

The Future of Our Legaciesⁱ

By Mitiku Adisu

A Leader is a dealer in hope. — Napoleon I (1769 -1821)

No legacy is so rich as honesty. —William Shakespeare (1564 -1616).

Introduction

The art of leaving a worthy legacy continues to elude Ethiopian political leaders. Transitions tend to be long and traumatic and power localized and coercive.

Coercive power, as opposed to the consensual, has its allure: one gets quick results; one has access to limitless funds and favors; one feels self-assured and invincible. Emperor Haileselassie, Chairman Mengistu, and now Prime Minister Meles agree on their irreplaceableness.ⁱⁱ Power, observed Henry Kissinger, is the ultimate aphrodisiac—exciting, addictive and corrupting.

What then is the likelihood that our Prime Minister will break ranks with his predecessors and step aside to allow a new leadership to take up the mantle? Indeed, by his own admission, a “more frequent changes of leaders is a safer and healthier approach.”ⁱⁱⁱ We concur wholeheartedly with that sentiment even as we doubt the sincerity of it; the fact that he is slated to outlast the *Derg* does not project health or safety. Is that how he wants to be remembered? Or does it matter? What objective lessons can we glean from the lives of successive Ethiopian rulers and from history? Where do enduring and pervasive symbols and folklores fit in the scheme of things? How should the Ethiopian Diaspora respond to make a lasting difference?

Legacy

I submit legacies of our leaders have become the *Achilles' heel* of the nation. We pride ourselves on having a rich cultural heritage. The same heritage, however, is too fractured, unrepresentative or irrelevant to grasp our predicament. It should not come as a surprise for example that the lion, the symbol of our indomitable spirit, was deliberately used to enfeeble the public, induce anger or de-memorialize the past.

Not minding the past squanders the future. Reframing the past could redeem the present. The lion may yet represent hope and the desire to overcome life's persistent challenges, and not simply conquests. Legacy intimates vulnerability, continuity, and the termination of power or death. Ethiopian leaders evade the reality of these events. The present for Ethiopians seems to swing between suffering and waiting and between instant gratification and non-committal. The acquisition and loss of power has been mostly violent and unpredictable.

Our leaders nurture the image of invincibility through a variety of methods. For years, the lion reinforced this image of invincibility. Following the February 1974 uprising, the culture of conflict making and non-cooperation gained the upper hand in civic discourse

and governance. Political appointments ensured the continuation of this culture. As I hope to hint later, rebuilding the bridges we have burned behind us is of greater urgency now than ever before.

Legacy is further accentuated by death of a leader. Death becomes a point of assessing values of the deceased. One reconstructs the pieces in order to reflect its effect on one's life and on society at large. All leaders are not created equal. Some are endowed with a keen sense of history and thus contemplate their legacy from the start. Others don't seem to fathom that there could be an end to their tenure and prefer to keep to the letter the words of the proverbial donkey አኔ ከሞትኩ ሠርዶ አይብቀል [*May the meadows dry up when I die.*]

Saddam Hussein, for one, was so enamored of his place in history that he saw himself in the mold of Hammurabi and Nebuchadnezzar of ancient Babylonia. Bricks for the reconstructed Babylon city bear the mark "Made in the era of Saddam Hussein."

Was Emperor Haileselassie really the 226th in the Solomonic Dynasty? Did his judgments resemble those of King Solomon? Why did he forfeit his chances for an orderly succession? Was he just, or just insensitive to the plight of his people? Was Comrade Mengistu *salsawi* (3rd) "Tewodros" with a different exit strategy? Whose reincarnation is Prime Minister Meles? None of these could deliver a functioning peace.

Change often catches our leaders unawares. Tomorrow has become the realm of illusion. This explains why there has not been a strong second-in-command or a thriving and credible opposition; strong 'seconds' get eliminated as quickly as they rise and in the case of an opposition, harassed and discredited. The void left by the death and flight, respectively, of Emperor Haileselassie and Comrade Mengistu could have been filled had there been a mature leadership in place.^{iv} Perhaps it was because of the absence of such a leadership that the 1991 London Conference took place and failed; it was handled from a position of weakness by the then hastily formed caretaker government. How can we avoid a repeat of a power vacuum that transpired in 1974 and again in 1991? Ethiopians have no excuses to make when they could not agree among themselves or negligently cede control of their affairs to third parties.^v Peaceable, reasonable and responsible citizens should gear up and rehearse their contingency plans. In other words, what must happen to maintain stability and continuity without resorting to violence or letting a splinter group steal the show?

Leadership: the science

The science of leadership is elastic and a relatively recent field of study. The concept stretches from theory of the Great Man, to trait, to situational, to excellence, etc. Indeed a review of the literature would show that the subject has become all things to all people. Researchers hedge rather than define their terms with precision. And when they do define them, it is often in the context of an industrial paradigm; action, results, and management receive most attention.

