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Ethiopia Today

Ethiopia prides itself on having attained political stability and has an enviable rate of economic growth thanks to huge foreign investment and the development of a manufacturing industry. Despite the apparent boom, the country faces numerous challenges as it grapples with finding job opportunities for an expanding population – not to mention the growing political dissent from the Oromo people, who feel marginalised by the ruling elites. To achieve long-term stability, Ethiopia is in need of better governance and democratic reforms.

Best on Film

In Search of Myths and Heros

(2005) The first in Michael Wood's sumptuously filmed series seeks the truth behind the Sheba legend.

Lost Kingdoms of Africa (2010) Dr Gus Casely-Hayford explores ancient Ethiopian cultures and legends.

The Great Rift: Africa's Wild Heart (2010) A finely crafted portrait of the Rift Valley and its wildlife.

Lamb (2015) The story of a young orphan in rural Ethiopia. It's the first Ethiopian film to make the Cannes festival's official selection.

Best in Print

Cutting for Stone (Abraham Verghese; 2009) This absorbing novel follows the fortunes of twin brothers over five turbulent decades in Addis Ababa.

Beneath the Lion's Gaze (Maaza Mengiste; 2011) Tells a poignant story of a fictional family during the fall of Haile Selassie and the rise of the Derg.

Notes from the Hyena's Belly (Nega Mezlekia; 2002) Sheds light on the violent decades straddling the ousting of Haile Selassie.

All Our Names (Dinaw Mengestu; 2014) The story of two young students who are confronted by violence during a revolution.

Ethiopia Under Desalegn

Hailemariam Desalegn has been serving as prime minister since 2012. Desalegn is said to be competent to foster growth in the country and combat poverty but has the reputation of lacking charisma on international matters (unlike Zenawi, his predecessor). Though his party, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), is solidly behind him, many observers wonder if he has the political clout to hold together such a diverse country and one that, despite its progress, remains blighted with problems and surrounded by unstable neighbours – not to mention ISIS, which executed 28 Ethiopians in Lybia in April 2015. The border conflict with Eritrea is still ongoing and relations with Somalia remain tense.

Economic Progress & Improved Infrastructure

Ethiopia has been developing at an astonishing rate. In the 10 years leading up to 2016, economic growth has, thanks to a huge investment in agriculture (particularly the flower-export market), been at record highs, sometimes reaching the giddy heights of 12%. Foreign investment has been tumbling into the country and the nation's infrastructure given a much needed overhaul. This is most notable in the transport system, which has been undergoing a major makeover, with Chinese road construction crews turning what have long been pot-hole-infested tracks into super-smooth highways – not to mention the Addis Ababa–Djibouti City railway line, which was inaugurated in late 2016 and is expected to boost exports. But this has not come without a price: local farmers have complained of being forcibly removed from their land in order to make way for huge foreign-owned farming or industrial projects. And Ethiopia faces a massive challenge in ensuring that the