

President Trump’s Administration Can “Confront” Ethiopia’s Repressive Regime

Aklog Birara (Dr)

For more than a quarter of a century, the government of the United States whose relations with Ethiopia spans more than 100 years, felt persuaded by the cunning and con-artists of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (the TPLF) who literally run Ethiopia as family enterprise to pour tens of billions of dollars in development and humanitarian assistance without making a dent in changing the structure of the Ethiopian economy. American bilateral assistance is estimated at more than \$30 billion and Official Development Assistance (ODA) at more than \$44 billion. Each year, my former employer, the World Bank, where I spent 30 years, continues to pour hundreds of millions of dollars in ODA without an ounce of effort to evaluate social impacts in a meaningful and accountable manner. The Bank uses government make-believe data to inform the world that Ethiopia is growing at a remarkable rate. The issue is never growth; it is social and economic impact. Has the structure of the Ethiopian economy changed through aid? Does Ethiopia have a middle class comparable to its African peers? Is Ethiopia food secure? Not at all.

The argument of this commentary is that American policy toward the Ethiopian regime must change now.

Buying a government through aid

In a quid pro quo, Ethiopia was mortgaged or hired to serve as a police state in the Horn of Africa and beyond. President Obama’s administration did little to nothing in advancing democratization in Ethiopia. It overlooked the crimes of the TPLF because the Ethiopian police state served as a deterrent in America’s war against terrorism in the Horn; and served loyally and competently as a hired hand in the Sudan and the rest of Africa where TPLF officers are paid handsomely. The UN’s and AU’s benign neglect of atrocities in Ethiopia is a consequence of this loyalty. This deal has worked successfully albeit at enormous costs to Ethiopia as a sovereign country and its 102 million people who remain largely poor.

Ethiopia and Ethiopians are more dependent on aid under the TPLF/EPRDF than under any Ethiopian government at any time in their history. Ethiopians are also more repressed than ever before. The best evidence of this is the 6 month State of Emergency without which the government and state would have collapsed. A regime that is loved and welcomed by its citizens does not declare a state of emergency. The state of emergency has made matters worse and not better. Among other things, it is pushing civil and political society to “extremes.” It is also emboldening Ethiopia’s traditional enemies. Ethiopia is encircled. This encirclement and the unaddressed root causes within the country pose substantial danger for the West as well.

By all human development measurements, Ethiopia is still one of the poorest, hungriest, unhealthiest, un-freest countries and corrupt countries on the planet. Ironically, it is home to more millionaires than any comparable country on the planet. Just imagine for a second and

weigh the new class and caste or ethnic group phenomenon that has occurred since 1991, especially since the flawed election of 2005 against the reality on the ground.

- a) A food aid dependent country that can't feed itself year after year is at the same time a country of new millionaires! Imagine how many mothers in Ethiopia carry fire wood to make ends meet each day. Imagine how many mothers travel long distances to fetch water. Imagine how many families lack safe drinking water, proper sanitation and or adequate health services. Imagine how many millions of Ethiopians do not have access to electricity in the 21st century!
- b) A country of new millionaires is unable to produce jobs for its youth population that account for 70 percent of the population. Imagine that, last year alone, 88 000 Ethiopian youth left Ethiopia. They leave in droves for two reasons: repression and oppression and lack of opportunities at home. The push factor is far greater than the pull factor. People have a way of coping with poverty and have enormous potential to overcome it in the long run. However, government repression or oppression is virtually impossible to overcome without sacrifice and unified action. Hence the preference for flight!! The good news is that this is changing.
- c) The con artists who took political power in 1991 had a well-crafted strategy. They mobilized Tigrean elites around the TPLF; emboldened and empowered it to seize and hold on to power by any and all means necessary. In other words, they captured the Ethiopian government, State and its institutions. They made it seamless and impenetrable. They crafted an education curriculum that emphasized ethnic identity and ethnic division at an enormous cost to the common good. The narrative of Ethiopia as a country and being Ethiopian as a defining national identity were eroded, thereby reinforcing the preeminence and predominance of the TPLF.
- d) I remember while in College and studying African history what one of Africa's pioneering leaders, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, said in **Why African Must Unite**. "Seek ye first the political kingdom and all else shall be added onto you." The founders of the TPLF learned this guide and applied it to the letter. First, they "sought the political kingdom" in Ethiopia solely by subordinating all political and civic actors to the dictate of the TPLF by disbanding and by penetrating multinational parties, civil society and independent media; by providing economic and financial incentives to those who can be bought; and by encouraging the formation of ethnic-based political parties. Ethnic federalism offered the means by which ethnic elites could be cajoled and persuaded to support the TPLF. Second, the TPLF created the institutional and governance mechanism of supremacy and hegemony in the "political kingdom" that facilitated supremacy and monopoly over the pillars of the modern economy and natural resources. The vast majority of the Ethiopian people were alienated from the benefits of growth and from owning the

