy Money, High Rollers, and the Great Credit Crash*, Perseus Publishing: 2008. What the book comes down to, say in the final analysis, is that the United States Banks manipulate and exploit the World financial markets, the people of the United States even though first hand beneficiaries often are also victimized by the same Banking system of the United States. This book is really saying the same thing that I have stated in my own metaphoric phrase of “snake oil salesman economic system.”

Unlike the United States, the Ethiopian government foolishly devalued the Ethiopian currency in October 1992, rather than adopting a monetary policy on interest rate, thereby affecting the supply of money and some control on the chronic underutilized savings due to chronic recession. In order to absorb the huge mercantile hoarding stashed in private safes, and commercial banks (no interest or very low interest is paid over a certain amount of deposit) the Ethiopian government should have started massive infrastructure work through out the nation stimulating productivity. As a result of such devaluation of the Ethiopian currency, when the Birr was devalued against the dollar by one hundred percent to 4.95 Birr to the dollar, which quickly was trading for more than 7.00 Birr to the dollar, the Ethiopian government hurt its own accumulated value in its currency (reserve) as well as all deposits thereby forcing the Ethiopian economy to give up much of its earned value accumulated in fair trade/exchange dictated by the market for decades.

Since devaluation was meant to deal with current and future exchange rates, the Ethiopian Government should have assessed all monies on deposit, in private hands, and even all receivables, and salaries at rates that would maintain or reflect all accumulated value from the past, with the new adjusted devalued currency rates. In other words, every currently held currency or on deposit et cetera should have been adjusted upward to neutralize the effect of devaluation on past earned value. The devaluation of the Birr was hailed as a necessary step to increase export; however, there still is no appreciable increase in export trade after fifteen years since devaluation. Moreover, due to the none existence of institutionalized stock trading (stock market) in Ethiopia, the manipulation of interest rate (monetarist policy) would not have made much of a difference to stimulate the national economy of Ethiopia.

The necessity of usefulness of any program or policy lies purely in the willingness of society to go along with such system. Ben S. Bernanke, the Federal Reserve current Governor, threatened to go to the extent of distributing US currency (money) without any interest. He said, "We have the keys to the printing press, and we are not afraid to use them." This is simply creating intrinsic value in the pieces of paper rather than using them as some form of symbolic representation of the value generated by service and production by the economy of the United States. One good example of the fact of printing more money in disregard of the fundamentals of the state of the economy of the United States is the bailing out of Bear Stearns, otherwise camouflaged as purchase by J P

Morgan, with the United States Government guaranteed shoring-up fund to the tune of 60 billion dollars made available as needed to cover all finance in connection with the loss of Bear Stearns. This is a good example of the mission of snake oil salesmen from the Treasury, the Federal Reserve, SEC and this time the President.

III. The Lesson for Ethiopia

The manipulation of any currency is more of an art-form than science, thus more inclined to the use of gobbledygook magic formula than anything worth calling positive science. The moral lesson coming out of such economic and financial system for Ethiopia is that debt-financing is not bad at all. If it worked for a developed country like the United States, it should work twice as well for a developing country like Ethiopia. The secret of Ethiopia's future economic success lies in the way it uses its debt-financing. If such borrowed fund is used to finance the building of factories, acquisition of farm equipment, and especially if borrowed fund is used to finance huge nation-wide infrastructure, dams, utilities, schools and colleges et cetera and not for the importation of luxury consumer goods, there is bound to be economic success in the country. Therefore, if there are banks or countries that will accept debt instruments from Ethiopia, by all means go for it and do not limit such funding on the ground of too much debt. A developing country should not worry about mounting debts at all as long as it is wisely directing its development programs. The worry should be on the debtor.

