

Are Democracy and the Rule of Law Necessary for Ethiopia?

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I. Introduction

Lately, especially after EPDRF's realization of its defeat during the 2005 election and the rejection of its policies by the people of Ethiopia, some of its representatives and cadres have begun advancing an idea, possibly concocted up at the Prime Minister's office, that respecting the rule of law and democracy are not necessary for Ethiopia. In fact, the concocted propaganda tool that they have begun using sounds like the myth that Ato Meles has laid out in his so-called book, which I possess the first version of the blue-print.¹ The countries that they are trying to mimic are what the World Bank called **High Performance Asian Economies, HPAEs**. They are: Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand. The propaganda arguments presented by representatives of the Zenawi regime run like this: since these countries achieved their economic miracles under one-party systems, the EPDRF would like to follow their footsteps in order to achieve high economic growth and political stability.

The purpose of this short article is to show that there are indeed quite a few economic policy lessons to be learned from the experiences of Southeast Asian countries. Second, if the last 18 years that Ethiopia has been under the EPDRF are any witness, this country is neither in a position to mimic these countries and bring about measurable economic change, nor is the political and economic phenomena of Ethiopia comparable to those countries. In the process, I refute the argument that is being presented by the EPDRF representatives on both factual and empirical basis. I do so by briefly presenting the economic, social, and political experiences of the Southeast Asian countries and by comparing and contrasting them with that of the Ethiopian economic situation and political realities. I then present a series of conjunctures on why the regime wants us to believe that democracy is unnecessary for Ethiopia.

II. A Brief Summary of Some of the Common Characteristics of the High Performance Asian Economies (HPAEs):

A. Shared Growth.

Sharing the wealth created through good policies and hard work is one of the remarkable accomplishments of the HPAEs. What was also remarkable is that the rise in their income levels was also accompanied by economic equality. These countries accomplished this remarkable feat with land reform, by expanding educational opportunities (by making primary and secondary education free), access to public health care systems, and a significant amount of investment in rural infrastructure such as clean water systems as well as communication and transportation systems. These policies were not designed to equalize incomes but to provide their citizens the tools they needed to raise their own income levels and to give them hope. In the process, these policies raised the purchasing power of each individual, which in turn benefited the local business owners. The rising incomes raised everyone's hopes thereby encouraging everyone to work hard

In contrast, Ethiopia is a vicious cycle of poverty due to the small landholdings, poor agricultural practices, a lack of potable water (with only 7% of the rural population having access to clean

¹ I thank one of my good friends, whose initial begins with N, for pointing out this to me.

water, for example), and deteriorating health and environments. These circumstances have been made worse by poor governance characterized by repressive minority rule. Even though Ato Meles likes to talk about how wealthy the peasants have become, the fact of the matter is that his policies have heavily contributed to their increased misery. Income inequality in the country has been rising under the reign of the EPDRF, while at the same time a handful of former guerilla fighters have become super rich nearly overnight. The corruption scourge (with a corruption index ranking of 139th out of 179 countries) is so rampant and so repugnant that it has begun changing the culture of that country.²

As I will argue later with another write-up, even the highly nationalistic and educated individuals have come to the sad realization that they cannot make it in life unless they become part of the corruption scourge. Such an attitude, driven by bad governance, denies everyone the right to be an equal participant of the economy. It denies hard working citizens the opportunity to reap the benefits of their hard work and the stakes that their country may hold for them. Rampant corruption erodes the hopes of citizens, and unfortunately, this is what is taking place in Ethiopia. When competent government bureaucrats realize that they could not serve the people who paid for their education, they choose to fend for themselves by working in the private sector or for the NGOs. When this is not possible, they leave their beloved country and become political refugees in neighboring countries, most of them facing increasing hardships and terror. When educated people become refugees, Ethiopia loses in a multiple of ways: being unable to use its young and educated sons and daughters, and being unable to recoup the costs it incurred for raising and educating the same people. There are also other social costs that I would refrain from elaborating to save space. A significant portion of the refugees make it to the West, countries which enjoy a comparative advantage in human capital. But their departure from their homeland adds to the problem of the brain-drain, a loss that poor countries such as Ethiopia cannot afford. In Ethiopia today, not only we do not have leaders who understand this issue, but the same “leaders” have exacerbated the situation by threatening the intellectuals that they would be replaced by Nigerians.

