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ALIENATION OF YOUTH AS AN UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCE OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE IN AFRICA

Illustrations from the Ethiopian Experience

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The development of global competition between Russia and the United States led to a dramatic diversion of the resources of the United States to military and quasi-military programs. Some of the objectives of the competition were to maintain United States influence and power over its empire in the Middle East and Africa: to monitor the Red Sea; to have a presence near Egypt, especially in view of the development of the Aswan Dam by the Russians; to have proximity to its Asian colony, Israel; to keep watch over its oil in Saudi Arabia; to establish and man satellite tracking stations which were necessary to compete with Russia in space; and to maintain a presence in Africa in order to safeguard its interests throughout the continent.

Ethiopia is geographically strategically located to enable the United States to accomplish the objectives stated above. Additionally, until recently its head of state, Emperor Haile Sellassie, held tremendous prestige, and was quite pro-western in his allegiances. Ethiopia was also the African headquarters of the Economic Commission for Africa, and the headquarters city for the Organization for African Unity. A military presence, therefore, was mandatory in Ethiopia if the United States was to stand up to the Russian challenge in that part of the world. This presence developed from its inception in the middle 1950's to the point that in 1970, the assistance to the military alone equaled the dollar amount of all other types of assistance to all the other nations of Africa. This did not include the support of the official United States military activities in Ethiopia. So, it can be seen that the United States invested heavily in military programs in that country.

One of the interesting items to note is that investment and assistance funds from all sources to a country usually follow rather than preceed the political decision to invest militarily in a country. Foundation money, developmental assistance money such as AID grants; even assistance from other countries and the

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[1]This paper was initially drafted following a three year assignment of the author at the then Haile Sellassie I University, Addis Ababa; now, the National University of Ethiopia.

United Nations followed upon the decision to invest in military assistance in Ethiopia, when it became clear that it was necessary to safeguard our interests in that part of the world.

Nothing much had happened in Ethiopia since the Italian occupation of the 1930's to encourage it to depart from its traditional modes of organization and behavior, until the decision of the 1950's by the United States to invest militarily in Ethiopia. Following upon the heels of that, the National University was established; Ethiopian Airlines came into being; public education was pushed for development from kindergarten through the twelfth grade; efforts were begun to establish an economic infrastructure; agricultural modernization was pushed; health programs utilizing western methods were organized; and so on. Even though there was much reservation about all this change among the elders, nobility, clergy and politicians, the push toward modernization went on apace anyway. It is the thesis of this paper that the decision of the United States to develop and strengthen its military presence in Ethiopia for the reasons cited was the single most important factor in accounting for the eventual alienation of youth in Ethiopia, which in turn became the dominant factor for the current revolution taking place in that country. As to whether this form of destabilization and its consequences is more functional than dysfunctional is a matter this writer cannot answer. Only time can tell. But the point of the paper is that the U.S. military are the modern missionaries without their either knowing or admitting same; for they in their presence in a country like Ethiopia to implant and reform military programs inevitably trigger changes that fundamentally alter the characteristics of all aspects of the social order. Let us then turn to a brief description of the process which took place in Ethiopia in the alienation of its youth, a major precursor of the current revolution there.

Ginsberg states that there are between 22 and 23 million persons living in Ethiopia. One-third of the population falls in the range of ages 15 and 59. The number of persons with a tenth grade education or more number 25,000. This select group of 25,000 are located almost without exception in the cities, where the scarce educational, welfare, employment, opportunities are found. Ginsberg estimates overall literacy at 5.7%. Fifty-two percent of the urban males are literate; 16% of the urban females are literate. Seven percent of the rural males are literate, but the rate is declining. The literacy rate of rural families is almost nil. [2]

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[2]Ginsberg, E. and Smith. H. Manpower Strategies for Developing Countries, Lessons from Ethiopia. Columbia, 1967, pp. 21, 48.

These figures show that Ethiopia is a nation of young persons, which is a situation similar to other developing nations of sub-Saharan Africa.[3] The figures also show that only a very small group from those under 21 years of age are at present able to move into the ranks of the educated elite. The creation of a coterie of educated elite is a key requisite for development, and the ability of a modernizing nation to produce and utilize this coterie is one of the important indicators of that nation's ability to initiate and sustain the modernization process. Ethiopia has difficulty in this regard, for Ginsberg states that with a population increase of about 2% per year, Ethiopia is becoming a nation of an ever increasing proportion of young persons, without much change in the near future in the ratio of the skilled manpower to the total age group. It can be said, then, that up to this time, only a very few of the young people in Ethiopia have been touched by the forces of modernization in any real sense. Most of them still live as they have been doing for centuries past. This highlights the importance of this small group of the educated elite, for it is from here that the individuals come who carry the responsibilities and leadership for the current and future efforts toward modernization. Alienation of this group, therefore, will have a deleterious effect out of proportion to its size on any effort toward modernization.

