

Abstract

Ethiopia and its people are kind and hospitable to all humanity irrespective of race, tribe, ethnicity, religion or creed. It has been, and still is, a refuge to hundreds of thousands of people who seek shelter and safety. The world knows Ethiopians as people who love their country and who do not hesitate to defend it by giving their dear lives, as was the case during fascist Italian invasion of 1895 and 1936 where thousands of Ethiopians died fighting to preserve Ethiopia's identity as the only country in Africa which has never been ruled by a European colonial power. However, Ethiopia also waged a protracted civil war from 1974 to 1991 which costed it billions of dollars and millions of lives. Making matters worse, during this civil war, Ethiopia also experienced drought and famine. The famine that struck Ethiopia was broadcast to American and European citizens and, as a result, most people from these countries identified and continue to identify Ethiopia as the county that struggles with poverty. However, Ethiopia is a diverse country blessed with many regions with evergreen vegetation beside the regions that lack precipitation. Therefore, regions that lack enough rain water can participate in other forms of livelihood other than farming, such as trading and facilitating items to places which are not available in other regions. As well, due to the fact that Ethiopia is blessed with the Nile river and the almost completed Renaissance dam has the potential to alleviate the country's lack of energy needs and to provide resources to regions which are not blessed with precipitation and fertile soil by exporting electricity to neighboring countries and distributing the resources equitably throughout the region so that the country maintains its uniqueness and to make sure that its people live in harmony without conflict by celebrating their oneness in their diversity in the way they portrayed it in times of need. Therefore, the ethnic identity politics the current government of Ethiopia implemented for the sake of ruling its people, conveniently, should be done away with as it may lead to division and conflict.

Introduction

There are many good things happening in Ethiopia: Economic growth, the construction of the Grand Ethiopia Renaissance Dam (GERD), the reduction in child mortality rate, and the increased enlistment of children in school. However, there is a number of negative developments that overshadow the positive developmental aspects. These includes the protracted conflict that has been going on for the last few decades, food and water insecurity, inequitable distribution and mismanagement of public resources, human rights abuse, tribalism and ethnicity, diseases, draught and famine, lack of governmental plans to stave off climate change.

Conflict, food and water security in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia has more than eighty tribes within its borders. It is also one of the oldest countries in the world. And it was one of the first nations that received Christianity during the Axumite Empire-100 years AD that had its capital in the northern part of Abyssinia-Ethiopia, or what is known now-a-days as Eritrea. Ethiopia is also known for its hospitality and unique culture all over the world. Because of the virtue that comes with being Christians, or being spiritual people, Ethiopians grow up to be considerate of fellow human beings regardless of race, color, religion, or creed. What is more, Ethiopian parents bring up their children to obey authority figures: parents, teachers and public authorities. Therefore, whenever Ethiopians were called to defend their country from foreign and domestic invasion they responded affirmatively. For instance,

when called to fight against the fascist Italy's invasion by Kings such as Menelik the II and Haile Selassie the I, both in 1896 and 1936 respectively, they responded in quite large numbers in favor of defending their country and faced Italy's well-equipped force with a make shift and homemade weaponry and prevailed against the invasion that stretched historian's credulity to the limit.

Historians such as (Assrat, 2014) compared the military power of Ethiopia and Italy at the time: Italy had 476,000 soldiers, 87, 000 mercenaries (Africans fighting for Italy), 100, 000 horses, mules and donkeys, and 500, tanks, 19,000 lorries, 1,500 pieces of artilleries, over half a million rifles, 15,000 machine guns, and 350 aircraft. Whereas, Ethiopia had 250, 000 men, a dozen tanks, eight aircraft and only 20, 000 imperial guards who were considered a match for the Italian army (p. 115). Yet, notwithstanding Italy's unprecedented military might and power, Ethiopians prevailed, therefore, making Ethiopia the only country that has never been occupied by a European colonizing power in the African continent, and because of this, Africans in general have seen Ethiopia as a beacon and symbol of independence and hope ever since. The South African freedom fighter and icon, Nelson Mandela, said the following when thinking about Ethiopia in his time of struggle for independence: "Ethiopia has always held a special place in my own imagination and the prospect of visiting Ethiopia attracted me more strongly than a trip to France, England, and America combined. I felt I would be visiting my own genesis, unearthing the roots of what made me an African. Meeting the Emperor himself would be like shaking hands with history" (Pearce, 2014, p.7)