By contrast, there is little research done on leadership legacy. Understandably, legacy requires long-term envisioning, adapting and building on past values and valuing the human dimension of organizations. The urge for instant results often overrode these sentiments. Preoccupation with survival, a vindictive spirit and incompetence^{vi} have conspired to handicap our leaders from taking the long view. Successive Ethiopian governments simply refuse to stay married to the totality of our collective past or let go generational blunders.

In its essence, leadership is an “influence relationship” between a leader and her followers toward a mutually beneficial goal. Symbols play a significant role in this endeavor.^{vii} What could be the one symbol that we all can agree on?^{viii} Legacy, on the other hand, is a construct in which are enshrined values and aspirations that go beyond the life of a leader and host institutions. Where do Ethiopian leaders of recent past fall in this general definition?

Students of leadership employ two concepts—“death positivity bias” and the “St. Augustine effect”—to classify and detect a leader’s legacy. The first simply means that a dead moral leader is assessed more favorably than a living moral leader; conversely, a dead **immoral** leader is less favored than a living immoral or ineffective leader. How does Prime Minister Meles compare with the more nationalistic Chairman Mengistu?

Something about death affects our perception of a leader. Emperor Tewodros committed suicide rather than surrender to British invaders whom he considered ‘sub-Christian.’ Emperor Yohannes IV died fighting the Dervishes. Menilik dashed the hopes of Fascist Italy and, indirectly, those of her allies. The ageing emperor Haileselassie was murdered in his sleep. In all cases, the manner of their death and confrontation with foreign invaders overshadowed and tempered, to a degree, some of their lamentable legacies.

The assassination of President John F. Kennedy left an imprint on our imagination of a youthful, charismatic, and intelligent leader. He is remembered not for his private affairs (which were not above reproach) but for his “Ask Not” speech, Cuban missile crisis, space exploration, and the igniting of democratic idealism around the globe. In the case of Martin Luther King, Jr., the later resurfacing of contrary information did not alter his good reputation at death. Ariel Sharon’s centrist politics and conciliatory gestures toward Palestinians have gained him more appreciation from all sides after a recent stroke even though he was implicated in the 1982 *Sabra* and *Shatila* massacre. Idi Amin, Mobutu, and Stalin were less favored, respectively, than their immediate successors Obote, Laurent Kabila, and Khrushchev. What will be the legacy of Prime Minister Meles when the books are finally written? Will it be that he tinkered with the Constitution to stay on indefinitely and that the international community preferred to look the other way?

The “St. Augustine effect,” the focus of this essay, denotes that positive actions towards the end of one’s life do tend to produce favorable results; that it is never too late for a leader anxious about his/her legacy to reform. Augustine, the great African theologian and Church Father (d.A.D. 430) had a pretty colorful youth. His *Confessions* record dalliances with astrology and Plotinian ecstasy and the licentious and riotous lifestyle he

led. What's new? At 32 he converted to Christ at which time he also moved from being a profligate and a tormented soul to a sane and purposeful scholar. Consequently, the mention of his name has hardly brought up the shady episode of his past. Rather, he is intimately identified with Western civilization,^{ix} ethics, and scholasticism.

Tanzanians under Nyerere (d. 1999) endured two decades of economic hardship and a few unpleasant incidents^x before Nyerere finally decided to make way for others to assume the leadership. For his courage, non-corrupt life, statesmanship, intellectual acumen, and passion to instill dignity in his people he was able to earn their forgiveness and respect. He spent his later years on his own soil reflecting, writing, and freely interacting with the people. Indeed, he was one of a handful of African leaders who could rightfully be referred to as 'a man of the people.'^{xi} Nyerere on more than one occasion had walked to a nearby bank to take a loan for his children's schooling. That is legacy for you, and a legacy of honesty at that.

FW de Klerk, the South African apartheid leader read the 'writing on the wall' in time to redeem himself by helping to dismantle the system that was the source of pain and suffering for the majority blacks. As a result, he shared the 1993 Nobel Peace prize with Nelson Mandela. What could past and present acronymic Ethiopian groups and their leaders do to come clean on their blood-soaked legacy? Could they have learned much from their past not to repeat it or more precisely, to set aside their ambitions to enable national unity? That may well gauge the genuineness of their patriotism.

Leadership: the signs

There are bad leaders. And there are good leaders. The bad could turn worse; the good could go bad; the bad could reform. Our last emperor (Haileselassie) started out as a progressive leader but progressively turned autocratic. Comrade Mengistu arrived on the scene in haste representing mystery, change, unity, and hope. He left office also in haste—leaving behind anomie, fear, and void. Politics hates void. Ethiopian politics has suffered from the fact that non-natives and organized minority groups have largely set the agenda, the venue, and the course of our politics. What will be the manner of Prime Minister Meles's departure?^{xii}

After deposing the Emperor, Comrade Mengistu sought to share power on his terms. Contenders for power also laid down terms that conflicted with everyone else's. Later, these took to Ethiopian mountains to realize their ideological and sectarian ambitions by means of smuggled arms, impetuous youth and the ever-manipulable peasantry. We continue to be haunted by the reckless misdeeds of those years.