In the pre-industrial society, where age is a positive value, children are subservient to their elders. They are an economic asset to the extended family. Most aspects of the pre-industrial societal structure are congruent with this value, and minimal disruption results. Young persons are dispersed throughout the population, for they remain in their homes and villages, and cannot act with any social force, as they can when they are collected in the cities in organizations such as schools, and in collectivities such as gangs and teams.

But with the advent of the U.S. military programs, complete with hardware, personnel, and most importantly, the western ideology, new ideas and technologies were available for inspection, discussion, learning, and adopting. The U.S. military personnel are particularly vocal, moreover, about the blessings of the western technology, and usually equally contemptuous of the non-industrial state of affairs in countries like Ethiopia where they may be stationed. Military personnel are also predominantly young. Their sumptuous level of existence is not lost upon the local population, especially the young, who then contrast this existence with the prospect of their own, should their situation continue the same. In fact, the military in Ethiopia lived much better than any other of the U.S. citizens that lived and worked there. They had their own commissary, which had all the foods available in the U.S. supermarkets, they brought in their own cars, which in themselves created great excitement among the populace; they had

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[3]At this point in time, Africa has the highest birth rate of any of the major land areas of the world. See Molnos, Angela. Development in Africa - Planning and Implementation. Ford Foundation Circular #3, April 1970. Part II, p. 20.

housing allowances which enabled them to live in some of the best houses in the
city, and they were able to employ a large number of servants. All this lar-
gesse was available from the highest ranking to the lowest ranking member of the
U.S. military, and when observed by the local populace, made a profound impression
upon them.

The ideology of the high standard of living is possibly the most powerful
that has yet been developed, and when combined with the missionary zeal for its
dissemination by U.S. military personnel, and the eagerness of the young people
of the developing country to accept it, something must change. The important
point here is that military personnel from the United States, even though they are
ostensibly in the foreign land only to care for the mission there, do carry out
a missionary function by spreading their ideas about the appropriate way of life
to the local population, especially, as has been stated above, the youth.

The western rational, scientific ideology which the military espouse states
that man can know his world, that this world is orderly, that if man studies his
world, he can manage it and exploit its resources to his own ends. By contrast,
most adult Ethiopians believe that the world, including man and his society, is
created by God, maintained by God. Man's task is to ascertain God's plan for the
world, and then follow it. Young persons have no right to question these assump-
tions, but should believe what they are told by their parents, priests and rulers.

The western ideology is activistic, rebellious, individualistic. In contrast,
that of the majority of adult Ethiopians is passive, collectivistic, conformistic.
When young persons learned of these ideas new to them, this created a certain
amount of conflict in them. Furthermore, if they attempted to behave in accordance
with these new ideas, they found themselves in conflict with the major organiza-
tional units of the society, such as the church, the family, the economic system,
government; those structures that existed in large measure to maintain the strength
of the then current ideological, stratification, and power systems of the social
order. When young persons stated that these institutions were not performing to
support the new ideas they espoused, or their proposed techniques for utilizing
more effectively the resources of the country, these young persons raised inevitable
fears among those who strove to keep things as they were, and who resisted the
implications of change for all the sectors of the social order. Therefore, since
the voices of the young persons were not heard, they either withdrew into their
own subcultures, or became strident in their criticism, and radical in the changes
which they advocated. Seldom did they retreat into the beliefs and behavior to
which their elders subscribed.

Of course, the situation becomes further complicated because it was by no
means lost upon the rulers of Ethiopia that the United States has tremendous
power because of its advanced technological system. They longed to remain as power-
ful as they could, and were not without threats both from internal as well as
external sources to the maintenance of that power. So, the rulers were eager also
to adapt the western technology to their own ends. One of the first things they

were told, especially the Ethiopian military personnel, was that for a man to be technologically proficient, he must have education. In fact, the men who now rule Ethiopia were among the earliest to be educated by the U.S. military in the late 1950's and the early 1960's. They were sent to military training schools in the United States during this period, and then came back to modernize the Ethiopian army. They also came back with ideas about how their countrymen should live, how rulers should behave, how industrial capacity should be developed, how resources should be distributed. This, it turned out, was knowledge dangerous to the status quo.