B. Increased accumulation of human capital.

Investment in people, through good educational policies was one of the most important policies of the HPAEs. They focused on primary and secondary education levels whose rate of return is much higher than university level (tertiary) education. By making primary and secondary education free, these countries raised the literacy rates, thereby laying the foundation for a highly skilled work force available for both the business and government sectors.

In contrast, the failed educational policies of the EPDRF have kept the country's position in terms of education one of the lowest in Africa. For example, according to the UNDP and other sources, the net elementary school enrolment ratio is the lowest in Sub-Saharan Africa at only 35%, the drop-out rate being among the highest. The literacy rate is 34% for females and 49% for males, which averages out to be about 41%. Gross Tertiary (college level) School Enrollment is around 1%. To add insult to injury, the last 18 years of EPDRF policies have exacerbated the situation since the EPDRF has forced intellectuals to leave their country, making Ethiopia's brain to continuously bleed and be hugely impaired due to the effects of the brain-drain. For example, I have been told that the number of doctors of Ethiopian origin who work in a single or two cities

² I invite others, either in collaboration with me or by themselves, to write the pervasive control nature of the ruling TPLF over life, economy, and the strangle hold party owned-businesses.

in the USA was greater than the numbers of doctors who work in the entire country of Ethiopia. Logic would tell you that doctors should be where most of the patients are located- in Ethiopia. Logic would also indicate to you that teachers should be residing in countries where they are the most needed, where the student/teacher ratio is one of the highest in the world – Ethiopia. One Ethiopian young mathematician tells me that, by his count and just in the last few years, the number of college level mathematicians who either have left their Homeland or decided never to go back home, mainly for fear of persecution is over fifty. This explains why the TPLF owned conglomerates, which were bought at throw away prices during the privatization process, are known to be operating way below capacity due to the shortages of human capital.

C. Rapid accumulation of physical capital:

The governments of HPAEs encouraged their people to raise savings rates which were used for domestic investment. These policies were accompanied by changes in demographics, which were accomplished through both low birth and death rates. Such demographic transitions allowed fewer children below the working age population while allowing a larger portion of the population to be economically productive. In addition, their policies enabled them to attract huge sums of foreign investments.

In contrast, the rampant inflation rates in Ethiopia, the IMF reporting it to be 40% for the month of June, is not only eroding the purchasing power of savers' incomes but the real negative interest rates are wiping out their assets on a daily basis. The negative real rate of returns could only help the ruling party-owned corporations who are enjoying preferential treatments by the government-controlled financial institutions.

Regarding the demographics of the country, because of the absence of a good national population policy and/or the lack of the provision of more than basic health services, the country is flooded with high birth rates. As a result, a significant proportion of the population is young and unproductive, where children under fifteen years of age make up nearly 50 percent of the population. Add to this the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which continues to wipe out a significant portion of the working age population. In contrast to countries such as Uganda, which made reversals of the HIV/AIDS infections, thanks to their campaigns for awareness and treatments, the autocrats of Addis Ababa instead wasted the country's meager resources in waging senseless wars with the country's neighbors, in creating ethnic and religious conflicts and spending a huge sum of money to suppress dissent.

In addition, the Ethiopian economy faces environmental degradation due to wind and soil erosion and the absence of good policies for the country to protect its resources. Such a neglect of the environment denies the country from developing its own homegrown physical capital.

D. Rapid growth of manufactured exports.

More than anything else, the HPAEs are known to have promoted manufactured exports. As everyone knows, the gains from the export of processed and manufactured goods are far greater than those from exporting primary commodities mainly because of the higher value added. Manufactured exports create economies of scale when domestic firms produce to satisfy both the domestic and the international market demands. Exporting manufactured goods also allow both the importation and development of new technologies, learning by doing and international best practices; create incentives for R & Ds, which in turn have multiplier effects on their economies.

