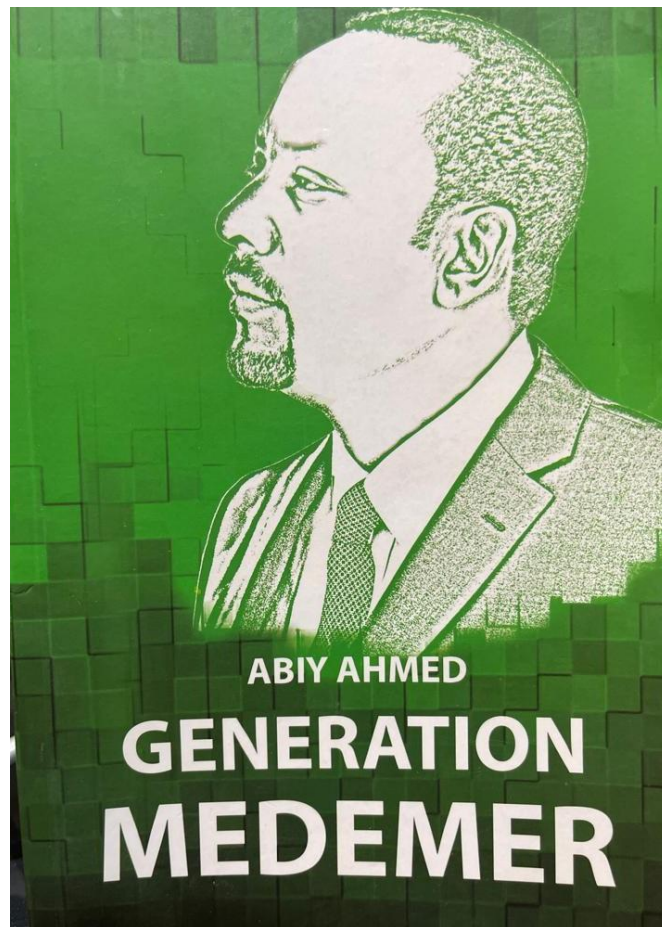


Book Review | 'Generation Medemer'

By Dr.Abdirahman O. Gaas | www.aogaas.com

Dr Abiy's spearheads for 'New Ethiopia'/Medemer Generation



Reviewer Note: The first book I read this year, 2024, is Dr.Abiy's "Generation Medemer," published last year, 2023, in which the author builds upon and refines some concepts and ideas he introduced in his first publication, 2019, which I read in 2021 and presented to one of my fellow reading clubs. In the first edition, he gave an Ethiopian and Afro-centred approach to address Ethiopia's and continental prolonged challenges. That volume proposed a direction of transforming the rooted ideas of the continent based on the indigenous culture and charter to achieve lasting peace, prosperity, and progress.

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My goal in reviewing this book is to objectively examine the author's ideas and his arguments on the Medemer Generation and assess their validity, practicality, and application to Ethiopia's and the region's present challenges, as well as to serve as a blueprint for Ethiopia's epic battle for peace, prosperity, and growth in the not-too-distant future.

The author's essential epistemological viewpoint is that Ethiopians and Africans must break free from the constraints of "foreign and imported ideas" that have driven their pursuit of "modernity." He encouraged people to explore solutions by drawing on the rich traditions of African cultures, rituals, and intellectual traditions while eclectically merging them with practical foreign ideas. He argued that Africans have sought to adopt non-African ideologies with limited relevance to the African experience and light understanding and apply them assertively, resulting in significant harm to Ethiopia and African societies. Such blind importation and application of foreign ideas has done considerable damage intergenerationally by setting pernicious examples without the means and ability to correct mistakes resulting from such ideas.

Medemer is from the Amharic word "demere," which means gathered, but the author translated it into "synergy." As the author's sequel, the "Medemer" concept fundamentally re-imagines Ethiopian society in this contemporary context. It is a vision of society based on a balanced system of cooperation and competition.

The "Generation Medemer," as the author defined it, is a "new framework of thought," a mechanism "*to heal our wounds and cure our ailments and resolve our problems.*" He formulated his "Medemer" ideas not from philosophical investigations or speculation but from a determined, practical quest for solutions to the problems faced by Ethiopia. In search of responses and perspectives, the author discloses he had to engage "*diverse personalities*" and deeply explore indigenous African institutions such as traditional culture, religious groups, and other African-based beliefs. This concept rejects the philosophy of social division by ethnic, racial, and sectarian.

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Using the “Medemer” concept, the author aims to describe socio-political “synergy” (from the Latin root “syn” (“together”) and “ergy” (“work”) in dynamic processes of cooperation and constructive (in contrast to destructive Zero-Sum outcomes) competition. The medium generation concept is very assertive as it describes a synergistic process of coming together of individuals, groups, leaders, and institutions to work more dynamically, effectively, and creatively for the common good practices and the public interest. The author argued that coming together in “Medemer” form releases a vast amount of social, political, and economic energy, as the elements of social and political change and transformations are inherent in Ethiopian and African peoples’ cultures, civilizations, hearts, and minds. Non-African ideas should not be eclectically adopted.