Bad leaders often show distinct signs as they approach their end. They increasingly become reclusive, divisive, disdainful, distrustful, and uncompromising. The loyal are feted while the real or imagined foes are swiftly punished. The loyal are kept in suspense in regard to decisions of the leader. Fear of being dumped by the wayside (if not locked up) and a desire to hang on at all costs ultimately blemishes the contribution to society of such. Isolation from reality sets in and their own safety consumes their normal activities.

Gradually, their safe havens become the hatching ground for their demise. In other words, a core that fails to connect with its immediate environment cannot withstand sustained pressure from the outside without imploding;^{xiii} neither can it tolerate nor judge the depth of dissent.

The good leader, on the other hand, thinks and plans in terms of the common good, and the humanity he shares with the people he leads and whose rights he deeply respects. Respect invariably promotes trust. Trust cannot flourish where there is no transparency and accountability. Such a leader also assigns tasks on the basis of achieving communitarian goals and seeks to realize those goals through team effort. He understands that the disenfranchisement of one disenfranchises all.

Moreover, a leader's conception of people individually and collectively determines outcomes on different levels. An established view of men and women in Ethiopian society—indeed one that 17 years of state-sponsored atheism could not erase—is that each person is created in the image of God. Respect and equality of opportunity is theirs by right; indignity and racism is an abomination in the sight of the Creator. I hope I have stumbled on a grand solution to our ethnic puzzlement. Do our current leaders or those waiting in the wings endorse such a proposition? If not, may be *they* will have to change or else realize they are unfit for such an august office.

The Lion imagery and Ethiopian obsessions

Ethiopian political leaders continue to squander positive elements of our past and, by corollary, our future. The end of the monarchy (1975)^{xiv} brought to the fore glaring inadequacies of our leaders to lead. Invariably and to the detriment of the nation, they must all learn on the job, make a clean break with the immediate past to introduce an experimental regime and be shepherded by hired experts and their instant ideologies. They lack the capacity and the disposition to appreciate a panoramic view of governance. Hence, incumbents perforce create (a permanent) physical, institutional and policy chaos^{xv} to entrench themselves in power and later make tactical compromises only to exit abruptly.

The lion has followed us around from ancient to modern times. It wields enormous influence on our political, religious, and social culture—though not with the same vigor as in the past. Why are Ethiopians obsessed with the lion? Why is the current ruling party downplaying the symbolism?^{xvi} Why did the idea of removing the tri-color (green, yellow, and red) and the lion logo off the Ethiopian Airlines (ET) create such a public furor? Whose recommendation was that in the first place? Is there something about the lion that could finally unlock the mystery that is the Ethiopian psyche? Consider for a moment few of the ways the lion interfaces with our daily life:

- **Health:** the one important referral and teaching hospital in the land is named *Black Lion* Hospital. Not that there ever were “black” lions.^{xvii} This seems to be not an issue for fellow Ethiopians. Just grab a lion by the mane and name it ‘black.’ We seem to have a knack for taking what is common and bestowing upon

it uncommon features. That is the Ethiopian genius. By the same token, the “faith once delivered” is transformed into “an integrally African church” and a distinct Ethiopian brand of Christianity.^{xviii}

- **Public Transportation:** one rode *Anbassa* (Lion) buses within the perimeters of Addis and regional towns. And then there is ET,^{xix} our pride and queen of the African air, with its enchanting lion boldly perched high near the cockpit saluting, even as it negotiated the hills and the valleys, city glares and bumpy runways spreading *Sheba Miles* to tie a strained and cracking nation together and to the rest of the world?^{xx} God bless the memory of Emperor Haileselassie. God bless the memory of TWA.^{xxi} And God bless America. Now, donors who are sincere about helping Ethiopians help themselves could pay attention to the history of ET and the fact that Ethiopians are capable of owning and running their affairs without listening to ever-changing rules and prescriptions.^{xxii}
- **Education:** one of the better high schools in the capital is *Tikkur Anbassa* (Black Lion).
- **Liberation:** *Tikkur Anbassa* (Black Lion) was a resistance movement against Fascist Italy.
- **Sports:** Ogaden *Anbassa* was a football club. Athlete Kenenisa is *Anbassa*.^{xxiii}
- **Politics:** Berru Goshu of Gojjam and Ras Wolde Selassie of Tigray were once referred to as *Anbassa*; so is Birtukan Mideksa.^{xxiv}
- **The Military:** “*Anbassa Bet*” was a regiment of 18th century Ethiopia (Pankhurst, 1992).
- **Religion:** Jewish, Christian, and Islamic apocalyptic literature records the ‘Lion of the tribe of Judah’ among the many titles of the coming Messiah (Revelation 5:5). The church of Saint Mark *the Lion* (አንበሳው ማርቆስ) was once the diocese of the Ethiopian martyr Abuna Petros.
- **Commerce:** see coins and old *birr* notes.
- **Literature & Art:** Reidulf K. Molvaer’s book on “the creative lives of modern Ethiopia’s literary giants and pioneers” was titled, what else, *Black Lions* (NJ: The Red Sea Press, 1997). A statue of a black lion graces the grounds of the National Theatre in Addis. Poet-Laureate Tsegaye in his inimitable way also makes allusions to the cat^{xxv}



