

Why Ethiopians Don't Trust the TPLF---

commentary

Aklog Birara, PhD

Part II

Premise

I start this section with the fundamental premise that genuine commitment to fundamental human rights and freedom that will assure lasting peace and national reconciliation for Ethiopia--singularly the most critical governance gaps are nowhere in sight if left to the governing party and the divided, leaderless and clueless opposition. Why is this so important? In this century, durable peace and stability cannot be imposed from the top down by force by any elite to serve itself permanently. Recurring violations of human rights and freedom, manipulation of elections and recurrent rent-seeking by public and private officials diminish Ethiopia's considerable potential to become a great and prosperous country. Skeptics wonder if Ethiopia would ever become a great and prosperous country. I have no doubt that it can be. For example, Ethiopia can serve as a major hub of agriculture-based industry producing world class textiles, leather goods, grains, processed and other foods to meet domestic demand and for export. It can serve as major tourist destination attracting millions of tourists each year and generating permanent employment for hundreds of thousands. It has substantial potential to export electricity and water to neighboring countries while satisfying domestic demand multi-fold. All these and more means new employment for millions, a strong domestic private sector and a growing middle class. For the government, it would mean more and reliable taxes and freedom from foreign aid. These and more require dramatic reorientation of governance, fair and free elections, a free press, shift in the paradigm of thinking and greater attention to and investment in civil society participation that is not encumbered by elite and intellectual manufactured barriers and divisions. These man-made barriers are hurting the country and the vast majority of the population.

The ruling party is not alone in deterring fulfilment of Ethiopia's enormous potential. Equally, the quarrelling political and civic opposition groups abroad and at home have ceased to serve the national purpose of defending and advancing Ethiopia's vital long term interests and promoting solidarity, national cohesion and shared **prosperity. Whether they live abroad or at home, most of those who are educated have fallen into the TPLF trap of thinking, organizing and acting as members of tribes and sub-groups rather than as Ethiopians.** ኢትዮጵያ ለራሷና ለመላው ሕዝቧ እንባ ጠባቂ ያላት አገር አትመስልም። These gaps in the way we think, organize and act towards one another have made the country more vulnerable than anyone of us is willing to admit or accept. We are all accountable for this in one form or another. We do not have to be Jeff Sachs, the well-known economist, who talks endlessly about sustainable and equitable development. Those of us with a modicum of education should know that sustainable and equitable development emanates from good and

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accountable governance and from the participation of committed and hardworking citizens who care for one another and for their country. Opposition groups and the Diaspora have failed to place Ethiopia's and the peoples' interests ahead of themselves. They therefore share the blame with the governing party.

“ሕዝቡ ካወጣነው ከድህነት ጣጣ፤

አደራ ከህዋስ ታዲያ ከየት መጣ?

ኪራይ ሰብሳቢነት ከቁንጮው ከቀረ፤ አሰራት ከዘከረ፤

ሕዝብ በመሪው አምኖ ልማት ከዘመረ፤

በሺታ ቸንፈር ሰቆቃ ባልኖረ።”

የህወሓት/ኢህአዴግ አመራር ይህን በእንቅጩ የቀረበ ሰቆቃ አይቀበልም። እንዲያውም ይከዳል።

It is true that “double digit” growth can occur in any country that receives substantial aid but the benefits rarely trickle down; the primary beneficiaries are those who run the state and or are aligned to the state. No matter how one looks at it, 90 percent of Ethiopians are sickened by a state that is rotten to the core and would reject the current ruling party if elections were held today and administered freely, openly and fairly. Why is this so? The World Bank showed twice in 12 months that state institutions and officials are corrupt to the core. Nepotism, bribery and corruption are debilitating Ethiopians regardless of ethnic, religious or demographic affiliation. Given this debilitating picture, who stands for the national interest? Who really cares whether Ethiopians live a better life than the current one or youth are employed or forced to flee in search of a better life abroad? Who is accountable and responsible for the welfare of the country and its people? For people to behave and act as responsible and patriotic citizens, especially at times of national threat (the current situation), they must feel that they are treated fairly and with dignity and that the benefits of growth are shared. It is uncommon for Ethiopians to leave their country in droves as destiny.