The author believes that enduring change may occur not via extreme upheavals or unanticipated violent changes but through eclectic learning from one generation to the next and the transfer of intergenerational ideals. The author contends that “nation-building is the consequence of years of ceaseless intergenerational interchange.” A nation is the outcome of intergenerational solid bonds and effective communication. Each generation's efforts and deeds within a particular "era" ultimately determine a nation's success or failure.

Each generation has its own “language” and way of communicating with its own members and other generations. Often, communication is lost in translation between generations, resulting in gross misunderstandings and violent outcomes. *‘Generation Medemer’ aims to learn from past generations' mistakes, failures, accomplishments, and successes and build a new Ethiopia that thrives in peace, prosperity, and collective progress.*

CONCLUSION:

In this book, “Generation Medemer,” Prime Minister Dr. Abiy publicly presented what I believe to be the “agenda” of ‘New Ethiopia’ (Generation Medemer). In his

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“Foreword,” he made a profound statement that may resonate with his road map to ‘New Ethiopia’ to lead the younger generation into this glorious destination.

“The Medemer path is the result of my life’s journey...The Medemer Path is a work that has been formulated to bring about intergenerational Medemer or synergy. Medemer is the lens through which we see the future generation by pulling the capacities of the current building on the strengths of the past generations and correcting the mistakes of the previous.”

In “Generation Medemer,” Abiy announced a generation that will do the heavy lifting in building the New Ethiopia from poverty to prosperity as he categorized (chapter 2, p. 36-51) the modern generations of Ethiopia from 1896 into four distinct categories: Conservative Generation, Dreamer Generation, Disillusioned Generation, and Alienated Generation. I noted the author's caution against harshly judging previous generations and acknowledging their historical achievements. In (chapter 7, p. 157-162) delves into Abiy's concept of Medemer as a generation-building formula. The author argues that the Ethiopian identity should be harmonized with a broader African identity, and this generation should embrace a global citizenship mindset. Abiy draws inspiration from the unity and strength of ants, believing that a united generation can overcome any challenges. On the other hand (Chapter 10, p. 267-270), Abiy suggests that the United States and its Western allies focus less on the Middle East and the Horn of Africa, creating opportunities for other actors. Ethiopia is presented as a potential economic and political partner for the Middle East due to its agricultural resources.

Nevertheless, leadership scholars reveal that a leader's success depends on the context, situation, and cause, while every cause needs to be resilient, inclusive, and service-oriented. Whatever obstacles Abiy met, he settled his leadership manifesto for the new Ethiopian generation. I recommend reading this book mostly for the following

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categories for their respective purposes: Politicians (regional and global), diplomats, younger generations, Researchers, and journalists.

From my point of view, this exciting and ambitious plan to rebuild Ethiopia (Generation Medemer) can only be the first step towards changing the country's course. Since a single leader cannot solve Ethiopia's ingrained problems, a group of elites must peacefully spread their revolutionary ideas from the bottom up until they reach the people, organizations, and institutions that require maturity. The inclusivity and ethical practices of cooperation, collaboration, compromise, tolerance, resilience, steadfastness, and respect in all areas of life serve as the foundation for these kinds of practical adjustments.

BOOK SUMMARY

Structure of the book:

The book is organized into three parts and ten chapters.

- **PART ONE:** (*three chapters*) It is about the “conception and chain of generations.” The author discussed his pivotal notions of “Generation Medemer.”
- **PART TWO:** (*three chapters*) “**Generations Path and Journey.**” The author discussed his notions of a “generational personality and identity and advancement of generations through imaginative knowledge and ethical integrity.”
- **PART THREE** (*four chapters*), the author focuses on the rise of the new “Medemer Generation” and Discusses ‘Medemer’ as a generational building formula. In the last chapter (the Middle East), he provoked a geopolitical analysis by exploring the prosperity of this Medemer generation, which lies in the broader Middle Eastern context.

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Although I'm recommending reading the whole book, here, I summarized several passages from some chapters:

Chapter 1: Generation Definition and Making: The Author defined the 'Generation' and generation making as he said, *"Every generation determines its own characters and legacy through its losses and gains, its life experiences and the way it has come to terms with the fortunes and misfortune it has encountered."* Each generation passes the baton to the next to reach the goalpost of peace, democracy, prosperity, and progress. *Unlike other revolutions, Abiy's dialectic progression in Medemer is from poverty to prosperity through generational struggle. The end is not a "rational society" but a society free from want, ethnic conflict, strife, bigotry, hate, etc. Indeed, Abiy explored that the "Medemer Generation" is rooted in love, fraternity, and unity values.* He concluded that behaviors and habits that persist across generations become national values, as national values are principles that endure and remain unchanged across generations. The author implicitly contrasted the Medemer Generation with Western "generations."