Luckily enough, their policies were also aided by the Cold War, in which Western countries gave favorable treatments (lower tariff rates, etc.) to the goods and services exported by the HPAEs.³

In contrast, the EPDRF has focused on an agricultural-based industrialization, if it can be called industrialization at all. The fact of the matter is that, Ethiopia is one of those poor countries which uses primitive ox-driven cultivation system, that no one in his/her right mind could call it agro-industrialization. One aspect of agro-industrialization is agro-processing of food products. When it comes to Ethiopia, such an industrialization has many constraints, including inconsistent and insufficient supply of raw material, seasonality of crops, harvest losses due to droughts, lack of efficient infrastructure such as good roads, nearby efficient ports, poorly trained personnel, weak and non-existent markets, absence of good managerially skilled work force, among others.

The fact of the matter is that, even though the EPDRF has been talking about agro-based industrialization for the last 18 years, nearly all of Ethiopia's export revenues come from the agricultural (primary product) sector- the agricultural sector constituting nearly 60% of the country's exports. Unfortunately, not only do the export prices of these primary products tend to fluctuate very highly, but their relative prices do decline over time as well. It is a well-known fact that countries that are commodity dependent or exhibit a narrow export basket, as does Ethiopia, often suffer from export instability arising from inelastic and unstable global demand. Ethiopia's major source of exports, coffee, is still being exported unprocessed. Export diversification is one way to alleviate these particular constraints.

We hear from the government, on a constant basis, how many dollars the country earned through exports. Unfortunately, it never wants to show the employment figures created by phantom exports. Even the much-advertised export of flowers, it only accounts for a little over \$100 million, a small sum for a nation of 82 million people. The flower business is also causing tremendous environmental degradation.⁴ The government never reports how much profit the country has gained by selling the flowers. It never tells us the effects being landlocked on exports, something that the TPLF and Ato Meles are proud of. Thanks to Meles's ceding the country's sea outlets, the foreign company running the Djibouti port, Ethiopia's only outlet, has Ethiopia by the balls. It increases tariffs at will, as it recently did with a 25% hike. Lately, it has been reported that Ethiopia pays over \$300 million every year to Djibouti for handling of the former's imports and exports. By this count, Ethiopia had already paid billions of dollars to Djibouti and other countries over the last 18 years reign of the EPDRF, and will pay so dearly for many years to come for handling of its imports and exports.

E. Targeting Specific Industrial Policies and Avoiding Rent-Seeking

Even though some of the HPAEs were governed by single dominant parties, they completely liberalized their economies. This liberalization of the economic sector was accomplished despite the fact that these countries were surrounded by communist countries with command economic systems. While following liberalized economic systems, the policymakers, using the so-called

³ Now that the Cold War is over, this option is not available for Ethiopia. It would not be long for American and European policymakers to learn it is dictatorship that bred Islamic terrorism and when that happens, Meles's false pretext of being an ally against terrorism will be over.

⁴ Again, I thank a friend of mine, whose name begins with N, for pointing this out to me.

Deliberation Councils, avoided rent-seeking behaviors (corruption). The Deliberation Councils were filled with highly-educated and competent bureaucrats who were purposely insulated from the political process. The Deliberation Councils were also in charge of targeting specific and narrow development industries. These government interventions included targeting very narrow and specific industries, directing credit, and export promotion. To accomplish their goals, they used licensing, quotas, tariffs, and export subsidies to restrict imports and promote exports. Whenever those policies failed to work, the incentives were withdrawn.

In contrast, the EPDRF cadres decided to follow the Russian model, misappropriating public funds and giving away formerly government owned institutions and sectors to the ethnically-owned firms. In Ethiopia, the EPDRF inserted its cadres, who happen to be highly paid and unproductive, into these ethnically-owned and other government institutions. In so doing, the EPDRF has stifled the productivity of competent bureaucrats. Any targeting of some sector is geared to benefit the ethnically-owned businesses. There is no press freedom which would expose the rampant corruption, nepotism and cronyism that has engulfed the country for too long.

F. Stable Macroeconomic Environments:

Macroeconomic stability is manifested by the absence of high inflation and interest rates and stable financial institutions, relatively low budget and trade deficits, minimal rent-seeking behaviors (that is, low corruption), and well-defined property rights. In the HPAEs, lower inflation rates protected the public's savings from being eroded by high inflation rates and raised confidence in the banking sector. Relatively low interest rates raised the real profits of the business sector. Low budget and trade deficits minimized the occurrence a financial crisis and dependence on foreign economic assistance, which do not come free.