Economists never tire from citing the economic disaster that befell South American Countries such as Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, Brazil (to a limited extent) et cetera in the 1980s and 1990s as an example of the danger of borrowing to ward of hyperinflation generated in the first place with poor development programs pegged with unrefined and often violent political ideology. At one point, Argentina was burdened with 132 billion dollars debt. The same is true in the case of some East Asian countries in the late 1990s such as Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia etcetera burdened by debt. Nevertheless, the connection of debt financing and the economic failure of such countries was not clearly established. It is more the corruption of government officials that is the real problem in all of the collapse of the economic well being of all those nations. [See D. Rodrik, "Where Did All the Growth Go? External Shocks, Social Conflict and Growth Collapses," NBER Working Paper No. 6350, January 1998; David D. Hale, "The IMF, Now More than Ever: The Case for Financial Peacekeeping," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 1998]

If one is able to secure fund to buy needed factories, build schools and universities, train professionals such as engineers, medical doctors, chemists, managers et cetera by signing a piece of paper that is an IOU, one should go for it with enthusiasm. Who knows, a meteor might even strike Earth; there is a possibility one may strike gold veins; et cetera, and as a last resort, seriously, there is always renegotiation, debt forgiveness, and a host of other remedies if something goes wrong with the repayment of debt being too steep. At a deeper level, there is no mistaking this human fear of being unable to pay back one's debts, but if seen in the right perspective we should be able to borrow from the rich to enable the poor without being squeamish.

I am not second guessing experts in the field on economic growth and social engineering. When it comes to economic development matters dealing with Ethiopia, there are numerous publications by the World Bank, State Department reports, private studies from several educational institutions, and most importantly from Ethiopian experts within the country and the reports of several Ministries. I find also most helpful the recent articulation of Ethiopia's economic and political situation by the erudite and well versed Genet Mersha, especially in an essay titled "Is Ethiopia's Economic Growth Sustainable?" of 5 February 2008. The essay was posted in several Ethiopian Websites. This essay effectively provides us with important supporting data that may be interpreted differently than what the author intended it for. [www.dekialula.com/articles/g_mersha as retrieved on Mar 9, 2008; and www.aigaforum.com/ArchiveFeb2008-1.htm as retrieved on Mar 17, 2008.] In spite of the optimism of the author, the picture that emerges from my analysis and evaluations of the supporting details provided, in support of the arguments presented by the author, ends up drawing a rather hopeless and bleak picture of the economic and political situation in Ethiopia.

The real problem in Ethiopia, which no one hardly discusses, but far more acute and entrenched is the lack of craftsmanship and measurable skills. We can easily trace the problem to our culture and later to the education policy of Emperor Haile Selassie. One can observe in Ethiopia the low status individuals engaged in physical work are relegated to, and this potent attitude is fully the result of long standing culture of abhorrence and avoidance of physical work that requires training and specialized skill. If we consider the typical village life in a farming community in Ethiopia, which is often assessed to be about 80% to 90% of the total population, we can easily see the problem. How many carpentry shops in such a village? How many blacksmiths? How many leather tanners? How many spinners and weavers? How many potters? A village and its environ are "Ethiopia" in microcosm. Whatever is lacking at the village level is simply lacking in the larger Ethiopian community, but magnified several times more.

This lack of technical skill in Ethiopia is not of recent phenomenon; rather it has been a significant factor in the decline of the quality of life of Ethiopians in the long history of Ethiopia. Although we find some great ancient monuments in the northern part of Ethiopia, that skill that fashioned those monumental works did not make its way down to our time. It seems, except for the brief but impressive revival of some engineering and masonry skills in the Eleventh to Twelfth Centuries at Lalibela and in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries resulting in the founding of a great citadel of Gondar, with its magnificent castles and urban design, all that ancient skill and craftsmanship was lost to us. In general, the northern Ethiopian communities lack comparative skills in useful crafts such as building, making utensils for every day use, pottery, leather works et cetera. One of Ethiopia's most futuristic Emperors, before he turned tragically brutal, was Emperor Tewodros II who understood clearly that lack of craftsmanship and skill was a great problem for Ethiopia hindering it from becoming a great Empire. He tried to remedy that defect within the Ethiopian community, a community which did not understand nor share in Tewodros's great vision, with force rather than persuasion. The result was the aborted technology center at Gaffat, south of Gondar, where the effort was concentrated to produce weapons such as canons.

