

## Keeping the Nation Secure Amid Terror Threats

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*(Tsehay Adugna 04-13-16)*

Terrorists groups are the major challenge of the twenty-first century. Barbaric attacks are conducted on civilians every other day.

In this month, in Mogadishu, Somalia, three people were killed and 10 injured in a mortar attack in after a mortar attack by suspected al-Shabaab militants in the city's seaside Hamar Weyne district. In Rafah, Egypt, the Sinai branch of Islamic State killed more than seven people, including a military officer and a civilian woman, in two separate blasts in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula. ISIL's Sinai branch claimed responsibility for the attacks on several websites.

Whereas in Syria; in a chemical attack killed twenty-three and injured more than one hundred in Aleppo, Syria. According to media reports, the Islamist group Jaysh al-Islam claimed responsibility and stated that they will punish whoever used the chemical weapon".

In Basilan Island, Philippines, the terrorist group, Abu Sayyaf, killed more than twenty people and injured several more. In Nusaybin, Turkey, five security officials, including two police chiefs and a major, have been killed in an attack in the Nusaybin district of the southeastern province of Mardin. In Izige, Nigeria, Boko Haram terrorists attacked the the area and killed three soldiers and two vigilante members.

These are in the past two weeks alone. Dozens of similar barbaric and cowardly attack on civilians take place every month raising the concerns of

governments around the world. As a result, there is hot debate in recent weeks on the means of countering terror threats.

In this regard, it could be useful to discuss how Ethiopia managed to prevent terrorist threats. Indeed, Ethiopia has been successful in keeping the people safe and some general lessons can be taken from it.

Hence, we will discuss some of the strong characteristics of Ethiopia that helped in fending off terror threats

### **The Ethnic Federalism**

Two decades ago, after the collapse of the Dergue regime, Ethiopia's peace has been in the hands of about seventeen armed rebellions organized along nationalist lines.

Ethiopia managed the challenge by taking the rare step of a multi-national federalism that endowed all ethnic groups the right of self-government. The right of nations, nationalities and peoples to self-governance is also applied at sub-regional level. Groups either that do not have their own regional state or residing outside their home regions exercise a self-governance with the status of special zone or special Woreda or special Kebele.

Therefore, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is founded by the constitution that is “an expression of the mutual commitment” of nation, nationalities and peoples rather than individual actors or citizens. The constitution guarantees the representation of all nation, nationalities and peoples in the House of Federation, which has the power to interpret the constitution, handle inter-nation/nationality and inter-state matters and demands for self-governance and secession, among others. Every nation,

nationality and group is guaranteed at least one seat in the House and extra one seat per million people, which reflects the numerical strength of the groups.

In general, Ethiopia's multi-national federalism provided several long-term benefits for the state. It promoted peace and helped in the prevention of ethnic conflict and civil war fostering cultural and regional autonomy while maintaining Ethiopia as one political and economic unit.

### **Peoples' Democratic Participation**

The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia states on Article repeatedly underlines that the peoples direct democratic participation as a defining feature of the state.

The Constitution stated in Article 8 (3): "*The sovereignty [of the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia] shall be expressed through their representatives elected in accordance with this Constitution and through their direct, democratic participation.*" Moreover, in Article 38 (1), the Constitution underlined that: "*Every Ethiopian national [has the right] to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly and through freely chosen representatives*".

In line with this Constitutional principles, Wodera and Kebele administrative levels of provide most of the essential services for the population and have big roles in facilitating citizen's access to various services provided by higher government organs, including community based policing services. They are also the venues for public deliberations, mobilizations and making the people's voice heard at higher levels.

## **Popular, Efficient Defense Forces**

In the past, Ethiopian governments had resorted to mobilizing and agitating the people with a message centering on national pride and based on the achievements of previous generations. They did not mobilize people to fight the real sources of our shame. Instead, they indulged in bragging and arrogant declarations of bravado.

The negative impact of this situation was pointed out as twofold: It has prevented the nation from recognizing that the source of our national shame is the lack of development and democracy; and this in turn has blocked efforts to embark on a path of progress through the forging of a national consensus. Secondly, militarism and arrogance have also produced conflicts that could have been prevented and worsened their consequences. Moreover, the mentality has stifled debate, dialogue, give and take, and prevented us from focusing on the fundamental issues.

Since 1991, the government adopted a radical change of outlook. The government committed to a people-centered and economy-centered defense forces by stating the *"determination to improve our lives by deploying everything for economic development and democratization free from arrogance and adventurism"*.

The national defense policy had also articulated the need for maintaining an economy-centered defense forces that have been overlooked and misjudged for decades. It stated that: *"Proudly declaring that we shall build a defense force second to none is no solution. Even if we tried, the result would not be different from the debacle that the Derg (former military regime) faced. The definition of what constitutes an appropriate defense force must proceed*

*from the threats that we face and our political and economic capacities to deal with them....The national defense force that we build should essentially be within the limits of our economic capacity, and should not be above or below the needs defined by our threat analysis."*

Indeed, the army's discipline, its skills and its unique characteristics as well as its performance in maintaining the balance between internal development and peace, security and territorial integrity; its contributions to regional stability; and the successful efforts to build a symbiotic relationship between the army and economic development have all been visible and widely acclaimed.