Chapter 2: The nature and relationship of modern Ethiopian generations: Abiy has an extraordinary understanding of the dynamics between different generations and generations in Ethiopia. According to him, the new generation either diminishes or amplifies the impact of previous generations. Historically, Ethiopian generations have criticized previous generations as hopelessly outdated or revered them with sentimental longing, sometimes idealizing and magnifying their accomplishments.

Abiy provides instances where he highlights the uncritical embrace of Marxist ideology and its detrimental consequences for Ethiopian society as illustrative instances of learning experiences. Another notable challenge he observes is the continued involvement of several individuals from the generation that promoted Marxist ideology and played active roles in the socialist revolution in Ethiopian politics. He cautions against harshly judging their generation, acknowledging their significant historical achievements.

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Abiy's categorization of Ethiopian generations is based on their characteristics and attributes. He categorized contemporary Ethiopian history into four discrete and somewhat overlapping generations.

- * **Conservative Generation:** After winning Adwa in 1896, the Conservative Generation was the first to experience “modernity.” It had early modern schools, hotels, vehicles, movies, aircraft, and newspapers. That generation valued “Ethiopians” and collaboration. It tried to mimic Japan, which modernized while balancing traditional traditions with Western technology. Conservatives wanted to “preserve Ethiopians’ culture ethos, spirits, patriotism, and pride and aspire to harmonize the modern with the traditional values.
- * **Dreamer Generation:** The mid-20th century Dreamer Generation is often called “the children of the 1960s.” Modern schooling, the media, and foreign ideals and customs impacted this generation. This communist generation's “student movement” and revolutionary “study clubs” were unique. It wanted a democratic Ethiopia, but a spiral of bloodshed wounded millions and sent hundreds of thousands into exile. The author argued that this generation’s courage, conviction, and patriotism were quite admirable as they are “ *the generation that valiantly defended the sovereignty of Ethiopia during the Siad Barre invasion.*”
- * **Disillusioned Generation:** This disorganized generation arose in the latter three decades of the 19th century, after the fall of the Derg and socialism. This generation saw the emergence of the Dreamer Age's ethnonationalist side. It is disillusioned due to the downfall of socialism, the elimination of its sacrifices, and the political chaos that has overtaken the country. This generation has been afflicted by religious and ethnic conflicts and exhibited a diminished degree of pan-Ethiopian thinking. This generation lost sight of the purpose of politics and became disconnected from it.
- * **Alienated Generation:** This fourth generation is the millennial generation nurtured by the Millennial generation and raised on the politics of division. The

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generation demanded what their country could not provide and instead opted for emigration when the nation failed to meet its demands. Abiy argued that this generation insisted on their rights without understanding their duty correctly.

In Chapter 3- *Understanding and Leading the Forces that Form Generations*: The Author revisited Ethiopia's prolonged challenges and its legacies (positive or negative) of different paradigms, including **Marxist socialist ideology** (which gained its eager audiences from Ethiopia in 1960s), **radicalization** (*give rise to extremist ideas that have their own ideological political social and religious underpinnings*) and **polarization** (*is an intellectual and practical tendency in which those who share the same ideology stretch minor differences which different wings and factions belonging to the same ideological camp*). The author debated that the rise of extremism has created three challenges to change and nation in Ethiopia: a). radicalism, b). weak political culture, and c). political violence.

Abiy profoundly discussed "*weak state legitimacy*" as he defined "legitimacy as the confidence that those who live within one political system believe that the system protects their interest" as the legitimacy is the extent to which the people and elites in a state consider the state as an agent of their interest. He discussed *international rivalry, technological change, and gray-sone war, which are the factors that contribute to generation formation*. The author discussed that sometimes Africa's situation as a continent has a negative influence and hinders potential transformations and development. He argued that although the continent formally gained independence decades ago, it still suggests neo-colonialism and emphasizes that the Ethiopian state's interests and existence are closely tied to Ethiopia's location in the horn of Africa near the Red Sea and its role in international competition among world powers. He wrote this quote: "*Ethiopia is a country that was created along the Red Sea during ancient times, and its fate and destiny are also tied to it. Ethiopia's access to the Red Sea had made it a strong contender in the region's geopolitics. When we lost all of its access to the Red Sea, Its*

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geopolitical role diminished significantly. Conspiracies that recognize that Ethiopia's role is strongly tied to the Red Sea have resulted in the situation we find ourselves in today."