In contrast, as I showed elsewhere, Ethiopia is facing rampant inflation, huge budget and trade deficits and high corruption. The lack of well-defined property rights has allowed the EPDRF owned conglomerates to grab any property they can find. As I argued elsewhere, by not making land privately owned, the EPDRF has not only denied the peasants to raise capital using their land as their collateral for potential loans, but the policy also has been used to scare the peasants and to force them to be real slaves of the ruling party. ***It seems that the same policy has created a perfect situation for the EPDRF to give Ethiopian land to foreigners at will, for the same policy effectively has made the EPDRF to be the owner of all the land of Ethiopia.***

Admittedly, SOME of those leaders of the HPAEs have done something no one desires and they already have admitted their mistakes and shortcomings. They are no friends of tyranny, at least not anymore, especially the most abominable one such as the one that is being practiced in Ethiopia. For example, the former president of South Korea, Kim Dae-Jung blamed the 1997/98 financial crisis on "authoritarian leaders who placed economic development ahead of democracy."⁵ The autocrats in Addis may invoke the Chinese economic growth as their model to imitate. Again, the Chinese economic, political and cultural situations are quite different from

⁵ As one of my friends aptly pointed out to me, Malaysia is also faulted for favoring native Malays over Indians and Chinese which has long been a source of instability in that country and that recently resulted in the uprising of its Indian population. Anwar Ibrahim, a noted opposition figure, has been in and out of jails there on trumped up charges of sodomy because he was about to bring down the regime. So, from this standpoint, no respectable "leader", other than Ato Meles Zenawi, can be so confident and proud of the misrule that has taken place within the HPAEs.

those in Ethiopia. Even though one could be hesitant to call the Chinese economic growth as an economic development, China was able to garner such a sustained growth by allowing economic freedom, the protection of property rights and a functioning market system. None of these realities exists in Ethiopia.

Be that as it may, a good leader is not one which longs for and looks up to the misdeeds and shortcomings of previous leaders. Such a desire to continue tyranny is distasteful and not one that healthy leaders could contemplate about and impose them on their own people. God: what kind of curse have you brought to that country and poor people?!

Now that I have briefly presented the experiences of the HPAEs, I would like to conclude this part by presenting the following parable, which, in my view, sums up the point I have tried to make:

During the 1988 American vice-presidential debate which took place between the late Democratic Senator Lloyd Bentsen and the Republican vice-presidential candidate Senator Dan Quayle, and after the then senator Quayle was asked what kind of qualifications he had to be president in the event that the president was to die or be assassinated as it happened to John F. Kennedy, and after Mr. Quayle answered in the affirmative, Mr. Bentsen said: “Senator, I served with Jack Kennedy: I knew Jack Kennedy; Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine. *Senator, you're no Jack Kennedy.*”

We echo the late Senator Bentsen and say to the tyrannical leader in Addis: Ato Meles, we and the rest of the world know how those countries achieved those enviable goals. We know how nationalistic the leaders of the Southeast Asian countries were (are). The world knows that they did not instigate ethnic strife. They did not commit treasonous acts by ceasing the territories of their respective countries. We know how their party members cared about the people in their entire respective countries. There was no rampant corruption as it exists in Ethiopia... We know Southeast Asia... We know the leaders of the HPAEs. Ethnocentric autocrats in Addis, you're not like the leaders of the HPAEs, not even close. The long 18 years of EPDRF's misrule reveals that, it is no Southeast Asian political parties which GOVERNED the HPAEs. Neither the world nor the Ethiopian people would be fooled. Nor would they be intimidated.

My readers, if you are convinced by the facts and logic as well as the contrasts that I presented above, let's follow the late Senator Lloyd Bentsen and chant together: “we know, you're no.....!” Well done, and thank you!

III.SOME CONJECTURES:

So, these being the facts, why do the leaders of the EPDRF concocted such a ridiculous suggestion and comparison? Comparing the experiences of the HPAEs and that of Ethiopia is comparing apples and oranges, really. Therefore, one cannot escape the thought that Ato Meles and his group concocted such a propaganda tool in order to use it for their political consumption, and possibly out of desperation.⁶ Here are SOME conjectures. It may be that:

⁶ A friend of mine thinks this concoction is probably meant for the consumption of donor countries.

