

The Three-Headed Hydra Breathing Fire on Ethiopia

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The problems facing Ethiopia is multiple and seems invincible like the myth of the many headed reptilian monster with amber eyes and yellow-white teeth that was terrorizing the Greek people in ancient times, 565-550 BC. The many-headed hydra was a ruthless creature feared for its mindless savagery, striking and spitting acid in all directions. Each head of the hydra had independent behaviour with a capacity to reborn. Ethiopia is now in a defining moment of history facing a three-headed fire-breathing hydra.



One head is the effects of exponential population growth. Ethiopia has a population of 96 million and is currently the population is increasing by about two million people a year. The population size is projected to increase to 137 million by the year 2037. Population size matters and it has already affected food security, employment creation (rural and urban areas), access to public services (education, health) and urban services. The Ethiopian population is not only large in size, it is also growing rapidly. Speed also matters affecting sources of economic growth. Has the economy the capacity to increase the scale of production and employment at the rate needed to recover from backlogs and re-adjust to new additional shortages every year? Are the mechanisms of economic growth and organization of economic activities in place to keep up with the population growth race? (for details see “Exponential Population Growth and Carrying Capacity of the Ethiopian Economy”). Population growth is an autonomous force and

no one has control over the driving demographic forces. Rapid population growth is the main head of the three-headed hydra.

The second head is the problem of choosing economic policy. There are many experts giving advices on the questions of what, why and how aspects of economic policy changes and reforms in Ethiopia. Some advocate poverty reduction strategies based on the principles of human rights and moral values. Using a political economy approach, some experts advocate various sectoral policies (social, economic and governance sectors) to improve the efficiency, implementation rate and capabilities of the sectors. Others focus on structural priorities and advocate either service or industrialization-led structural transformation. Among researchers and experts there is a considerable difference both in the analysis (selection and benchmarking of performance variables) and solution findings to economic problems. What kind of policy matters more for solving economic scarcity, economic fragmentation, low saving, low productivity trap, environmental degradation and outmigration? Have a guess. Who is to judge both in the means and objectives of policy choice?

The third head is the culture of political power fetishism. There are group of opposing political valances who consider state power as a prerequisite to their group social existence. For these group of people consequences of population growth and challenges of policy choices are different plans that come second. These group of people work incredibly hard to stay or come into political power, because all other benefits express their values in it.

Ethiopia is now battling the three-headed hydra that lurked at the houses of the Ethiopian people. Has Ethiopia the strength to fight the multi-headed serpent? Or, is it fighting a losing battle?

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