In Chapter 4-, A Generation's Personality, Identity and Ownership: The author started an Amharic proverb "*Home is where you return, Earth is where you end up.*" he compared the challenges of Ethiopia's intergenerational in the historical context and argued that until 17th century; during Emperor Fasiledes Ethiopia was one of the global power before they decide to close themselves from the global "closed-door polity" for avoiding external influences "This eventually culminated in a closed-door policy and shrinkage of Ethiopia's international influence." This policy affected foreign relations, trade, and education access from outside the country. Ethiopia's leaders had the wisdom and foresight to forge cooperative relations with outside powers to protect the country's sovereignty while striving. Abiy argues that Marxism-Leninism became a deadly litmus test for Ethiopians of that period, leaving the country open to chaos and brain drain. "The Ethiopians who had emigrated in thought during the student movement eventually emigrated in body, leaving the country to become a play den for the ignorant. Violence came to be considered as wisdom and evil as strength, and corruption came to be viewed as smart and laziness as clever. National values were lost, institutions demolished."

In **Chapter 5-** The Rise of a Generation Through Imaginative Knowledge and Ethical Integrity, Abiy argued in this chapter that the Medemer Generation is different from any other generation as they are powered by creative imagination, scientific knowledge, and ethical integrity. The author believes this generation is transformative as they are ready to access vast knowledge sources and knowledge to transition Ethiopia from poverty to prosperity and make it globally competitive with innovation and new ideas.

Chapter six- the legacy of generations: Transcendentalism and transnationality. The author analyzed different nations and nationalities and how each is proud of their beautiful historical attractions and historic locations, such as Jurisalam. He argued

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that the secret of happiness, health, and long life is something that most people wonder about, as beautiful sights that prompt joy and contentment. The beauty of a country is among the prime causes of happiness for a population. At the same time, the dirty offices have contributed to poor work ethic and low productivity in any country, particularly Ethiopia. In the last part of the chapter, Abiy scolded the Ethiopian people as they were the symbol of African Solidarity and the Source of African pride. Still, all of these have been forgotten, and Ethiopians have been frying themselves on the stove of division for decades. He urged this new generation to look beyond internal divisions and embrace a paradigm that embassies and strengthens African solidarity and concluded that *"the Medemer Generation is a generation that strives to make Africa united and robust to security African rightful place in the world, rising above betty internal division and rivalries."*

In Chapter 7- Medemer as a generation-building formula: Abiy investigates his concept of Medemer as a "generation-building formula." In his first book, he returns to his initial premise that attempting to live in solitude would not allow humans to survive in their everyday lives. He emphasized that this generation's Ethiopian identity should be harmonized with a more significant African identity and African identity for global citizens. Abiy thinks that this generation will triumph via the spirit of ants. "Ants united can never be defeated."

Chapter 8 The new generation of medemer: characteristics and distinguishing features. Abiy described the characteristics and distinct look of the modern generation as it differs from every generation of Ethiopia. He said, "The era of medemer is Ethiopia is one multinational unity, an established ethos of fraternity; with well developed civic culture and strong regional linkages." The characteristics he described include that this generation has a genuine desire to learn and know rationality and superiority of ideas, a lifestyle of respecting human dignity, and where a feeling of love for the country that will be manifested through holistic patriotism as they have strong urban and rural cultures that are relevant to the contemporary world such culture for democracy and election to be the party of our political culture. He concluded that

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Ethiopia would be created by understanding and implementing the medemer framework of thought through networks, unity, and collaboration, which will be incredible as this generation leads Africa on the path of prosperity.

Chapter 9- Gernation Medemrn's composition: wisdom and strategy. In this chapter, the author explained his philosophy of Medemer generation building and its pathways, such as studying the historical mistakes and taking strategic directions, including freedom of the press, reforming the problematic system of education to be modernized, inclusive, and holistic education as he stressed many relevant examples including east Easia countries approaches. Poor education and failing schools have created "an apathetic and socially disengaged generation," which is Medemer Gernation's most significant danger.

In Chapter 10- The Middle East: An Opportunity or Impediment for the Generation Member- The author investigated the future of the Horn of Africa region and the global context, as well as the attainable possibilities and risks that it confronts. His theory is centered on the demise of the unipolar Western order and the emergence of China and, indirectly, the BRIC nations. He contends that the United States and its Western allies face significant economic and military challenges and that a multipolar world is emerging. He argues that as oil reliance has decreased, the United States has shifted its focus away from the Middle East and Horn area and toward the Pacific and Far East to counter China's growing influence. This has created a vacuum in the Horn and Middle East, which the West's adversaries are exploiting. Sanctions, economic chokeholds, and other punishments are increasing disobedience and hastening African nations' separation from Western powers. Abiy made a compelling case for Ethiopia's future prosperity as the breadbasket of the Middle East and beyond, emphasizing that the Middle East is facing water and food scarcity, and Ethiopia can become the only viable option for economic and political cooperation.