1. The pressure from the public is mounting against the EPDRF, and as a result, the EPDRF is confused, to the point of becoming schizophrenic. On the one hand, Meles has been lying to his foreign backers and the donor countries that democracy prevailed in Ethiopia. On the other hand, it has been difficult for the EPDRF to hide the facts: that it has ruled Ethiopia with brute force. It knows that the world now knows it has robbed the peoples' votes on daylight. By telling the world that it wants to follow the HPAEs, Meles is effectively admitting to the world that he is an authoritarian. Such contradictory statements and admitting to rule Ethiopia with brute force is an act of desperation.
2. As one of my other friends pointed out, knowing that the leaders of the EPDRF will not stay in power (quite possibly not even in Ethiopia) for too long, they must have decided to concoct an idea, no matter how ridiculous it may sound, in order to buy time for their exit. Knowing that there are other graceful ways of exit, following this route is an act of desperation.
3. The regime is facing a crisis, both political and economic. On the political side, the regime knows that the Ethiopian people have rejected its ethnocentric policies and authoritarianism. It faces dissatisfaction and cynicism on every policy it follows, mainly because of the corruption scourge and the selfish nature of the EPDRF and its cadres. The 2005 election revealed to the EPDRF that, if allowed, the people of Ethiopia can cast their votes peacefully, no matter how much they were intimidated, arrested, or killed. Given the opportunity, the people of Ethiopia showed to the EPDRF autocrats and the rest of the world that they could show their dissatisfaction by peacefully marching in the streets of Addis Ababa, in millions, and come out and vote those they did not like out of office. Humiliated by the outcome, the EPDRF leaders do not want to repeat the same "mistake" by going through a similar election process and talking about democracy. Therefore, they are laying the ground to do away completely with any semblance of democracy. It must be due this same humiliation that the EPDRF has received why its cadres have now begun terrorizing the general populace- threatening or firing those workers who voted for the opposition parties.
4. Ato Meles wants to engage the cadres with such a frivolous issue, in order to keep them busy and confused. For those of us who know the tricks Meles has played and how he played them in the past, a similar concoction has been adopted right after the debacle of the senseless war with Eritrea. When members of his own party, some of them founders of the TPLF rejected his ceding of the prize to win the silly war and the country's sovereignty, he concocted the idea of fighting corruption. Well, we all know what happened to the level of corruption in the country after Meles's concoction: It skyrocketed since then! Unfortunately, he succeeded: He threw in his opponents in jail and purged the rest of them from the party. He succeeded in his deception by deflecting the public's attention away from himself. He managed to put the docile members of his party, and especially the ones who are the most selfish, who are summarily called in Amharic as the HODAMs, in his column. He might have done it out of desperation even then, but he succeeded and he thinks he would succeed again.
5. Ato Meles probably concocted this idea of ruling Ethiopians by hook or crook, and in the process, placate the EPDRF cadres, especially those who have stakes at the EPDRF controlled conglomerates. On the one hand, he is terrified by the news of the tariff hike that Djibouti recently announced. He is also terrified by the fact that his cadres would

turn against him for making the country land-locked to begin with. Having a sea access is very essential to these corrupt conglomerates and the rest of the business sector in which the EPDRF is involved in, which according to some people, its involvement in the Ethiopian economy is so deep that it even includes small retail trade such as exporting of Ethiopian traditional bread, the injera. The fear adds to the schizophrenic nature of the EPDRF leadership thereby making them to be desperate and concoct ridiculous ideas to be used for propaganda purposes. Some even speculate that, the same desperation may be behind why Ato Meles gave away huge tracts of Ethiopian land to the president of Djibouti. They further argue that Meles decided to implement his plan to give away Ethiopian land to the Sudan so that the EPDRF owned conglomerates would have access to the Port of Sudan. If what they claim is to be true, the same desperation must have spread to the entire ruling clique and forced some of them to be schizophrenic. They ask, what else could explain this bizarre behavior of betrayal of a country, making her be land-locked, giving away the prizes that comes with a winning of a war, lying to the people that the so-called Ethio-Eritrean Commission has ruled in favor Ethiopia while the fact is to the contrary, and now the giving away a big chunk of the country's territory to a neighboring country? In any case, the giving away of the countries territory and fertile lands is another manifestation of desperation to stay in power, even if it is a blatant betrayal of trust.⁷

6. Knowing that it has lost the backing of the general public, the EPDRF concocted this idea in order to send a terrorizing message to both the opposition parties and the general public by sending the message that, whether they like it or not, the EPDRF is here to rule them for many years to come. In reality, it is a desperate move taken by a desperate party.
7. Create an excuse for those foreign powers and supporters that their governments were behind the rulers of the same Southeast Asian governments and they ought to do the same for the EPDRF. Second, the EPDRF is trying to suggest to them that, if a one-party system was good for those countries mentioned above, it has to be good for Ethiopia as well. Some of those foreign governments and/or their unsuspecting representatives probably like such an excuse. Such blackmailing, however, would not last.