material and natural resources that are fundamental for wellbeing. These intertwined and twined supremacies by the TPLF are now more or less complete. The critical point here is this. The social, economic, spiritual and political consequences for the vast majority of Ethiopians are devastating.

I should like to strengthen this narrative by using foreign aid as an instrument of both repression and ill-gained wealth for the few. In his bold and penetrating article in Forbes, **“Ethiopia’s Cruel Con Game”** March 3, 2017, David Steinman put it succinctly. “Why, despite ever-increasing amounts of foreign support (that now exceed \$4 billion a year), can’t this nation of 100 million clever, enterprising people feed itself?” The answer is poor, disempowering, self-serving, corrupt, nepotism-prone, Mafia-like and repressive governance. If you run a country like a family enterprise; it is akin to a Mafia-like system that is well-guarded and secretive. Such a system is inimical to the public good. It does not advance the common good.

Steinman explains this phenomenon using American bilateral aid to Ethiopia. “The amount of American financial aid received by Ethiopia’s (TPLF’s) government since it took power: \$30 billion. The amount stolen by Ethiopia’s leaders (primarily the TPLF) since it took power: \$30 billion.” The amount left to serve the public good is therefore nil. Steinman’s numbers reflect American bilateral aid. What about ODA? What about Foreign Direct Investment? What about trade? What about remittances? I have written several commentaries on this subject and will refrain from discussing the vast nature of the stolen billions. An estimated \$3 billion is stolen and taken illicitly out of Ethiopia each year. So, more aid is not the answer. It is empowerment that comes from freedom that is the answer.

Why then does America continue to provide aid to Ethiopia’s “thieves of party, government and state” while millions go hungry each and every day? Why condone the beggar state while billions of dollars are being siphoned off? What is the moral and long-term strategic justification of shoring a regime that is both repressive and replete with corruption? Should not the Trump administration examine the misdeeds and adverse implications of its predecessor? After all, it is America’s tax payers who bear the burden without accruing the benefit of thanks from the Ethiopian people. “Ethiopia’s far-left economy is centrally controlled by a small ruling clique that has grown fantastically wealthy. Only they could be responsible for **this enormous crime**. In other words, the same **Ethiopian leadership that is begging the world for another** billion for its hungry people is stealing several times that amount every year.” It is to this reality of greed and waste to which I draw President Trump’s attention.

This “same leadership that is begging the world” for more money while stealing billions follows a pattern of behavior that proved effective in the past. Over the past 8 years, the Obama administration and the rest of the global community “turned a blind eye” both to the theft and the illicit outflow of billions from one of the poorest countries in the world; and more important to the atrocities committed by the TPLF/EPRDF regime. Less than one year ago, more than 1,000 innocent Oromo and hundreds of Amhara were massacred through extrajudicial measures. The Obama administration “condemned” the atrocities; and continued to provide

aid, including lethal weapons and security assistance to the TPLF. Again, the TPLF took this as a signal of approval and announced a crushing state of emergency. This reinforced the determination of the top military and security echelon of the TPLF to rule and to punish as they wish. Ethiopia is now a military state run by TPLF generals and security personnel.

The military “command post” was instituted to serve as a blunt state instrument to kill, maim, punish, imprison and forcibly dislodge opponents, including hundreds of thousands of peasant farmers. Whether the Trump administration shows interest in the rule of law, human rights and democracy in Ethiopia or not, America’s values and long-term national interests require closer scrutiny of the regime in Ethiopia. “Much of Ethiopia’s and the region’s problems stem from Ethiopia’s lack of the accountability that only democracy confers,” says Steinman. The popular resistance in Ethiopia that has been muzzled into temporary submission through the state of emergency and the command post structure imposed by the TPLF has enormous potential in building an all-inclusive and democratic state in the second most populous country in Africa. “A more **accountable Ethiopian government** would be forced to implement policies designed to do more than protect its control of corruption. It would have to **free Ethiopia’s people** to develop their own solutions to their challenges and end their foreign dependency.” This is why I suggest that Ethiopians need freedom more than aid.