The ruling class was not slow to grasp that for their power to be enhanced, they must modernize. But to modernize, they must teach the populace how they should live for this to be accomplished. So, a massive public education program was begun from grade one through the university, to create a manpower pool of technically proficient members of the society to carry out this task of modernization. Since it is difficult to change the ways of the adults, because they have a stake in things as they are, and are not amenable to the control that needs to be exerted in educational activities, the programs concentrated on the young.

Elementary schools up to grade six were initiated in most local communities, and young persons lived at home while attending these schools. But following grade six, those who persisted in their education had to live in the nearest city where the more advanced facilities were located. This meant that they had to leave home, live with their peers in some kind of dormitory arrangement, and be freed from the influence of their family, and the local elders.

It is the cities that have always been the spawning grounds of social change, and the situation in Ethiopia was no different. It is the urban youth in Ethiopia that were the concern of the authorities. It is the urban youth that rebelled and experimented with western strategies; not the rural youth that form the bulk of the population. It is in the city where the young people could escape the tyranny of the extended family, could congregate in schools where they are the majority in a cultural as well as in a social psychological sense. It is because of this loosening of the hold of the traditional social institutions on young people that they were able to identify with their kind, develop their own class and subculture, and look at the world in their own terms. Thus, they were able to take positions in relation to themselves and their world because of antecedent changes that operated to make this possible. In turn, this situation set up considerable incongruencies, from which arose the challenges of youth to the status quo.

Certainly, educational efforts of the modernizing African states were not set up to result in the disaffection of those to be educated. These efforts were initiated to further the cause of modernization, to build a manpower pool by which modernization could be accomplished. When one of the most visible immediate results of this immense committment of resources was the rebellion and radicalization of youth, the leaders of these nations became somewhat disillusioned

with results of these efforts. Both the indigenous and foreign advocates of
change failed to understand that change, when it did come, was not even, was not
readily more functional than previous modes of social behavior, occurred in some
sectors of the society before occurring in others, and above all, was resisted
by the current forms of social organizations as long as these forms had any effec-
tive hold upon the individuals of the society.[4]

Culturing borrowing, and imposition, when done, is seldom even attempted to
be tailor made to the requirements of the borrower, either by the borrower, or by
the exporting faction. The educational system in Ethiopia is a case in point,
(including that portion of it concerned with the training of social workers.)[5, 6]
In the first place, since it is a direct transplant from the United States, its
objectives are not clear as they relate to Ethiopia. Does the elementary level
of educational development aim at universal education? If so, to what end?
Does the secondary level aim to be somewhat selective, and build a base of the
technical manpower pool? If so, with whom, and for what technologies? And just
what are the aims of the university? To develop a status organization that can
compete with foreign organizations, copy foreign patterns; or to turn its atten-
tion to the building of a manpower pool that will be committed and prepared to do
the job of modernization of the nation? What planning between education and the
other sectors of the society - such as welfare functions - is going on to give
cues as to what tasks must be accomplished, how resources can be allocated to
accomplish priority tasks, and just how manpower can be trained, in sufficient
numbers to carry out these tasks?

The inability of men to control the course of change in modernizing societies
leads to problems such as the one under discussion in this paper. Educational
programs are seldom introduced to be relevant to the requirements of the modern-
izing society. Western medicine is seldom introduced accompanied by population
control measures. Economic planning seldom coordinates the development of the
agricultural and the industrial sector. Welfare programs seldom take into account
the mass rather than the individual nature of social problems of development.

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[4]At the same time that Emperor Haile Sellassie I, then the Chancellor of the
Ethiopian national university, made his commencement speech to the graduating
seniors in July, 1969, reciting the challenges to them for development, 500 stu-
dents, 10% of the student body, were languishing in jail, a postscript to the
riots then occurring at the university.

[5]Schenk, Q. F. "The Welfare Function in Ethiopia". Proceedings, Seminar on
the Reassessment of Social Welfare and Related Manpower Needs in Ethiopia Haile
Sellassie I University Press, 1969.

[6]Schenk, Q. F. Final Report, Committee for the Study of the College of
Social Sciences and Development Administration Haile Sellassie I University Press,
1970.

Military programs seldom take into account domestic implications. Young people are usually the first to realize the irrelevance of their education, the frustration of being overwhelmed with too many of their own age group, the inattention to problems of rural areas as modernization is attempted, and the preoccupation with problems of the individual sick, crippled, poor, to the neglect of the attack on the factors in the society giving rise to these problems. If young people see few attempts to rectify these inequities which affect them as much at first hand as any group in the social order, they will fail to understand the value of modernization, and the relevance of individual enterprise in their lives, inhibiting them from investing themselves in the efforts to modernize as they are exhorted to do by those holding power at the time.