After the defeat of Fascist Italy, Emperor Haile Selassie continued to modernize Ethiopia. As Donald N. Levine in his groundbreaking book about Ethiopia put it, Haile Selassie has brought forth significant changes to Ethiopia both educational, cultural and social throughout his reign which was not seen in Ethiopia before he ascended to the throne; changes like parliamentary procedures, election system, technical colleges, military academics and higher learning institution (p.75)

Nevertheless, many Ethiopians did not appreciate Haile Selassie's paternalistic grip of the country, but he continued to control the political system and faced many opposition in the northern part of Ethiopia-Eritrea. Rebel groups called the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) whose aim was to transform Eritrea to an Arab state, supported by Arab countries, continued to sabotage Haile Selassie's regime by kidnapping and terrorizing people. Subsequently, another rebel group which was called Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) dominated by Christians came to take over ELF in frustration to Haile Selassie's declaration of Eritrea as Ethiopia's 14th state by disbanding the federation of Eritrea and the rebels continued their sabotage of the Emperor's government (Asserat 2015, p. 261).

What is more, during Emperor Haile Selassie' reign Ethiopia faced unprecedented natural calamities - drought and its ramification - famine. Ethiopia's economy is agro-based, and farmers' heavy reliance on rain did not help the situation. And the administration's in ability, or unwillingness to heed experts warning that an unprecedented drought was to befall the country and prepare for it made the situation a catastrophic one. Agriculturalist Charles Van Santen put it as follow:

In late 1972 a first warning of the seriousness of the drought and famine was given by Christian Missions operating in the Tigray province and by some University researchers, working in the Wollo province. A joint report by FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture dated December 1972, reported a large drought and famine in Wollo and Tigris provinces. The report actually included an estimate of the amounts of grain needed to avoid starvation of large groups of the farming population. Unfortunately, the report was completely ignored by the central government, which actually in late 1972 sold a large amount of cereals in storage on the export market (p.7).

Thus, under the above circumstances and coupled with the population growth and the famine which claimed many human lives and live-stocks, the situation for the Haile Selassie's government did not bode well. "In the autumn of 1973, the year before Haile Selassie was overthrown, tv pictures of starving children who had fallen victim of the famine were broadcast to the world" (Asserat, 2015, P.XVI).

Consequently, the people of Ethiopia continued to rebel against the government. The military started revolting against Selassie's government and it was joined by almost the whole population of Ethiopia. And the Marxist ideology followers calling themselves Derg took over the country and put the Emperor in prison (Santen, p.7).

Thereupon, the Derg Marxist Leninist military junta overthrew Haile Selassie's regime and continued condemning the Emperor and his family's presumed lavish life style at the expense of the people and forced the toppled king and his family to watch starved and emaciated children on television, and the military continued killing, imprisoning, exiling Ethiopian intellectuals prompting a historian called Blair Thompson to write a book called *The Country that Cut off Its Head* (p.157).

To say nothing of, compared to Derg Haile Selassie's regime was much better. Haile Selassie indeed made mistakes, and historians characterized him as a paternalistic and kind dictator as his leadership was challenged by coups in 1960s, but the political and social oppression Ethiopians experienced under Derg was unprecedented. The Derg turned the volatile political and social situation into a disastrous one. "The regime soon had millions of enemies who were either imprisoned, exiled or put to death" (Asserat, 2015, p. 306). As a result of the Derg's brutal rule, the Eritreans became more aggravated. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and the EPLF soon joined hands and fought the Derg regime for seventeen years.

Asserat's (2015) study found the following:

The Derg rule came to an end in 1991 after a long-drawn-out battle by EPLF and Ethiopian Revolution Democratic Front (EPRDF) against the regime and the terror of the Derg came to an end, but only to be replaced by another terror and human right's violation as it is attested now and again by Amnesty International and Human Rights watch. And what's more, the government divided the country

based on regions and ethnic lines which many experts view not a right path for a country like Ethiopia which harbors eighty different ethnicities and 100 languages. What's worse the ethnic federalism the government is fond of referring is a carbon copy of the South African apartheid racist system of government as it is evident that the then south African prime minister D. F. Malan when asked about what Apartheid meant he said: "Apartheid means nothing more than ethnic federation" a system that is far removed from the governing systems in USA and Germany. Any government worth of the name Federation should put in place the culture, tradition of its country first and foremost and should celebrate unity in diversity, but not use diversity as a stratagem for divide and conquer in the way past colonial powers attempted to do (p.318).