A Barbary Ethiopian lion^{xxvi}

የቀጭኔው ምጡቅ ግርማ
የአሳት ዓይኑ፣ የነዳልጋ አንበሳው ጋማ
በሌሊት ጥሪ ሲያሰማ፤

“ከፋ”/አሳት ወይ አበባ/—

Loosely translated, _

*the giraffe’s towering looks
the fiery eyes, the mane-saddled lion
thundering deep calls into the night.*

The political lion has its roots in antiquity. The Egyptian Amenhotep III (1375 B.C.), for example, was said to have killed more than 100 lions during a single hunt. The hunt, of course, projected his unassailable manhood and warriorhood. Accordingly, lion statues were erected to make royalty concrete and publicize whose side guardians of power favored.

In the past, donning a lion's skin distinguished Ethiopian nobility from the commoner. As was the custom in ancient Egypt, killing a lion also accorded one special status. I still remember Bulcha Wayyessa, the scion of marksmen who ever walked the planet maned and buttered, his right earlobe ringed holding high his buttered and garlanded Remington rifle, the ululation of women, the tingling excitement, the earthshaking dance, sweat, dust, and infusion of *araqi*; more *araqi*, dust, sweat sprays, and earthshaking dance. Those were the days when lion tales and hunts generated liveliness and community.^{xxvii} Sadly, we have graduated in the past thirty years to hunting down each other in broad daylight and seeking help from those who don't pretend to understand our culture.



Tewodros II
(d. 1868)



Yoahannes IV
(d. 1889)



Menilik II
(d. 1913)



Haileselassie I
(d. 1975)



Derg
(deposed 1991)



Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
(1991-Present)

The legacy of the representational lion has fallen on hard times. Until the end of Emperor Haileselassie's reign the lion wore a crown. Strangely, it also raised the Cross and the national flag during the last two monarchies.^{xxviii} That is a long time to hoist a flag on three legs. The coming together of socialist revolutionists and the *Derg* did away with the Cross, the Crown, and the Flag 'as was' and established instead state atheism, a Vanguard Group, the Hammer & Sickle, and an additional *Comintern* Red Flag.

The once pacifist, frightening but lovely lion suddenly turned ferocious. For the duration of the socialist revolution, a devouring lion encircled the land. The spirit of imported (*መጡ*) revolution moved the lion to devour its own cubs—and lots of them. Many

Ethiopians were terrified into inaction and self-exile and many more scattered over the face of the earth. Who shall bring them home?

Now the old lion is all but forgotten as we enter the 30th year of the termination of the monarchy. What's more, the lion's consuming anger still burns even in this time of 'revolutionary democracy' and everlasting hunger. What could be done to tame a wayward lion and reinstate an updated version of its old glory? Could the lion please have its crown and flag back? In other words, royalty *per se* was not the problem nor is a "people's government" the solution to our unending dilemma. Rather, the problem emanates from exclusionary policies, lack of compassion, and pettiness. In fact, termination of the monarchy as an institution may have caused us to see sludge instead of the stars!

I propose the lion symbol, ^{xxix}one of our enduring legacies, be resurrected on a national level along with values that foster continuity and community. I believe it is easier to reinterpret and imbue with meaning what is already there than to institute new symbols and rituals. That was what the February 1974 Revolution could not comprehend. That is why I would argue the policy of the present government would not last once incumbents leave office.

The office of our leaders also needs some dignity returned to it. The lion may once again teach us the essence of majesty, beauty, and fame. In the past, high office holders induced reverence and distance. What we have now is distance and irreverence. The public speeches we hear are in large measure unbecoming of heads of government. How will this impact school children? Perhaps future leaders will gain enough sense and wisdom to instill values of respect and dignity.

The lion also is the "most companionable of all cats." It is naturally African/Ethiopian.^{xxx} Its survival is dependent on group solidarity. A pride comprises 10-35 adult males, lionesses, and cubs and inhabits a specific territory. Intruders are warned to stay off or else face the consequences. As the need arises it sends out a thunderous roar that paralyzes its victim. A pride always shares a kill, despite the fact that its life alternates between feast and famine. Of course, such feasts are not unattended by growls for the "lion's share." What then better resonates with us than a universal symbol that captures our political, social, and religious imagination? Will we ever see ourselves larger than our constituent parts?

* * *

Legacy of the Diaspora

Where have the years gone and what have we done with them, we ask intermittently. It all seems only like yesterday, we groan. But time flies with a vengeance. Well, here is a question: how do you want to be remembered *before* and *after* you depart this life? Or does it matter? I believe it matters a great deal because the knowledge of a positive memory adds zest and meaning to life. I also believe there is still hope, despite the

unpleasant past, for those genuinely concerned about leaving a legacy of hope and goodwill.