Ethiopia is a country of resilient people. They have enormous pride in their country and have confidence in its potential to prosper. Yet, there is no trust in the governing party and officials know it if they open their eyes and ears. People have been expressing their desire and demands for justice, equality of treatment under the law, fair access to opportunities and freedom to debate, to vote and to negotiate. If the governing party and the rest of us wish a strong Ethiopia, it behooves us to accept the simple notion that Ethiopians deserve to be **heard** by their government. They deserve to live without fear and with the provision of basic necessities. Enduring peace emanates solely from a just, inclusive and participatory government and state. The acid test today is whether or not the ruling party is confident, bold and nationalist enough

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to open social, economic, political and cultural space for everyone. I say this because the TPLF/EPRDF paradigm of ethnic and religious division and supremacy is offering Ethiopia's traditional enemies, especially Egypt, windows of opportunity to weaken and dismantle it. Some in the opposition repeat the same mistake by aligning themselves with the country's traditional enemies that wish to weaken and or dismantle it once and for all. The chorus of anti-Ethiopian sentiment I heard in Doha represents this threat. It is real and imminent. The Saudi official on a visit to Khartoum who made threatening remarks about the Great Renaissance Dam on the Abbay River is not an isolated phenomenon. **It is a coordinated chorus.**

What is the imminent danger?

Listen to what Egyptian generals, political leaders and intellectuals and their backers are saying and make conclusions for yourself. One general made the unbelievable remark that Egypt "has legitimate claim to one-third of Ethiopia." How did he come to this conclusion? Who has he coopted to do Egypt's dirty proxy-wars? Is there a secret deal in the same way as the TPLF deal with the Sudanese to cede Ethiopian territory? What we know is that the sieve through which this strategy to weaken and dismantle Ethiopia is the ideology of ethnic elite divide and capture that angers millions of Ethiopians left out from the benefits of growth. For this reason alone, ethnic politics must be replaced by national or Ethiopian politics and institutions fast. Eroding Ethiopian values is a recipe for disaster. Egypt and others are using ethnic elite divisions and political elite aspirants to weaken and dismantle what is left of Ethiopia. The current government leadership and equally the opposition would be wise to set aside differences to save Ethiopia and the Ethiopian people from misery and man-made destruction.

In addition to the repression by the governing party on which much has been said, continued divisions, petty rivalry, jealousy, individualism and in-fighting among Ethiopian opposition, civic, faith, political and intellectual groups is eroding what is left of Ethiopia's proud culture of patriotism, bravery, sense of community and ability to stand up and fight for the greater good rather than for self, group and other narrow interests. The diminution of core Ethiopian values, for example, undeterred commitment to Ethiopia's unity and territorial integrity, the country's right to use its national resources to improve Ethiopian lives, the capacity and willingness to defend human rights and freedoms of citizens at home and abroad without any distinction, etc. diminish our collective will and strengths as a society. I find this to be a more compelling weakness in Ethiopia's resiliency to withstand external threat than any other variable. Just think of this simple preposition. The ruling party did not have the wisdom from the start to anticipate that ethnic divisions and ethnic elite political and economic capture will ultimately cost. Simply put, the TPLF core and its allies implanted an intolerant political, social and religious society. One cannot expect a different outcome through hate, arrogance, dismissive and accusatory thinking. It is therefore not farfetched to see danger in this construction of governance that fails