What is ironical, the EPRDF and EPLF rebels after fighting the Derg regime for seventeen years and having come to power the former in Ethiopia and the latter in Eritrea respectively, they fought another catastrophic war among themselves and 100,000 people believed to have been killed from both sides as a result.

Solution

Therefore, Ethiopia has endured both man-made and natural disasters for the past 100 years uninterrupted and it cannot afford to continue like that in the 21st century. Ethiopia should be a democratic country. The government should make the political playing field even and transparent and Ethiopians who seek public offices should be elected by the people. The idea that is prevalent among most Ethiopians that the overthrow of EPRDF and the result-democracy can only be achieved by armed struggle should cease. Again, there must be a term limit for a given political party, or individual that act as a head of government. The EPRDF's intransigent belief that it had come to power after fighting for seventeen years and anybody who would like power should do likewise must be condemned by every rational thinking Ethiopian.

Unquestionably, Ethiopia needs educated people more than any other country in this planet. Unfortunately, from the outside enemies like Fascist Italy to the home-grown dictators such as Derg and EPRDF, all of them had one sworn class of enemy – the educated class of Ethiopians. As one scholar pertinently put it, Ethiopia could be a different place for better if it was not for fascist Italian generals' brutal genocide of Ethiopia's educated class (Pearce, 2014, p. 8). Therefore, any sitting government, or aspiring one must come to terms with the fact that Ethiopia urgently needs intellectuals in all fields especially in science and technology; hence, universities and learning institutions should be fertile grounds for research and diversity of ideas and the educated class themselves should form the government of Ethiopia. Last, as seen in this essay almost all regimes made mistakes and the EPRDF's government is one of them. But instead of repeating past mistakes at the expense of Ethiopia's people it should reflect and correct past mistakes so that open discussion can be facilitated for the betterment of everyone. Donald, 2014 said as follows about the benefit of learning from past mistakes and history:

...it would give heart to those numerous Ethiopians and foreigners who want nothing more than to see the reconstruction of Ethiopia succeed, so that scarce energies can be pooled into the mammoth tasks of rebuilding Ethiopia's impoverished

infrastructures, conserving her environment, keeping population growth in pace with economic growth, healing the sick, confronting the AIDS epidemic, educating the young, cleaning the towns, and preserving deteriorating monument. These are crucial moments in Ethiopia's History, and those in power have an awesome responsibility to make sure that the promise of a democratic and peaceful Ethiopia will not be betrayed yet again (p.157)

Food and water security

Because of the 1984 drought most American and European citizens associate Ethiopia as a country that cannot feed itself for the image of starving children was broadcast to their televisions on Christmas day. However, Ethiopia is a diverse country in terms of soil fertility and vegetation growth. There are regions which are fertile and evergreen and still there are parts of Ethiopia which are not fertile and not conducive for agriculture. Block in his presentation concerning water and food security in Ethiopia attested to the fact that Ethiopia is indeed a varied place. It is true that some parts of Ethiopia are rocky and mountainous and not suitable for agriculture and it frustrates most small-scale farmers. Also, there are parts of Ethiopia which are evergreen and gets more than two metres of precipitation every year. For instance, the western part of Ethiopia is fertile and gets enough rainfall every year and it is the bread basket of Ethiopia. (Block, 2016).

On the same breath, Ethiopian farmers heavily rely on rain water. And most of the population live in the country side and the country's economy is based on farming. Yet, there is none too little irrigation system in the country to stave off rain fall shortage. Thus, farmers save the little harvest they have from one year to the next to make sure that they are not starving until they have a new harvest (Block, 2016).

Solutions

Famine should be viewed as unacceptable in this day and age. Stephen Deverux an economist aptly pointed out that famine in the 21st century is deadly and uncalled for. And the writer of this essay is in agreement with solutions proposed by the blog How to Solve the Food Crisis in East Africa which is applicable for Ethiopia's problem as well.

(<http://www.voicesofyouth.org/posts/how-to-solve-the-food-crisis-in-east-africa>): The government should setup a social safety net program such as providing cash for individuals and families in a situation when there is a shortage of food or where people are unable to access their daily nutrition because of high prices.

Secondly, the proposed plan to insure farmers and pastoralists by the World Food Program in an event they lose their pastures due to drought, or their crop fails is commendable, and the program should continue as a pre-emptive and proactive measure.