Why the Trump Administration Should Side with the Ethiopian People

A change in American foreign policy toward the regime in Ethiopia is in America’s long-term strategic interest. The challenge for American policy makers is to entertain the notion that the Ethiopian people are much more reliable in defending their own national interests and in advancing their own welfare than the donor or the diplomatic community or the TPLF. They certainly do not wish to continue the cycle of dependency and deprivation that characterizes the current regime.

I agree with Steinman’s narrative that an accountable Ethiopian government and an empowered Ethiopian society is more compelling in grounding the war against terrorism by advancing freedom first and foremost; and by “decreasing fraud, basing military promotions on merit instead of cronyism and ending diversion of state resources to domestic repression.” The current model of capturing the government and state as well as state resources to enrich the governing elite in Addis Ababa is a recipe for disaster. The often misused and abused term of stability in the midst of misery and gross human rights violations masks the reality of crimes against humanity on the ground. This reality is masked because independent media coverage is disallowed. The regime in power is convinced by past U.S. administrative policy of aid for hire. As Steinman put it, “Ethiopia’s government believes it has America over a barrel and doesn’t have to be accountable to us or to its own people...Past U.S. presidents have been afraid to confront the regime, which even forced President Barack Obama into a humiliating public defense of its last stolen election. The result has been a vicious cycle of enablement, corruption, famine and terror.”

The small clique of ethnic elites who run the government and state feel empowered by massive aid and diplomatic support to embezzle more and to repress more. In the process, America loses moral credibility as well as tax payers monies. By providing aid without accountability, donors undermine their own long-term strategic interests in the Horn of Africa and the rest. These interests can be well served by advancing the democratization process and by disengaging with Ethiopia's repressive regime.

In this regard, Ethiopians across the globe welcome the draft legislation in the U.S. Congress championed by Congressman Chris Smith and co-sponsored by several representatives. At a hearing on March 9, 2017, Representative Dana Rohrabacher asked members to consider the unprecedented notion that America had made "a mistake" to have sided with the "corrupt and brutal regime in Ethiopia." He reminded his audience, the Trump Administration and the American people that American-Ethiopian friendship is durable and must be made durable by siding with the people of Ethiopia and by disengaging with the repressive regime. "We are soulmates with people who love freedom around the world, and at the very least, we should say that corrupt regimes that utilize weapons from the United States to repress their own people will not be provided those weapons. Beginning today, it is time to eliminate Ethiopia from its ability to purchase and obtain U.S. weapons."

It has been very difficult to persuade past American presidents that American aid, especially security assistance, is being used to kill innocent Ethiopians. As documented by Human Rights Watch numerous times, humanitarian aid is used by the TPLF dominated regime to reward friends and to punish foes. Federal government inputs are used selectively and serve to buffet the governing party and not to empower and enable producers. No wonder the country cannot feed itself!! No wonder Ethiopia's middle class and the private sector are among the least developed in Africa!!

Congressman Rohrabacher's scathing remarks are identical to Steinman's admonitions. Ethiopia does not have an accountable government or leadership. "Instead, there is a small clique, that **is corrupt and brutal**, and the results have been misery and hungry which is disgraceful." This "small clique" represents the TPLF while marginalizing the vast majority of the population. Ironically, it is this "clique" that the government of the United States has been supporting under the pretext of fighting 'radical Islam.' The record shows that Ethiopians of all faiths have lived side by side peacefully and respectfully for hundreds of years and will do so for generations to come. The U.S. and Ethiopian governments both have used the fight against terrorism as an excuse to strengthen relations. In the process, the U.S. has emboldened and empowered one of the most repressive regimes in the world to punish its own citizens. "If we don't help this regime, don't you think an honest, elected government in Ethiopia would also be against terrorism?" The answer is unequivocally yes.

In fact, a government that is elected by and accountable to the Ethiopian people will deter real and genuine terrorism while serving the national interests of the country and advancing the welfare of its 102 million citizens. A government elected by and accountable to its own citizens

is likely to be much more capable and competent to serve America's long-term security and market interests than a regime that steals from its own people and represses them at the same time. I therefore embrace Congressman Rohrabacher's position that American-Ethiopian relations should be strengthened by siding with the Ethiopian people; and by disengaging with Ethiopia's "cruel, repressive, corrupt" and nepotism-prone regime.