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to serve an enduring national purpose. Ethiopia's traditional enemies thrive on this. Remember, this is how the TPLF took power. Ethiopia's enemies have always relied on proxies within to achieve their goals. The secession of Eritrea and the rise of ethnic elites to power is illustrative. Go to any social or political or even religious meeting in the diaspora. Division is everywhere and people think and assume that it is healthy. I am not talking about diversity and diverse thinking; both are healthy. We live in a diverse America. India is diverse and tolerant. Our divisions are scary and damaging to the fabric of Ethiopian society and endanger the very existence of the country. They are antagonistic. What is tragic is that such divisive world views are not limited to the governing party. The culture of division is widespread. The Diaspora is a prime example. Can anyone come up with a reason why Ethiopians with advanced education and who live in Western democracies are incapable to sit together around a conference table, debate ideas and come-up with viable options for their country? Why are opposition groups that reject the TPLF/EPRDF incapable of setting aside non-strategic differences and offer the Ethiopian people a better alternative? Why are civil society groups unable to learn from Armenians? The Irish? The Palestinians? The Jewish community etc. in forming formidable multiethnic civic, human rights and political groups? We cannot attribute the phenomenon solely to the TPLF/EPRDF. The vast human capital of Ethiopians in the Diaspora has done little to nothing to bridge differences and to promote healthy conversations and offer policy alternatives. It has sunk to the status of being self-serving.

We are our own worst enemies

Back to the Egyptian example. I realized in my discussions with many Egyptian experts (in Doha, the GCC and Egypt) that, unlike Ethiopians, Egyptian society is united and speaks with one voice concerning Egyptian hegemony over the Nile. Egyptians seem to understand that Ethiopian society is polarized by political elites and non-caring intellectuals. Egyptians and Saudis are exploiting this division to maximum advantage by financing various groups. In short, Egyptians have a national purpose. On the other hand, the Ethiopian ruling party is more preoccupied with suffocating all forms of dissent using all kinds of pretexts and prolonging its power than in serving Ethiopia's national interests and the welfare of its diverse population. For example, 23 years after it took power, it has done nothing to allow let alone create an empowering political, social, economic and religious environment that strengthen a sense of Ethiopian community that transcends ethnic and religious affiliation. It **has not set in motion the critical conditions that will create national cohesion as Ethiopians**. In my estimation, it is such national cohesion and shared prosperity that will serve as buffers against any foreign aggression whether Egyptian or other. Adwa is a prime example. It was a victory of all Ethiopians regardless of wealth, religion or ethnicity. Unfortunately for Ethiopia and its 94 million people, this cohesion won't occur under current governance. Why? The governing party is incapable of reforming

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itself. It is afraid of any form of peaceful dissent. I say this for a reason. The danger is all out there for us to see. This phenomenon is much aggravated by a divided civil society and opposition and by a dysfunctional ruling party that does not read the dangers on the horizon and continues suffocating all forms of human rights and freedom. The ruling party's singular and blind preoccupation with sheer political power and economic capture by the few for the few is a recipe for an impending crisis for which everyone will pay a price.

Is there peace and stability?

Briefly stated, Ethiopia has the appearance of peace and stability. Social and political fissures are everywhere to see. Diversity is used as a wedge rather than as an asset. Evidence shows that government has not tapped fully into the country's immense diversity, natural resources, strategic location as a hub of the African continent and as a bridge to North Africa and the Middle East. It has not offered its youthful population—64 percent under 35—employment opportunity. It has not harnessed modern information technology that is transforming poor societies to tackle poverty, boosting the middle class and increasing incomes (Bangladesh, **Kenya) etc. etc.** The Ethiopian government is one of the few anywhere in the world to retain state control of the telecommunication sector, a cash cow. "The absence of competition has seen a country of 94 million lag badly behind the rest of the continent in an industry that has generally burgeoned alongside economic growth...with mobile phone penetration of **70 percent in SSA compared to a paltry 2.5 percent** in Ethiopia; internet access of 40 percent in Kenya." 4/

Modern IT opens windows for private enterprise and employment. It enhances freedom and facilitates knowledge transfer. It serves as an essential tool for youth to better themselves. It is at the heart of the quest for choice and freedom from poverty and oppression. **Government** unwillingness to give space; to be all inclusive; and to unleash the creative potential of the country's youth and to harness the peace, gender (females) and information technology dividend, including freedom of expression, have diminished national social cohesion, productivity and the emergence of a robust national private sector. Africa Business quotes Guang Z Chen, World Bank Country Director, Ethiopia, who asked the Ethiopian government "to allow the private sector to play a bigger role in the economy." Chen says, "For the country to continue to grow I strongly believe industry has to take a much bigger role because there is no other country that I am aware of, aside from resource-rich countries, that can grow to middle income status with still 50 percent of GDP on agriculture." The private sector suffers from lack of access to credit, foreign exchange, land, licenses and permits. Procurement of goods and services is not transparent or competitive. "Making credit available for the private sector is certainly one area the government can do more. The trend that worries us is that while the public investment (the biggest source of bribery, favoritism and corruption) as a share of GDP is