In addition to their contempt for the people they rule, the EPDRF leaders have, in a stealth manner, instigated ethnic and religious conflicts - the latter a phenomena rarely

⁷ By the way, I have heard many, from those who are participants of Ethiopian related political blogs and paltalk shows, that Meles is giving away Ethiopian land in part because he wanted to prepare the ground for the future independent state, the so-called Greater Tigray. Even though, this writer agrees with some of their conjectures that Meles and his group would do everything in their power to "liberate" the Tigray region from Ethiopia, especially if the going gets a little too tough for them to continue pillaging the country's resources and when the oppressed people say enough is enough, I do not believe Meles and his Ethiopian hater comrades will succeed. First of all, our Tigrayan compatriots would not allow him to do so. Second, the economic realities in Tigray would not allow the region of Tigray to maintain a sustainable economy. I even go a little further to suggest that, let alone for the region of Tigray, both the existing economic resource realities and the realities of global economic conditions would not permit even greater Ethiopia to isolate itself from Tigray region and enjoy a sustainable economic reality. There are also additional variables and constraints which have led me to believe in such a conjecture, but I refrain from elaborating them for now.

seen in Ethiopia prior to their rule. It is quite possible for them to try to do it on a massive scale, especially when the going becomes a little too hard. Fortunately, those who were pushed for an ethnic-based strife had come to their senses, and in most cases, the spirit of Ethiopianism has triumphed over sectarianism and disintegration. As a disciple of Isayas Afewerqi, Meles undermined the unity of Ethiopia for nearly two decades. Fortunately, so far, people have refused to go along with his plans and instigations. Such refusals had frustrated the leaders of the EPDRF. That may be why they have become as desperate as to concoct such a myth.

8. By comparing the incomparable situations that Ethiopia is in with those of Southeast Asia, the TPLF (EPDRF) is trying to fool the general public and the unsuspecting cadres that Ethiopia is in par with those countries and placate them in the process –by feeding them with empty words, as the Prime minister has been doing it to the peasants – telling the world that they have gotten richer under his rule, while in fact they are starving. At the same time, by advancing such issues, Meles is trying to scare the west that Ethiopia would ally itself with such undemocratic countries such as China and Russia if they fail to accept the status quo ante. I happen to believe that the days of such deceptive tactics are about to be over.
9. Meles has come to the realization that the days for him to play the game as an ally of the west and one who stands against Islamic terrorism is about to be over. It could be that Meles is terrified with the fact that it is his government which has instigated religious-based conflicts. He may be terrified that the West would come to realize that Islamic fundamentalism has not roots in Ethiopia. As you all know, the EPDRF has tried to foment not only ethnic conflicts, but also religious ones. Their calculation is that, once such religious hostilities begin, Meles would attempt to convince the Western world that terrorism indeed exists in Ethiopia. Perhaps, the EPDRF leadership has come to the realization that they cannot dupe the world for so long and they would be denied of the financial assistance that they have been generously getting. Perhaps, the same autocrats are now terrified that the West would know that even his invasion of Somalia has nothing to do with Islamic terrorism. Instead, it has more to do with Meles's jailing of protesters, journalists, human rights workers and opposition leaders, to satisfy his insatiable appetite for hard currency using false pretexts- which ultimately will be used to buy weapons, which in turn could be used against the people they rule. Meles is terrified that he himself is an agent of terror for his brutality and oppression helps breed terrorism.