Advancing human rights is a good investment for America

In 'It's life and death': how the growth of Addis Ababa has sparked ethnic tensions," March 13, 2017, the Guardian noted the misguided policy stance of the U.S. government and other democracies that shoring a dictatorship in Ethiopia does not advance sustainable and durable peace does not yet have traction. "As analysts agree, this is unlikely as long as the US sees Ethiopia as a key regional ally. Diplomats in Addis Ababa talk of how advancing human rights will help stability in security in east Africa but the truth is that countering the increasing influence of China in Ethiopia, and fears over rising Islamic militancy in the region, make any significant pressure unlikely. The EU now see Ethiopia as a key actor in the struggle to slow migrant flows across the Mediterranean. There is little appetite in the chancelleries of Europe or Washington to risk chaos in a country of nearly 100 million in such a sensitive part of the world for the sake of a few thousand incarcerated activists and commentators."

The argument of "chaos" is tantamount to an endorsement of repression and oppression that will inevitably lead to civil war and potential genocide. The regime in Addis Ababa has done a good job of crushing the opposition by arresting and jailing potential leaders and by making peaceful and non-peaceful opposition parties dysfunctional, fragmented and inept. It does this in the name of stability and growth. However, this narrative does not mean Ethiopia does not possess the requisite competent and dedicated human capital within and outside the country to lead and establish democratic institutions. The regime's strategy of going after each and every potential opponent as an "enemy" of the government and state is intended to prolong the current repressive and oppressive system. The West can no longer fool itself by adhering to this misinformed and misguided notion that Ethiopia will fall apart unless the repressive system is sustained. Actually, it is the repressive system that is creating an environment of fear, resentment, revulsion, defiance and instability and violent reaction, including secession. Take

Ethiopia is a country of staggering inequality

Ethiopia faces enormous hurdles that emanate from repressive governance. "Then there is the inequality," says the Guardian. "According to the World Bank, the GDP of Ethiopia is \$62bn, almost eight times more than in 2001. Tens of millions have been lifted out of poverty, primary school enrolment is approaching 100%, and if there are still millions who depend on aid to eat and an annual threat of hunger in many rural areas, it is almost impossible to envisage the appalling famines of 30 years ago recurring." Ethiopia is begging for food aid to the tune of \$1 billion to feed 5 million citizens. It is unlikely that this cycle of drought, famine and hunger will stop any time soon. Billions of dollars of aid later, Ethiopia has not created a resilient economy.

Investment capital is wasted and billions siphoned off from the country to foreign destinations. Gains from growth are captured by ethnic elites and their allies. Conspicuous Consumption of luxury goods is shamefully high. Growth is not debatable; it is unfair distribution and restrictions on the freedom to deploy and use capital and the lack of capacity to boost domestic productivity that I question.

“The new wealth generated over recent decades is not being evenly distributed. In 2014 Ethiopia topped a list of African countries creating the most millionaires,” reports the Guardian. Yet, Ethiopia is food aid dependent. “Sales are good, especially of imported champagne,” says the manager of a fine wine shop in an upscale neighborhood in the south of Addis Ababa. Next door, a dozen luxury cars fill a dealer’s yard. The best-selling vehicle is the Toyota Prado, a vast **SUV which costs \$200,000.** The owner says he sells between five and seven each week. At the same time, poverty levels, even in the capital, remain between 25-30%.” The legitimate question to pose is this: “Is such conspicuous consumption in one of the poorest and food aid dependent countries in the world justified?” In my assessment, such luxury is feasible in an authoritarian system that creates conditions for gross income inequality and destitution of millions of Ethiopians.

This phenomenon of extracting income and wealth for the few without expanding and diversifying the middle class by broadening economic and social opportunities breeds more disenchantment and revulsion among the urban and rural poor. Unequal society can never be stable or peaceful or prosperous. This is why the vast majority of Ethiopians desire fundamental rather than cosmetic change. Fundamental change means freedom: the freedom to choose and remove leaders through fair and free elections. The donor community’s admiration of “stability” without freedom and growth without equity perpetuates hunger, destitution and perpetual dependency. It is therefore indefensible and self-serving. Unlike democracies that expand and broaden opportunities, dictatorships are inevitably unfair, unjust and unequal.