Ethiopians in the Diaspora have been criticized for ‘interfering’ in their nation’s ‘internal’ affairs. Such comments have come from diplomats, scholars, interest groups, and donors.^{xxxix} There may be an element of truth in that. However, it should be noted that such comments are distractive and that one need not be on sight or fit a set description to be part of the ongoing national debate. It is possible, is it not, to hold a meaningful conversation about the moon without ever setting foot on it? And we come from the moon, if I may say so.

The Diaspora does indeed have a specific niche some of which have to do with representing the nation’s interests abroad, supplementing resource deficiencies in our homeland, and stabilizing unilateralist leanings of incumbents. One way to foster a culture of accountability would be to coordinate Diaspora groups regionally, to connect organically with base communities and strive to rein in the role of donor groups on local politics. The welfare of fellow Ethiopians should unite us, not the vanquishing of a real or invented foe. The former stance is wholesome and conserves interdependence; the latter hastens our undoing.

As long as we continue to have irresponsible governments there should be plenty of work for those living abroad. The only requirement is this: don’t lose sight of the big picture, organize more, stick to the facts, and publicize clearly, coherently, proactively, and strategically; effective professional PR strategies could supplement *ወገን* gutsy politics. Select few realizable and critical issues. Resist the temptation to micro-manage or remote control affairs better left to those close to ‘ground zero.’ Work on establishing expanded investment incentives,^{xxxix} on voting rights for those living abroad, and coordinate an alternative to donor funding.

In the end, the democratization of our nation will not come about through foreign aid or foreign experts or Ethiopians with a warped sense of native culture. We can build our own brand of democracy, which, by the way, cannot be worse than what we have. And what is democracy but a reconfigured *idir*, *iqub*, *debbo*, *jiggi*, *mahbar*, and *gadda*? Cannot these time-honored institutions be updated or adapted? Are Ethiopian intellectuals willing to make a serious effort to return to their roots?

The hope of a democratic society that respects human rights can be harnessed profitably by and from those who have lived and worked in societies of established democracies. However, it is sad to witness that after having lived abroad, the best we can do is to converse and organize along ethnic lines. I am afraid we may be turning into a nation of exclusive religious and political country clubs.^{xxxix} We will be deceiving ourselves if we expect to build trust out of such activities.

We keep coming across Oprah-like confessionals of “percentage Ethiopians”—that so-and-so is 30 percent Oromo, 30 percent Amhara, and 30 percent Tigre.^{xxxix} I only wish such claims could pass rigorous DNA tests. And you would think the fellow is tri-lingual.

Not quite. In fact, he speaks and writes a foreign language better than his mother tongue. What about the remaining 10 percent, you may wonder? Well, that is so on purpose—just in case he needs to also prove his Anuak parentage. That is how miserable our politics have gotten. Don't forget that a Tigre dead, an Anuak, Amhara or Oromo dead is still a dead Ethiopian and a dead black to the rest of the world.^{xxxv}

I know some in our community may be at a point in their life where retirement, prescription drug refills, and a decent burial occupy their waking hours and nights. Those too have a special role to play—especially in imparting to the next generation wisdom and decorum (which modern education will not provide). Absence of such mentors has given rise to a proliferation of ethnicized and apocryphal histories. One claim, for instance, renders that Ethiopia of antiquity ruled a large swath of land from Yemen to Madagascar (and I am not making this up).

Such nonsense aside, we are witnessing a quiet renaissance in the arts (*Ethiopian Passages* at the Smithsonian), in memoirs (*Notes from the hyena's belly*, *Blue Daughter of the Red Sea*, *The Texture of Dreams*, *Reminiscences of My Life*, etc), in music (*Ethiopiques* series), religion (consider the number of Ethiopian civic groups around the world), and culture (*Ethiopian Restaurants*, *souvenirs* shops, *Paleontological* finds, our *athletes* for heaven's sake), etc. These activities certainly make us more visible and affirm our contribution to world community. If the past decades were characterized by a time of scattering, I strongly believe the coming years could become a time for gathering. They that sow in tears, you will agree, deserve once in a while to reap in joy. Let's make sure we're not going to miss the opportunity this time.

Leaving a legacy: Conclusions

Emperor Haileselassie could have arranged a peaceful succession had he deeply cared about the welfare of his people. He would heed neither God nor man. Instead he squandered nearly a decade and a half after the first Mengistu (Neway) coup d'état only to be overtaken by a second more lethal Mengistu (Hailemariam). Thereafter, everything went downhill. Anything that bore his name or image (including a life size monument in front of the then Empire Theatre) was defaced or pulled down. Today eighty percent of Ethiopian population would have difficulty remembering the imperial era if it weren't for occasions like his publicized reburial 25 years later and for Rasta lore in few urban areas.