Third, pastoralists should engage in different livelihoods. As Devereux gave his educated and cautious advice, telling pastoralists to consider other forms of livelihood is controversial as that form of livelihood is their life style and the only way of living they know, but still pastoralists should consider other forms of making ends meet at least as a safety net measure. For instance, regions that lack enough precipitation can participate in other forms of livelihood like trading and facilitating items to places which are not available in other regions.

Additionally, the labour for food programs whereby farmers go to cities to work and generate income in case their crop fails and the early famine warning that is put in place by NGOs as a preventative measure of hunger are good initiatives and should be cheered on (Block, 2016).

By the same token, Ethiopian farmers who do not lack precipitation on yearly basis produce more grain for themselves and others as well; yet in an event when drought happens in other parts of the country, grains from developed countries, such as United States and Europe come into the country and local farmers who have grain for sale end up without buyers and technically they end up on equal footing with their compatriots who lack food and they are inundated by debt that they incurred in farming their land. Therefore, the government of Ethiopia should protect the local farmers by buying grains from them and distributing it to people who lack it. (Block, 2016).

Water Storage and Ethiopia's energy needs

Water is one of the most precious commodities in the world whereby people's lives depend on it, and the world is increasingly acknowledging its value. In the year 2000 the former secretary of United Nations (UN) Kofi Annan believed to have said that "fierce competition for fresh water may well become a source of conflict & wars in the future".

According to Block, 2016, Ethiopia is categorized with countries which cannot use their water effectively because of lack of financial ability to put the necessary infrastructure in place to utilize its waters as opposed to lacking water in its physical territory.

Hence, a country like Ethiopia should put more emphasis on water and put extra energy to conserve and use it. Researchers on water tell us that storing water plays a significant role in alleviating food shortage and water scarcity and the capacity to generate electricity and to educate its people and increase literacy. For instance, Block (2016), states that if a country like Ethiopia has more water in storage and the rain fails to come it can conveniently irrigate the needed amount from its storage.

However, there is a historical roadblock for Ethiopia to use the water within its borders: For example, Ethiopia has many tributaries, such as headwaters like Lake Tana and highlands like steep gorge that make the second longest river in the world: the-Nile River. But in 1959 British assigned 75 percent of the water to Egypt and 25 percent to Sudan leaving Ethiopia with nothing. Thus, Block (2016), explains that Egypt receives 45 billion cubic metre of Ethiopia's water at the border and Ethiopia contributes 85 percent for Egypt's artificial dams.

However, in 2011 upstream countries, such as Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda, and Tanzania in Entebbe called the 1959 agreement null and void. And Ethiopia in the same year announced that it was building the GERD which has 6000 MW generating capacity, that holds 74 billion cubic meter holding capacity which could be the largest in Africa both in terms of capacity and volume. Block's (2016) presentation states Ethiopia has 30,000 MW of potential, but only ten

percent of it is realised and still 83 percent of its population lack electricity and 94 percent of the people rely on biomass for their day to day living (Tegenu, 2006).

Therefore, the author of this essay unreservedly agrees with the Entebbe accord. Ethiopia should utilize its water unconditionally. Therefore, it will provide electricity to its people and sell hydro power to its neighbours and meet its economic potential and the government should strive to encourage farmers to learn to rely more on irrigation

In conclusion, Ethiopia is a diverse place both economically, culturally, socially and religiously. As we speak Ethiopians are striving to eradicate poverty, ignorance and conflict within and without Ethiopia. It is a home for more than eighty tribes and Ethiopians live and treat each other like brothers and sisters regardless of ethnicity, tribe, and creed, and they bled and died in defending their country under a tricolor proud flag. However, Ethiopian governments for the last hundred years have been benign despots to outright dictators to their own people in addition to the natural calamities the people of Ethiopia endured. Thus, Ethiopians should see to it that political solution through dialogue is the only way out from the ordeal of protracted conflict. So that Ethiopians will have time to address the recurring natural calamity by beating their swords into plowshares. Therefore, they will channel their energy into improving their wellbeing. They should search different forms of making ends meet in addition to relying on rain water and farming such as irrigation and participation in other forms of livelihood like trade especially pastoralists and farmers who live in a less fertile land. What is more, Ethiopia should capitalize on GERD and provide the badly needed energy needs to more than 80 percent of its people and afford resources to its people whose regions are not suitable for farming by exporting resources to its neighbouring countries. So that Ethiopians will live in harmony by celebrating their unity in their diversity.

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