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increasing, the private sector as a share of GDP is decreasing" as are savings. Illicit outflow of scarce capital continues unabated, reducing capital resources. 5/

By all measurements, the government fails to empower and unleash Ethiopia's productive potential. It gives preferences to foreigners at a cost to Ethiopian entrepreneurs. It counters national cohesion and integration, the opposite of global trends. A 2010 Gallop Poll shows that trust in government and its institutions is among the lowest in Sub-Saharan Africa. Those with wealth make money without generating employment and without creating national wealth for the country and its people. Some fear that a nationalist government would go after their ill-gotten wealth. Some say that they are leaving the country in droves and voting against the government by not investing in their homeland. Whatever the motive, it is the people who are being bled dry. The only institutions in which there is a high level of trust is in faith institutions: Christianity and Islam. However, both are under constant harassment by the ruling party.

Reform must be relentless, inclusive and empowering

Ethiopia is one of the few countries in the world where social change has always come from within. The 1974 Revolution was a result of the Ethiopian Student's Movement that galvanized the entire society. It was national and not ethnic or religious. It was transformative but not well designed, planned or executed. In this sense, the country has gone backwards: from a national to that of an ethnic political and social culture. I have argued that this type of social and political culture entails risks and unintended consequences. Observers within and outside Ethiopia agree that the Socialist Military Dictatorship that toppled the Haile Selassie government in 1974 and ruled the country with an iron-fist for 17 years was among the most oppressive. Its leaders, leftist groups with different ideologies and motives, foreign sponsors, ethnic-based liberation movements, supporters of the defunct Imperial system and others turned the country into a blood bath. An entire generation was lost. Hundreds of thousands of young people were murdered; and hundreds of thousands fled. This period triggered the first wave of **human capital flight at a massive scale. A trend was established.** Before then, Ethiopians sent overseas for further education returned home. Today, an **estimated 5.5 million Ethiopians**—almost all with high school education and 1/3rd with college education—live and work in the two Sudans, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf, Western Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand and numerous Sub-Saharan African countries. Ninety one percent of domestic workers in the GCC are Ethiopian females aged 20-30. In 2009, 42,000 Ethiopians, most of them young, left through Yemen. According to one Canadian institution, between 1991 (when the TPLF/EPRDF took power) and 2006 (after the 2005 elections were reversed), Ethiopia trained 3,700 medical doctors. Of the total 3,000 left the country. This brain-drain continues unabated. An estimated 80 percent of educated and trained Ethiopians leave the country. Simply put, no matter how much money we remit each year (In 2011, the World Bank disputed Ethiopian lower

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government data and estimated that Ethiopia's growing Diaspora remitted more than \$3 billion per year), Ethiopia's national growth will be diminished by brain-drain for decades to come. It is true that many in the diaspora have vested interests and contribute to the glitz economy.

Has the ruling party lost its ways?

It seems that way. In political science, they say that **"Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely."** This is the case with the TPLF/EPRDF core. It has no soul. It sees nothing wrong with the current unjust and unfair distribution of wealth and incomes. There is no doubt that when it took power the TPLF dominated ethnic-coalition offered a promising start toward democratization. The world community accepted it as a positive force in doing what is good for the entire society. However, like its predecessor, it failed to seize opportunities to advance genuine democracy. Most people, especially youth, were jubilant when the new government seized power in 1991 for four reasons. **First, the** repressive regime was removed through collective revolt; **second, a** new Constitution with democratic content was promulgated; **third, ethnic-regions were granted autonomy; and fourth, a** new era of growth, justice, peace, inclusion and political pluralism was proclaimed. All these have evaporated.