Comrade Mengistu adamantly sought military solution to the nation's dilemma. He would not liberalize his policies soon enough because he only listened to his mentors Dr. Fida & Co., the ghosts of Uncle Marx, Cousin Lenin, Brother Castro, and later as he gained confidence, only to his inner voice. Did history determine the course of his fate? All the same, he continues to be severely criticized by all those who hoped but failed to wrest power from him. In the end, he will probably be remembered for enduring an embarrassing confrontation in the *Shengo* by a lone cleric and for taking a last flight out of the country. He was then in his fifties as is Prime Minister Meles now. Am I being fatalistic again?

Whatever their memory, we owe it to ourselves and to posterity to establish a national park that honors all leaders of consequence including their wives in order to motivate the living.^{xxxvi} Each region must be allowed to participate both in suggesting names and in providing the resources.^{xxxvii} By this act we will be declaring that we are inseparable both in life and in death and resolve to purify our intentions and to learn from our past and from each other. If we object to living together peaceably, may be we should allow the dead to instruct us on how to do it. And I believe the Diaspora could and should spearhead such an undertaking.

May be this time?

What will be the legacy of Prime Minister Meles? It depends on what he decides to do next or what history turns up from its secret vaults. What is at stake now is how long and to what end the will of the voting public as expressed during and after the 15 May 2005 elections could be stifled. Even more worrisome is the growing disillusionment and anger that has begun to manifest itself in destructive ways.^{xxxviii} The current hoopla about growth rates and the number of hospitals, bridges and schools built is a diversionary tactic and a palliative to prolong and disguise the trauma. Perhaps, such lofty ideals as democracy and freedom are not meant for us. Perhaps we should be thinking ‘basic needs’ and leave the rest to our government; we are told our government is now preparing to take the *Great Leap Forward* and, if all goes as planned, award our longsuffering with the enviable status of a middle-income country in twenty more years.

The rhetoric notwithstanding, we should also recognize that the introduction of an ethno-federalist policy, however faulty, has energized debates about democracy, citizenship, ethnic pride, and (hear this) nationalism! Political organizations and Diaspora politics should owe some of their successes to Prime Minister Meles’s policy (mis) judgments. Nothing will be the same hereafter. Denial and attempt to turn the clock back will only bode disaster. Persecuting members of the opposition at home or abroad will only increase their organizational skills and undermine the authority of the governing group—as well as waste time and resources. The downside to all this is, of course, that it feeds into the culture of negative politics. In short, we cannot allow any Ethiopian to feel second-class citizen again either in policy design or in our national cultural orientation. Perhaps what we could do is clip the clutter and move on.

Our prime minister has repeatedly shown a knack for adjusting his sail according to the direction and force of the winds. His ethnic federalist policy was well timed to pacify and meet the requirements of those who at the time were promoting the idea of democracy-aid, privatization and decentralization (or perhaps disfavoring centralization and a strong state). He has remained at the helm for over 15 years—equal to every year spent in the desert; or if you will, longer than his mentor (ex-mentor?)^{xxxix} the Honorable Tony Blair will have been at the end of his tenure. Will the opposition, if and when it enters office, limit itself to two terms? What guarantees are there that the opposition will not in turn ostracize or jail the opposition without due process?

Our prime minister also has shown his stuff at playing hardball politics, especially with an opposition in disarray, with a gullible and hastily informed foreign media and some self-serving NGOs. He tends to see himself alone against the rest of the world^{xi}—a posture reflective of his years in the desert and his hobbies.^{xli} He has had successes so far. Nevertheless, one cannot get it right every time. Here is where one should seek wise counsel—and be willing to act on it even when it may not be to one's liking.

If, therefore, he cares for his legacy at all and for the welfare of the nation, he should be occupied with arranging a peaceful transition and try his hand at studying and writing.^{xlii} The other option, “weathering the political storm”^{xliii} is simply a euphemism for acquiescing to the demands of local power contenders and regional interests.^{xliv} Compromises have short-term benefits but could also yield unintended consequences. History is replete with failures of leaders at exactly this point. Time can outrun thought. Those who stand by him now will not think twice to desert him in his hour of need. They may not tell him the bitter truth and he may not want to hear it either. They are only around because his utility has not been exhausted. That is how the world operates. I know he is smart enough to understand all this. On the other hand, he has a unique opportunity to initiate the first-ever peaceful and legitimate transition in our modern history and at his age, in the whole of Africa.

Senghor, Nyerere, Mandela, and Sam Nujoma^{xlv} showed good judgment in stepping aside. The latter is now accorded the honor of being the “Father of the Nation”—never mind that he was autocratic for most of his tenure.^{xlvi} He was wise enough to handover power. Now, in his 70s, he can enjoy the accolades to the end of his life without the humiliation that attends life in exile and peacefully return to a soil from which he sprang. There is no sense in squandering all that one toiled for all one's life through privation and loneliness, doubt and danger, and blood and tears. What then is the reward, rather, the crowning jewel of a leader? I believe it is leaving a good legacy while the going is good.

ⁱ My goal in this and previous articles is to participate in and perhaps contribute to our nation's welfare; the fact that individuals are mentioned by name is simply a by-product of such an attempt and nothing more.