It is in the Southern part of the Country in the Kafa area that one finds great skills in building, weaving, metal works et cetera; for example, there can be found no comparable ability in the rest of Ethiopia, in the smelting of iron and steel as was the case with the Yamma (*Janjero*) and Wolaita iron workers whose home base was the lake area and the basin of the Omo River. [See G.W.B. Huntingford, *The Galla of Ethiopia: The Kingdoms of Kafa and Janjero*, (London: International African Institute, 1955)] The amazing Dorzes weaving skill rivals any of their northern counterparts by several degrees. The Gurage, Fuga, Dorze, et cetera building skill and mastery of wood work has no comparison to the type of sloppy work in building and handling of wood we find in the Northern part of Ethiopia. [See on Gurage culture, William Shack, *The Gurage: a People of the Ensete Culture* (London: International African Institute and Oxford University Press, 1966).] In fact, at times such home structures in the north, especially wood framed thatched roof huts are no better than hastily thrown in and assembled rough-shod pile of wood. However, in the Northern part of Ethiopia, in most of the communities you find unparalleled skill in book making and binding, wool weaving, jewelry making specially crosses of all sizes and fabulous designs from recycled metal.

The distribution of craftsmanship and skills, even if modest in depth and excellence in some areas, illustrates to me how much Ethiopia is the result of its parts and how far it needs each member of the community to remain a viable nation. To all of us it is a lesson on how far we should respect and appreciate each others' contribution to the greater glory of our nation. I may surmise about the devastating effect of poverty on Ethiopian civilization in a manner that may be considered a hypothesis at best, otherwise a wild speculation. Sloppy craftsmanship, inattention to details, lack of artistic expression et cetera are all signs of a declining civilization. I applaud rightly the Orthodox Christian Church for its moral guidance and for humanizing an otherwise wild population. However it wrecked havoc to our secular life, to our creature comfort, to the advancement of our skill and craftsmanship. The primary problem with the Church education was the narrowness of its curriculum and the conformist methodology of instruction. There is no instruction in mathematics, geography, chemistry, physics; even history is taught as an informal subject more akin to gossip than a legitimate discipline. When Haile Selassie, as Regent, started his Modernization effort from 1923 on, he simply changed the venue, the place of instruction from the Church to government run schools, but the curriculum remained essentially clerical in its content with less emphasis in the technical fields of study.

We can see the effect of such lopsided emphasis and concentrating on non-technical instructions, even in the immigrant population here in the United States; for example, one could hardly find Ethiopians engaged in construction work in Metropolitan Washington DC. The preferred work usually is the type of work that affords independence of action, with minimal supervision, such as driving taxis, running small convenient store, or a vendor's stand et cetera. (Of course, there are very many Doctors, teachers, lawyers et cetera that I am not including in my generalized statements.) Sedentary work is preferred by Ethiopians, I believe as a result of survival strategy. Famine and starvation has been part of our history; continuous war and violent raids by ethnic groups, as well as raids even by the central governments, were common occurrences before the reign of Haile

Selassie. That type of state of existence will not allow for the accumulation of capital and for expansion of development, especially when it is coupled with natural disaster of dry weather, plague et cetera. Thus, the Ethiopian individual instinctively learns to preserve his energy by being sedentary as much as possible. If one is not sure about his or her next meal, the best strategy is not to expend calories. It is in that sense that I asserted poverty had far deeper effect on us in shaping not only our world view but also our very life process.

The type of paradigm shift that we need get underway is far more profound than that advocated by Meles in his long essay. The type of “paradigm” shift claimed by Meles is not a paradigm shift at all. It is at best a modest reshuffling of the political and economic forces by giving them new names. What is a profound paradigm change is the one I am suggesting in reorienting the culture and philosophy of poverty and sedentary energy preservation schemes, to that of a dynamic and risk taking technology oriented outlook. The huge projects of multimillion dollar investment projects owned by individual investors are in effect similar to the raids experienced by Ethiopians over the centuries by ethnic based violent bands and the central governments as well. Thus, the first clear paradigm shift would focus changing the economic policy toward encouragement of small scale industries and home-based high value cottage industries specializing in productions for both local consumption and international trade. The other element of the paradigm shift I have suggested above is the active pursuit of “*Ethiopiawinet*” unitary program both in political structure of the country and the establishment of a new government with young Ethiopians running such government. There can be no paradigm shift while maintaining the existing divisive ethnic based so called “federal” political structure that Meles has forced on the people of Ethiopia since he has been in power for the last seventeen years.