The selling point of the new ethnic elites in power was this. The Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) offered a compelling argument that "it stood for human rights, press freedom, political pluralism, the rule of law, equality of all nations etc." While donors praise Ethiopia's remarkable growth, albeit from a low base, human rights groups and unattached development experts question the spread of social benefits. "Meles engineered one party rule in effect for the TPLF and his Tigray inner circle, with complicity of other ethnic elites that were coopted into the ruling alliance....**Ethiopia's much praised economic development is not as robust or cost-freeas** the international community believes...The system was entirely dependent on central authority or command and control." This does not mean that there is no growth. It will be impossible to receive aid without showing some growth. Education opportunities have expanded. But quality is low. In recent survey, Ethiopia ranked 126 of 127 in access and quality of education. The number of colleges and universities has increased. Roads, bridges, hydroelectric dams, etc. have been built. Equally, it will be unthinkable to siphon-off capital unless there is something to siphon or steal. 6/

Sharp criticism of "Ethiopia's renaissance" is buffeted by others. Following the death of Prime Minister Meles in August 2012, Halvorssen and Gladstein of Forbes critiqued donors and the Ethiopian government's Anti-Terrorist Law. "Those in the West heaping praise on Zenawi—all living in societies that suffered so much to achieve individual liberty are engaging in dramatic hypocrisy. In a 2009 UK Department of International Development sponsored study of Ethiopia's growth Stefan Dercon and Ruth Vargas suggested that "The magnitude of this growth

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and the fact that it has been achieved with little change in input use suggests something is not right with the data on agriculture," the leading sector in the country. In 2012, the IMF questioned Ethiopia's growth sustainability. "The sustainability of Ethiopia's growth model over the medium term is uncertain, given the constraints on private sector development, the absence of savings incentives, lack of financial reform, etc." Despite these policy and structural limitations, the government argues that export-driven growth is possible without the domestic private sector. Critics argue that mega projects (hydro) to export and generate foreign exchange do not respond to the real need of improving smallholder agricultural productivity, domestic agriculture-based industrialization and employment generation. In other words, state and party-led growth alone cannot create sustainability without competition and participation.

If we accept the thesis that Ethiopia's development story is not "as robust and cost free" as the government and donors claim, what is the root policy cause? It is lack of freedom and predictability that private property is protected by law and cannot be affected by political decisions. Private sector development in Ethiopia is virtually impossible without a favorable investment regulatory system that levels the playing field. The rule of law and the judicial system must be above the party, sacrosanct and predictable. In 2013, the country ranked "49.4 percent, making its economy the 146th freest or among the least free in the world. It has gone down by 2.6 %; lower in 6 of 10 indices: trade, workers' rights, financial movement, investment, etc." It ranks 32nd of 46 African countries. "Regulatory efficiency remains weak, creating an unfavorable climate for entrepreneurial activity...The foundations of economic freedom are quite fragile, and particularly because of pervasive corruption and a deficient judicial system...Corruption further undermines the foundation of economic freedom." It goes without saying that this suffocating environment limits productivity and efficiency severely. As a result, both the country and consumers suffer. 7/

Human Rights Watch has done more than any human rights organization to show the flaws of Ethiopia's authoritarian governance in general and the nexus between massive aid inflow on the one hand and discrimination, nepotism, corruption and repression on the other.

"Development aid flows through, and supports a virtual one-party state with a deplorable human rights record. Government practices include jailing and silencing critics and media, enacting laws to undermine human rights activity, and hobbling the political system." Aid is routinely used to punish opponents and reward supporters. Massive amounts of money is siphoned-off for private gain. The effect of this on the population is substantial. "The Ethiopian population pays a heavy price for this approach in development" in economic, social and political terms. The 2005 elections that the opposition won and then lost through political decision is a prime example. Similarly, in 2010, "the EPRDF won 99.6 percent of parliamentary seats," making a mockery of the electoral process. Competition was not allowed. 8/

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Continued suffocation of human rights and freedoms is dangerous for Ethiopia