ⁱⁱ Emperor Haileselassie believed in divine election. History and the law of dialectics, we were told, determined Comrade Mengistu's power. Prime Minister Meles, in a series of articles, stated his views thus: 1. There is no alternative to his party, 2. Any attempt to replace his party will only culminate in dismemberment of the nation, 3. Attempt to seize power cannot take place short of inciting the rural community, 4. Having the rural population on the side of such an opposition group is unimaginable, 5. Any incitement would be quelled mercilessly, and 6. In the event that his party disintegrates, the nation will turn into another Afghanistan, Rwanda, Yugoslavia, Somalia, and Armageddon. ([http://www.mcc-reporter.com/magazine/R36/Pol 1,2,3,4,8,10. htm](http://www.mcc-reporter.com/magazine/R36/Pol%201,2,3,4,8,10.htm)), accessed 05/16/2001.

ⁱⁱⁱ In an interview with Sacker, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/hardtalk/4649373.stm>

^{iv} It is interesting that Ras Imru and Ethiopian Patriots supplied the leadership during Italian invasion (1936-41) and Emperor Haileselassie's exile.

^v Herman Cohen was the mediator at the London Conference of 27 May 1991 and later, a facilitator for the EPRDF to seize power, "The Demise of the Military Government," <http://countrystudies.us/ethiopia/141.htm>

^{vi} Incompetence is essentially inability to make full use of existing human and material resources. Any government attempt to assign responsibilities based on other than competence is corrupt and in the end deprives the populace its basic human rights.

^{vii} See Bolman and Deal (1997). *Reframing Organizations*, Part V, p.213.

^{viii} See how many times the coat-of-arms on the national flag changed with each of the past three governments.

^{ix} The sociologist/agnostic Rodney Stark has gone on record as saying that "The success of the West, including the rise of science, rested entirely on religious foundations, and the people who brought it about [Tertullian and Augustine] were devout Christians," 'How Christianity (and Capitalism) Led to Science,' *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 2, 2005.

^x The way *Sugu Sugu* peasant uprising was handled was a case in point.

^{xi} After Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*, Anchor Books, 1966.

^{xii} In an interview with Sacker of the BBC, Meles had responded "people (leaders) have to stay as long as the people want them to stay, and do so through freely-contested elections. The decision has to be that of the people in the final analysis. Now once that decision has been made, the leaders also have to make decisions as to whether they want to stay longer or not. The longevity of political leaders, in my view, depends on the quality of the democracy in the country... however, *more frequent changes of leaders is a safer and healthier approach*," [Italics added]. That is a shrewd insight. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/hardtalk/4649373.stm>

^{xiii} It is revealing that our prime minister wrote his famous letter to the editor of the *Ethiopian Herald* in English on the unconvincing argument that translating his letter from the Amharic could have created misunderstanding. In reality, the fine print reinforces the fact that he has less trust from and respect for the people he rules; and that he recognizes the legitimacy of his power lay with the donor community.

^{xiv} That is, with the death of Emperor Haileselassie.

^{xv} Just count how many times we've been told the government is ready to end poverty and also observe the timing of such declarations.

^{xvi} "Ethiopian Airlines Says Lion Logo Intact," <http://www.addistribune.com/Archives/2000/09/29-09-00/Air.htm>; "Airline logo change not well accepted in Ethiopia," <http://www.allbusiness.com/periodicals/article/631349-1.html>; Note the official excuse for the attempt to change the logo: "A representative of Ethiopian Airlines stated that the logo change was necessary *to avoid an identity crisis between the airline and other parastatals using the logo* including Highway Authority, Ethiopian Telecommunications and Meta Brewery" [Italics added]. So what is wrong with more agencies using a national symbol?

^{xvii} Lions have brownish yellow (sandy, dead grass) hide; the only black is on the back of the ears and tuft of hair at the end of the tail.

^{xviii} Archbishop Yesehaq. *The Ethiopian Tewahdo Church: An Integrally African Church*.

^{xix} To view ET logos from 1946-Present go to <http://www.timetableimages.com/timages/et/htm>

^{xx} Recently I came across a delightful ET travel tale in Amharic by a Beqele Sisai and did it trigger pleasant memories; <http://www.selamta.net/Amharic%20Literature/Lonchina.pdf>

^{xxi} We should seriously consider erecting a monument to the spirit of TWA! May be Ethiopian Airlines already has a museum in place.

^{xxii} The World Bank is increasingly sidelining Ethiopian professionals who challenge its position. The Bank has perfected the technique of 'killing two birds with one stone.' It remained silent over the ruling party's vote tampering or jailing elected opposition party officials on trumped up charges or the killing of unarmed civilians on the pretext of being 'apolitical'. By circumventing the central government to fund *weredas*, it projects a humanitarian face of siding with Ethiopian people. The same gesture, however, keeps incumbents in power. In light of the May 2005 elections, the *cumulative* effect of the Bank's policies simply undermines the process of building trust and democratization.

Unfortunately, democratization and human rights issues seem to be secondary to its larger agenda.