Alienation of youth is a universal phenomenon in states in sub-Saharan Africa, all of whom are attempting to modernize their production and distribution systems. This alienation is a novel situation with which the national leadership of these states must deal. Their reactions to this alienation often provoke measures that exacerbate and prolong the condition, leading to extreme measures on both sides. The challenge of the appearance of the subculture of youth to these nations is not to eliminate it, which is impossible, but to use it to further progress, and as preparation for leadership for development.

Any prolongation of the age at which young persons are readmitted into the adult mainstream of the social order will aggravate their feelings of marginality, and thus further the development of a separate subculture. Since this subculture is set up to defend against the adult society, its characteristics will be negative in reference to the adult world. Thus, the sooner the adult society can absorb these young persons into their own structures, the less will be the degree of alienation of this portion of the society, and the less the disruption and tension that will result. However, this can only be accomplished if the economy can absorb those qualified to enter it; if the educational system is organized to prepare appropriate numbers for appropriate tasks; if the family and the religious institutions instill values in the young that will commit them to the modernization of the society; and if the political and welfare systems can oversee the planning, the coordination; and develop quickly enough the administrative efficiency to integrate all the disparate social elements required for development.

In most cases this cannot be accomplished, for change in developing countries does not proceed evenly any more than it does in the industrialized countries of the world. It is often easier to introduce new activities in a country than it is to modify existing ones, and this important fact often is the basis of the alienation which this paper addresses. Education in the organized sense did not exist before extensive western incursions into Ethiopia, so it was relatively easy to develop. But religious, political, and distributive systems did exist, with all their supporters among the leaders and the powerful who retained their power and leadership by maintenance of things as they were.

When the rulers realized what kind of monster they had created in their midst, one which threatened their very existence, they naturally became disenchanted with the results of the efforts to modernize, especially as it was reflected in the school system. It was here that the struggle localized itself. The focus became the political rulers, the clergy, and the elders of local communities against the students. Riots became common at the university at Addis Ababa, in the large high schools in headquarter cities in the outlying regions. Force was used on both sides, schools were closed, and students were killed, injured and incarcerated. Alienation was engendered and intensified on both sides, and something had to give.

The retreat of the old ruling class from its former enthusiasm for moderni- zation meant also that it had some misgivings about further modernization of the armed forces. When this occurred, both Ethiopian as well as U.S. military person- nel became alarmed, for it meant a lessening of their power and influence, as well as the standard of living of the local military. For the U.S. military it could mean the lessening of control of the defense of the country, which in turn could mean the lessening of control of power in the area to further its aims as an arm of U.S. foreign policy. With these two very powerful forces also alienated from the old ruling class in addition to the youth, the days of the political status quo were numbered. The only question was not whether a revolution would happen, but when it would take place, and in what form.

It is now apparent that the United States educated Ethiopian military person- nel have seized the political power, but their important preoccupation is still to develop the means to control the alienated youth. In order to do this, as stated above, they must find the means to integrate the youth into the main stream of the culture. In a modernizing society this is a herculean task, for there are not the automatic forms of control yet developed that exist in our own society to coopt the dissidents and make them work for the major values of the society. But, if the current regime cannot accomplish this task, then it too is doomed to be replaced, for the youth of Ethiopia are too numerous, too well organized, and presently still enough alienated to be ignored. Youth of Ethiopia, then, consti- tute a major problem in maintenance of societal stability when that society is in the process of technological development.

During the years that the author lived in Ethiopia, he was haunted by the ethics of exportation of the ideology of technological development, especially as it took place in such uncritical, ethnocentric, and aggressive form, princi- pally by the U.S. military personnel residing there. It is the contention of the author that the military as an important arm of the United States is responsible for initiating what is going on in Ethiopia today. It was a major factor in ex- porting the ideology, the knowledge, the artifacts, of technology that led up to the instability that ensued and that still exists.

Is this by-product of our foreign policy and our committment to military strength functional or dysfunctional to the parties to the process, both in the long and the short run? Could more positive results have been achieved with other

initiatives such as tailor making programs which the Ethiopians could apply them-
selves; letting them develop their own technology in reference to other industrial
nations rather than to our own; or, permitting them to live as they had been doing
for centuries, if this is what they wished.

The core of the issue that disturbs the writer is that there did not seem to
be self determination of the Ethiopian people in relation to modernization. If
left alone to make their own decision, perhaps they would have decided to modern-
ize, but then the writer is certain they would have done so at a much slower pace,
with less instability, and possibly with technological assistance from other
developing countries that had recently been through the problems which Ethiopia
now faces.

The writer would like to have seen what direction and form technological
development would have taken had the United States been oriented toward welfare
rather than warfare in reference to its assistance to Ethiopia.

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