Hope among Ethiopians that the ruling party would be open to reform has evaporated. It shows no inclination to reform itself. "Ethiopian authorities have subjected political detainees to torture and other ill-treatment at the main detention center in Addis Ababa. In a 70 page report, Human Rights Watch "documents serious human rights abuses, unlawful interrogation tactics...beatings, torture and coerced confessions." The US Department of State's 2013 report is dire as ever. Ethiopia is home to one of the largest political prisoner populations in the world. It is also one of the top ten jailers of journalists. The court system caters to the party alone. "Ethiopia's courts are politicized and lack independence." Their role is to serve the ruling party and not to administer justice. "Beatings, torture and coerced confession are no way to deal with journalists or the political opposition." It does this against in violation of the country's constitution. "Ethiopia's Constitution and international legal commitments require officials to protect all detainees from mistreatment....Real change demands action from the highest levels of government against those responsible to root out the underlying culture of impunity." The system validates and sustains impunity. This impunity is expansive. Bribery, ethnic-based nepotism, high corruption and illicit outflow of funds stem from the system itself. High officials and top military officers operate above the law and all are vested in the system that enriches them. In short, the system survives by bribing, paying, rewarding and enriching those who are hired to serve the county and the public. 9/

Top officials of the governing party do not see anything wrong with their manipulation of the Constitution and with violation of human rights contained in international agreements. Following the aftermath of the 2005 elections in which 200 young and innocent Ethiopians were massacred, Ana Gomes, member of the European Parliament and Head of the EU Election Team to Ethiopia saw the danger of impunity as a political culture. She concluded, "As long as the Meles regime is in power, I will never believe in an election in Ethiopia." Meles is gone but his legacy remains intact. Measured in terms of freedom, human rights, transparency, fair and open political and economic competition and rampant and systemic corruption the country is worse off than it was in 2005 and 2010. To his credit, Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn is fully cognizant of the dangers the country faces in one area of poor-governance, namely, **corruption**. A few high officials have been arrested. However, the system breeds corruption and those at the top who use the state to make themselves, their families and friends rich are central to the problem. They operate above the law. The public sector investment led strategy of relentless public borrowing, aid, remittances, commercial loans etc. offers a window of opportunity for theft, graft, kickbacks, corruption and illicit outflow through procurement, customs etc. As the system is infected from the top down; it will not stop until and unless the

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system is overhauled radically. This requires wisdom and political openness and competition; a modern monitoring system; and the establishment of an independent oversight consisting of civil society and prominent individuals with impeccable integrity. Transparency International, UNDP and Global Financial Integrity provided documentary evidence showing systemic corruption that requires real commitment to hold corrupt officials at the top and private individuals accountable, including freezing their assets and going after their ill-earned wealth abroad. Why? **“The people of Ethiopia are being bled dry. No matter how hard they try to fight their way out of absolute destitution and poverty, they will be swimming against the current of illicit capital leakage.”** 10/

Ethiopia faces intractable vulnerabilities and risks

The hurdle Ethiopia faces on the economic front is equally prevalent on the human rights front and social development. “Rather than working to build a development strategy grounded in human rights, the Ethiopian government is attempting to hoodwink its human rights record, leaving unmentioned its Villagization Program and the Anti-Terrorist Proclamation—both used by the government as significant justification for forced resettlement, arbitrary detention, and politically motivated arrests. Tools used in implementing projects reinforce violation of human rights and the uprooting of indigenous people from their lands all in the name of development “without freedom.” The lack of people-centered development contributes directly to the prevailing phenomenon of growth for the few and a gaping inequity that will feed into and cause social unrest similar to Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Egypt and rest. This feeds to the threat the country faces.

Here is the good news, Ethiopian society has overcome its veil of fear imposed by the system. Opposition groups, spiritual leaders, some members of the governing party and others are openly critical of the government. Women showed their courage recently demanding justice, inclusion and democracy. Peaceful protests are common. Some of the party's hard core supporters are critical of corruption and open favoritism in hiring and licensing. While this may be a trend, think tanks such as Human Rights Watch and Oakland Institute do not see sustainable development unless human rights and freedoms are protected by law and enforced by the government. Undeniable is the trend that the genie of corruption and fear is out of the box and the quest for freedom is unstoppable. The option is not more repression. It is opening-up political and social space sooner than later. Those in the Diaspora and opposition groups within the country have the moral responsibility to focus on those policy issues that they share as Ethiopian citizens and have the courage and will to challenge the ruling party.