^{xxiii} That is according to a popular song honoring his achievements,
<http://www.iaaf.org/athletes/focusOnAfrica/newsId=26783/index.html>

^{xxiv} I am just echoing what CUD party faithful call her.

^{xxv} 1966ec, p.164

^{xxvi} Photo credit: <http://www.lioncentral.com/jpegs/jahlion.jpg>

^{xxvii} I could say more but I will stop here before the park warden throws me to the lions.

^{xxviii} Some argue that the creation of the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) was partly because Eritrean Muslims saw in the symbol of the Cross their own disenfranchisement.

^{xxix} One may also propose *coffee* and *ensat* trees, among plant species, for qualities they bestow, i.e., endurance, watchfulness/alertness, sustenance, socialization/community/friendship; (green) hope, yellow, red leaf color textures; rootedness, and so on.

^{xxx} Except for about 200 Asian race in Indian Game Park. <http://www.britannica.com/ebc/article-9370316?query=lion&ct=>

^{xxxi} *Farewell Speech by Ambassador Aurelia E. Brazeal*, http://addisababa.usembassy.gov/amb_speech082305.html; *Paul Henze's response to Prof. Clapham*.

<http://www.hmbasha.net/PaulHenze2ProfClapham.htm>; <http://www.ena.gov.et/>; <http://www.tisjd.net/mission.htm>

^{xxiii} Let 20,000 of those in the Diaspora with \$20,000 and up compete for nationally planned region/industry specific investments. Such a surge of human and financial resources will have far-reaching repercussions on democratic participation and sense of ownership, if nothing else. The figures could be revised as needed. The argument here is that many small investors are less a socio-economic security risk than few big investors.

^{xxiii} Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR) may be the exception. Could this region serve as a model for diversity and tolerance? How has Christian evangelization in the region contributed to the present condition?

^{xxiv} The argument here is that ethnicity, in and of itself, is neither good nor bad; that we should not be sidetracked by ethnicity from a larger and more important issue of maintaining stability and continuity.

^{xxv} Ways to take our minds off the ever-abundant ethnic fodder is to see us under siege from illiteracy, hunger, and diseases. We may also seriously consider pan-ethnic and socio-ideological party regimes suggested in Professor Tecola's "Changing Fundamentals, Fundamental Changes," <http://www.tecolahagos.com/symposium.htm>

^{xxvi} I don't see any problem with renaming Addis Ababa University, Haile Selassie I University (HSIU). And I am not even a monarchist. We simply cannot continue to act as if some leaders did not exist or have not impacted our lives for good or for ill. Better still (to avoid confusion), one could found a new HSIU where the following courses could be offered: Reggae & People Movements; Ethiopia, Pan-Africanism and Liberation; the Revolutionary State and Development; International Organizations and Africa; Orthodoxy, Identity and Development, and so on. The focus herein could be equally geared to African and Black cultures.

^{xxvii} That exercise in itself will generate a national debate on who passes for a good leader.

^{xxviii} <http://www.eppf.net/missionStatement.htm>

^{xxix} Jonathan Clayton, "Blair turns his back on friend who failed him," <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,3-2037645,00.html>

^{xl} In writing a long letter to the editor of the Ethiopian Herald in regard to EU-EOM Report, for example, the prime minister said "this is the first time in my entire political life that anything is being published in my name... I feel the normal party response is too slow to address the urgent requirements of the day. Hence, the break in tradition." <http://www.ethioembassy.org.uk>. These comments give us a rare glimpse into the inner workings of the governing party and the leeway enjoyed by the prime minister in regard to major national decisions. One of the accusations leveled against him by the so-called 'splinter group,' if you recall, was that he unilaterally called a cease-fire during the last war with Eritrea and that he too readily conceded to World Bank conditionalities compromising, in the end, the sovereignty of the nation.

^{xli} That is, swimming, reading, and tennis. <http://www.brandt21forum.info/BioAfricaCom-Zenawi.htm>

^{xlii} The fact that he could complete a First Class MBA'95 (Open University, UK) and MSc'2004 (Econ, Erasmus U) as a sitting head of government suggests his academic bent. Could he be entertaining a life as an academe? <http://www.commissionforafrica.org/english/commissioners/bios/zenawi.html>; accessed 2/10/2006

^{xliii} Hull, Bryson, C. (15 February 2006), "ANALYSIS-Ethiopia's Meles can weather political storms," <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L14345158.htm>

^{xliv} Ethiopian political and civic leaders should be on their guard not to let donor groups dictate who should be part of a transitional government, etc. I fear the leadership may be presented with a 'win-win' offer it cannot turn down in terms of either/or: Meles goes and you accept this or else...

^{xlvi} It is beside the point to argue that these leaders relinquished total power as septuagenarians; and that Nujoma was "bribed" into retirement [see, "African leaders ready to bow out in style," 6 December 2004, <http://www.iol.co.za/>. Rather, the point is that they stepped down at all.

^{xlvi} Profile: Sam Nujoma, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3706431.stm>