IV. The Evidence is In: Democracy has Triumphed over Tyranny

Many researchers have come to conclude that authoritarianism helps economic development is a myth. If anything, there is only a spurious correlation between autocracy and growth. Good governance begets development, not the other way round. Empirical evidence shows that democracies enjoy higher economic development compared to non-free ones. Most importantly, evidence shows that those countries which adopted democratic principles have outperformed those which followed the path of tyranny on a range of development indicators, such as life expectancy at birth, access to clean water and air, literacy rates, and infant mortality rates. They did this in part by doing away with special interest groups and rampant corruption. The citizens of

democracies stayed within their own countries, to raise their children within their homeland, to be with their own loved ones, instead of becoming “super maids” as Ethiopians have become. By allowing their citizens to be part of the decision-making process, leaders who respected the rule of law have enabled their citizens to have their own stakes, thereby motivating them to work hard. Democratic countries were (are) able to enjoy peace, which has been a scarce commodity for Ethiopians for decades. As the 1998 Economics Nobel Prize Winner points out to all of us, hunger and starvation do not take place in countries which adopted democratic principles. In the age of globalization, good governance and democracy is the precondition for economic development. So, the evidence is in: democracy and the respect of the rule of law bring more prosperity to a country than authoritarianism. In fact, research shows that both the well-being and the survival of poor countries depend on people controlling their own destiny more than others. In fact, both empirical evidence and logic indicate that resource-scarce countries need better governance and policies than those endowed with relatively abundant resources.

For those of you who do not know Meles and the EPDRF, it may be quite puzzling to both hear and see why “leaders” of a political party that has been in power for 18 years continue to behave like mad dogs against their own people. One would expect such leaders, who have amassed enormous wealth, a good portion of it at the expense of the poor peasants, to be humbled by the Grace of God who allowed them to be in such a position, while at the same time, the people they rule are homeless and starving. One would expect the so-called “leaders” to work hard to deliver what their subjects yearn dearly, which is the respect of the rule of law and democracy. Instead of being proud of satisfying the demands of the people, Meles and his gang opted to frighten and terrorize them, in a crude and repugnant manner at that. Instead of being confident for delivering the goods and services that their subjects so desperately needed, they seem to tell the world that the peasants are rich and not starving. Instead of lifting up the moral and spirits of the people, they continue to intimidate them, putting them in concentration camps in drones, just because they exercised their rights and voted their conscience. Instead of being proud by protecting the territorial integrity of the country, which is one of the cardinal obligations of a government, they chose to willingly give away portions of the country’s territory to its traditional enemies. Instead of taking advantage of the modern telecommunication technology created elsewhere and try to catch up with the rapidly advancing world, they chose to suppress its usage and even use it to suppress the people they have ruled for too long. Such an act is not something to be proud of, unless the so-called leaders are so paranoid to the extent that they even fear their own shadows knowing the crimes they have committed against the poor people of Ethiopia.

V. WE HAVE NEWS FOR THE AUTOCRATS:

There is news for such paranoid, angry, prejudiced and desperate “leaders”- bad news for them, good news for everyone else: with the demise of communism, respecting the rule of law and freedom has triumphed over dictatorship. People refuse to be intimidated. They will continue demanding for the respect of the rule of law, freedom, human rights, and democracy. Despotism leaves their victims with no choice. Despotism leaves their victims with no choice. Even though they suppress the independent media with their new draconian press law, even though they intimidate opposition party leaders by arresting them with familiar tramped-up

charges, even though you have made the existence and function of opposition parties practically useless, we will not rest until we gain our freedoms. We know such ridiculous propaganda and intimidation is an act of desperation. We know the world has changed and we will go along with the rest of the world that respects and practices democracy. Just like those people who have found their freedom, who have found the path of democracy, who found ways to discard authoritarianism, the Ethiopian people will find ours and do the same. We know, sooner or later, the entire world will be with them. We say, “No” to tyranny, intimidation, ethnocentric policies; “No” to nepotism; “No” to government instigated ethnic and religious strife; “No” to mass arrests and state terror. “Yes” to checks and balances, to the respect of the rule of law, to accountability, to equality, and to freedom!

So, bad boys, what are you going to do when those freedom loving people stand in unison and try to liberate themselves from your yolk of tyranny? Bad boys, what are you going to do when Ethiopians come after you, demanding their freedom? Bad boys, what are you going to do once the people begin chronicling how you expropriated the peoples’ resources by selling the previously government owned corporations to yourselves? Bad boys...., Bad boys, what are you going to do when ...?

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