It is this unfair and unjust system that former President Obama described as “democratic” during his state visit in 2015. He took make-believe periodic elections in Ethiopia as “democratic.” The TPLF dominated EPRDF has never allowed genuine competition. It has won every election for the past 25 years; and will win future elections. As the Guardian confirmed in its latest commentary, “The EPRDF has won every major poll for more than 20 years and currently occupies every seat in the 537-strong parliament. Diplomats in Addis Ababa describe “a climate of fear” and point out that “almost all opposition politicians are in prison or abroad. Ethiopia is ranked 140th out of 180 countries by press freedom campaigners. Bloggers are a particular target, with many held under anti-terrorism laws.” This deliberate policy of jailing potential leaders is intended to deprive Ethiopian society of a viable opposition that will unseat the governing party. The EPRDF wins every election because it does not allow a viable opposition to emerge.

It is true that there is a sense of calm and stability following the state of emergency. The reason is simple. Ethiopia’s security, federal police and defense forces have the license to kill, maim,

jail and torture. Tens of thousands of Ethiopians are in jail or have been forced to disappear. Civil society is decimated. There is no free and independent media. The Guardian is therefore right when it opines that “Though recent months have been calmer, the fallout from the unrest of the last two years may still dramatically change the history of one of the continent’s most important countries – and possibly the future of hundreds of millions of people across the entire continent.”

Change is inevitable. Demographics alone suggest the need for transformation. More than 70 percent of Ethiopia’s 102 million people are under the age of 40; and 65 percent are under the age of 30. Urbanization is taking shape at a rapid pace, with hundreds of thousands living in squalid conditions. “Today there are somewhere between 3.4 and five million people living in Addis Ababa. Most are without proper sanitation or clean water, many lack steady electricity, there is limited public transport and rubbish collection is grossly inadequate. The World Bank expects the city’s population to double over the next 10 to 15 years”, says the Guardian. The social and political implications for Ethiopia are vast. The question is therefore what kind of change, how and when and not if?

I share the widely held view among the vast majority of Ethiopians that last year’s popular unrest will resurface throughout the country. This time, it may not be contained. This is because the root causes of the unrest have not been addressed. The regime has suppressed them. In the words of the Guardian, dissidents, democratic activists, independent minded foreign experts and others “Say the unrest has challenged the basic premises that underpin the legitimacy of the government in the country. If Ethiopians can no longer look forward to a steady evolution towards political pluralism and ethnic inclusion, coupled with a degree of material improvement, then the fundamental contract between the government and the population will break down. In this case, if there is no significant reform and particularly if there is no outlet for resentment through protest, an open media, unions or opposition parties, then the center cannot hold for very long. As they doubt whether there exists leadership and intellectual capacity to execute the necessary changes, massive and disruptive change is inevitable”.

However, it is debatable at best that Ethiopia does not possess the requisite potential “leadership and intellectual capacity” to lead and execute fundamental democratic changes. It does. But, this leadership and intellectual potential is repressed, forced to dissipate, undermined and the very people who can lead the change process successfully and competently are in jail, maimed, killed or forced to flee their country. Given freedom the talent pool of potential leaders and opinion-makers leaders who live overseas and within Ethiopia will reemerge. There are ample indications that those within the “opposition camp” have begun to coalesce and craft a compelling vision and government alternative.

Therefore, the vigorous debate that is taking place in the U.S. Congress is a most welcome development toward change in American foreign policy with regard to the repressive, corrupt and cruel regime in Ethiopia. Approval of the draft legislation will send a strong signal that the

government of the United States chooses to side with Ethiopia's 102 million and not with self-serving and corrupt elites.

H.R. 128, "Supporting Respect for Human Rights and Encouraging Inclusive Governance in Ethiopia" has been introduced by Representative Christopher Smith and co-sponsored by Representatives Karen Bass, Mike Coffman, Keith Ellison, Robin Kelly and Mark Veasy. The draft legislation that the vast majority of Ethiopians welcome and support includes the following:

- Condemns the killings of peaceful protestors and the use of excessive force, the arrest and detention of journalists, activists, students, political leaders and abuse of the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation to stifle political and civil dissent and freedom of expression;
- Calls on the government of Ethiopia to lift the state of emergency; and end the use of excessive force by Security Forces;
- Calls on the regime in Ethiopia to conduct a full, transparent and credible investigation into the killings in Oromia and Amhara regions and hold security forces accountable for wrongdoing;
- Demands that the regime in Ethiopia respect the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, and guarantee the freedom of the press and media;
- demands that the regime in Ethiopia allow a Rapporteur appointed by the United Nations to conduct an independent examination of the state of human rights in Ethiopia;
- Calls on the regime in Ethiopia to repeal proclamations that can be used as a political tool to harass or prohibit funding for civil society organizations and investigate the circumstances surrounding the September 3, 2016 shootings and fire at Qilinto prison, the deaths of persons in attendance at the Annual Irreecha festivities at Lake Hora near Bishoftu on October 2, 2016, and the ongoing killings of civilians over several years in the Somali Regional State, and publically release a report on such investigations in an expedient manner;
- Calls on the Secretary of State to conduct a review of U.S. security assistance to Ethiopia in light of recent developments and improve transparency with respect to the purposes of such assistance to the people of Ethiopia;
- Calls on the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to immediately lead efforts to develop a comprehensive strategy to support improved democracy and governance in Ethiopia;
- Calls on the Secretary of State in conjunction with the Administrator of USAID to improve oversight and accountability of U.S. assistance to Ethiopia, pursuant to the expectations established in the U.S. Strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa; and
- Calls on the Secretary of State in cooperation with the Secretary of the Treasury, to apply appropriate sanctions on foreign persons or entities responsible for extrajudicial killings,

torture, or other gross violations of internationally recognized human rights committed against any nationals in Ethiopia as provided for in the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act.

Passed by the U.S. Senate on 12/17/2015, the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act is consequential for Ethiopia. Section 3 of the bill authorizes the President to impose U.S. entry and property sanctions against any foreign person (or entity) who is:

- a) Responsible for extrajudicial killings, torture, or other gross violations of internationally recognized human rights committed against individuals in any foreign country seeking to expose illegal activity carried out by government officials, or to obtain, exercise, or promote human rights and freedoms; and acted as an agent of or on behalf of a foreign person in such activities; and
- b) A government official or senior associate of such official responsible for, or complicit in, ordering or otherwise directing acts of significant corruption, including the expropriation of private or public assets for personal gain, corruption related to government contracts or the extraction of natural resources, bribery, or the facilitation or transfer of the proceeds of corruption to foreign jurisdictions; or has materially assisted or provided financial, material, or technological support for, or goods or services in support of, such activities.

The TPLF has begun a counter offensive hiring an American firm that will be paid from Ethiopia's coffers using aid and other tax payers' monies. The TPLF dominated regime is "begging for emergency humanitarian assistance of close to a billion dollars to feed more than 5 million famine victims while spending \$150,000 a month (\$1.8 million per year) to lobby the American Congress and government" to adhere to the status quo.

The U.S. Congress and the Trump administration should reject the waste of American tax payer money, demand accountability from Ethiopia's rulers, and promote the democratization process in Ethiopia. Promoting democratization in Ethiopia is the best investment America can and should make in Ethiopia and the rest of Africa. Granting billions of dollars of tax payers' monies will end up being siphoned off by Ethiopia's ruling clique. Ironically, the money will end up in Middle Eastern, Caribbean and East Asian banks where there is very little or no oversight.

In conclusion, only the formation of an inclusive, rule of law based and democratic Ethiopia will serve as a beacon of hope, prosperity, peace, stability and anti-terrorism in one of the most conflict-ridden parts of the world. It is also this investment of empowering Ethiopians to resolve their own problems that will serve America's long-term strategic interests in the Horn of Africa and the rest. America should learn from the sunken costs of the past and change its policy toward Ethiopia.

A substantive shift of American policy support of Ethiopia's 102 million people; and not falling into the temptation or the trap of the lobbying efforts by a repressive, cunning and corrupt regime that the Trump administration would and can show Africa and the rest of the world a

departure from the past. Without a dramatic policy shift in aid, the “vicious cycle” of state sponsored “embezzlement, cronyism,” graft, hidden commission and bribery, corruption and illicit outflow of billions of dollars from one of the poorest, least developed and oppressed countries in the world will continue. These attributes in poor governance will only breed terrorism, civil conflict and instability in the Horn of Africa and beyond. The status quo will only diminish America’s values of freedom, constitutional democracy and the rule of law.

March 14, 2017