Conclusion

It is not that easy for those who are already in a *regreg* (bog) to pull themselves out. Under such situation a rope tossed as a rescue tool goes a long way than all the philosophical pontifications and posturing. We Ethiopians are in a political and economic bog, and we need all the rope we can hold onto to pull ourselves from the quagmire that we find ourselves stuck and sinking. In Meles Zenawi we find a leader not throwing ropes to help us to safety, but powering water on the bog to make us sink even faster. In a recent article by Getachew Mequanent, I was amazed to read such ridiculous accolade of Meles Zenawi that is also promoting the idea that Meles rules another term. Actually Getachew started toying with the idea of supporting Meles in those terms in his article “Reflection on Meles Zenawi” of December 2006. That mild effort is now turned into a full-fledged campaign to extend the brutal traitorous rule of this one man. I start to doubt whether we are residing on the same planet. It is a fact that Aiga is run by a handful of Tigrayans and Gonderes with the patronage of Meles’s official residing in Los Angeles as Ethiopia’s Government Counsel.

It is always gratifying to me to observe Ethiopians from historically competitive background cooperating on projects: in the Aiga Website situation, the children of Sebagadis and the children of Wube and Marye are working together as the children of a

united Ethiopia. Specially taking into account the long standing historical rivalry between Yeju (Wello), Semien/Gondar, Gojjam and Tigray, the Aiga project is refreshing in the exercise of unity. That fact alone has been sufficient reason for me to overlook Aiga's biased editorial, and never been a concern to me as a dangerous Website. In fact I welcomed it. In spite of my pain to see the one-sided and often irrational support of Meles by Aiga, I have thought of Aiga as a good example of Ethiopians cooperative product. Meles is a passing phenomenon, and what I want to witness endure is close relationships between Ethiopians from diverse communities. Nevertheless, cooperating to shore-up a treasonous leader, who continues to compromise the Sovereignty and Territorial integrity of Ethiopia is as treasonous as the actions of the original traitor. I had respected Getachew Mequanent's views in general, except for his misguided effort to extend Meles Zenawi's term of office. Getachew's views usually are reflective and accommodating with obvious effort of balanced approach to the political situation in Ethiopia. Of late, however, he has become quite sycophantic in his admiration of Meles Zenawi. And I cannot understand such drastic shift of personality. Now he reminds me of Haile Selassie's ardent retainers calling for a "thousand years reign," while the Emperor was tittering on his last legs. Getachew's expressed wish that Meles Zenawi continues his anti-democratic government (characterized as such even by the 2008 States Department Report as a government that routinely violates the human rights of Ethiopians) is unconscionable.

Seventeen years of Meles Zenawi is quite enough. Because of Meles Zenawi our national Sovereignty has been betrayed and our Territorial integrity breached; our country's wealth has been looted, and our people degraded living under the harshest political suppression during the last seventeen years. Our economy is fully controlled by foreign investors such as Al-Amoudi and by Mafia-like enterprises fronting for political organizations such as Meles's TPLF. Countless crimes have been committed by the Government of Meles Zenawi, from murder of political leaders to looting the wealth of Ethiopia through fake non-profit organizations and associations created for such purposes by the leadership of Meles's TPLF. It is tragic to hear/read well educated Ethiopians, specially living in safe democratic Western nations, advocating for the continuation of the government of a brutal dictator who maintained his government through fake elections and brute force for the last seventeen years.

May be these same individuals will further argue that Meles should hold onto power until his daughter and son come of age and inherit the Throne from their father. That we have come to this stage of opportunism and predation is the tragic result of a hyphenated modernism, that we succeeded by patching poorly understood social and political processes into some form of government *debelo* in no way justifies such quantum leap to advocate for further political life of the impeccable enemy of Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi.

A century old relationship between Ethiopia and the United States is not something that can be discarded without some effect on both nations. Even the sheer number of Ethiopians educated at American universities is indicative of the degree of relationship between the two nations. However, I do not think Ethiopia had ever been a client-state or a satellite state to the United States. I believe Ethiopia will not be held hostage or tethered

to any kind of leash by anybody. It is an ancient country that is fully aware of its identity and will pursue a path that is good for it. The occasional intrusion of traitorous leaders, such as Meles Zenawi, is not going to have Earth shaking and long-lasting impact on Ethiopia. Ethiopia will recover, dust off the misdeeds of its past leaders, and reinvigorate itself in the new Millennium.Ω

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March 29, 2008