In sum, **“No Human Rights=No Development. No human rights and fundamental freedoms=No national Cohesion, Solidarity and Stability.** 10/

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The regime breeds enemies rather than friends

Ethiopia is most likely to face immense challenges in the years ahead from a man-made governance hurdle of ethnic and religious divisions, a regime that is unwilling to change and an opposition that lacks a national purpose and suffers from fragmentation and wise leadership. "It is probable that the new government will be more fragile, the security forces more influential and internal stability endangered," says ICG. This is generally true in the Ogaden, Gambella, the Omo Valley, Oromia and pockets of the Amhara and Beni-Shangul regions. In its 2013 report to the UN, the Ethiopian Women's Human Rights Alliance (EWHRA) points out that "The Anti-Terrorist Law allows the government to promote policies which foster ethnic and religious hostilities and to label opposition groups as terrorist organizations, thereby eliminating all dissent and creating an environment of fear of reprisals for challenging the government." Especially worrisome is deliberate provocation of ethnic conflict that pities one group against another; and ethnic cleansing and displacement that forces people to revolt. "Ethnicity permeates politics of the country and the ruling party has been unable and unwilling to create a broader political base in this complex and diverse country. The current party dominates the political scene and governs through limited popular participation." 11/

In short, for Ethiopia to protect its national unity and territorial integrity, the TPLF/EPRDF has no other choice but embrace Ethiopian nationalism and Ethiopian long-term interest. It must recognize that trust of the vast majority won't occur without genuine reform. The history of the core group, the TPLF, which commands political and economic power will not happen through fear and repression. It facilitated the secession of Eritrea and made Ethiopia land-locked. It mobilized Ethiopians, sacrificed the lives of 70,000 to 100,000 lives and squandered billions of Birr for a war whose end game proved to be a disaster. I should like to ask the reader a simple question. If the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and his cohort had the resolve to defend Badme, an Ethiopian territory in the Tigray Region, what motivated his successor, Prime Minister Haile Mariam Dessalegn to cede Ethiopian territory that previous governments defended to the Sudan? I refer to the secret deal of transferring Ethiopian territory to the Sudan and by offering the false argument that it was simply "implementing agreements reached by previous governments." The new PM offers no credible evidence.

Colonel Mengistu Hailemariam, former President of Ethiopia and the only surviving head of state rejected the story and asked the ruling party to provide concrete evidence. Therefore, the ruling party has no integrity. In the later example, it decided to take the Sudanese position rather than siding with the Ethiopian people and defending Ethiopia's national interests. Ironically and regardless of the rhetoric the Sudanese Government has close military ties with

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Egypt. Given looming dangers, especially threats from the Arab World (Egypt is the leader), the governing party must change its ways now. It must listen to dissenting voices and accommodate all stakeholders in order to survive and to gain legitimacy. Ethiopia possesses untapped resources and deserves to join breakout nations that are on the way to prosperity. In the 1980s and early 1990s, Sub-Saharan Africa was considered a "basket case." Today, the region is home to some of the fastest growing economies in the world. Ethiopia is included in this newly emerging club. However, as the above analysis shows, it lags behind in numerous critical areas, freedom, political pluralism, the use of information technology for development, per capita income, etc. Ninety percent of the population is poor. Thousands of young people leave the country each year. This in itself shows that the foundation of its growth is shallow. "A nation can climb the ladder (of growth) for a decade, two decades, three decades, only to hit a snake and fall back to the bottom, where it must start over again, and may be again and again." There is no doubt that quantitatively, Ethiopia grew fast in the late 1960s and fell in the late 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. It began to climb up again since 2005. There is no certainty that growth will continue at the same level unless fundamental reforms are carried-out. 12/

Commentary Part III will focus on why squandering Ethiopia's natural resources is dangerous for the governing party.