

Issues to Ponder for 2010 Ethiopian Parliamentary Election

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June 26, 2009

There is a shortcoming in comparative knowledge about democratic elections and democracy that emanates from the broad Western notion of democratization, affecting those who're very quick to critic an election in non-Western countries. This shortcoming in comparative knowledge assumes that all democratic elections should be responsive, transparent, fair, and **peaceful** no matter how uncommon their background is. By having such a persistent and inflexible presupposition toward all elections, a concept born for lack of comparative knowledge has now become a philosophy, which depicts elections in disparate places with disparate background as interchangeable social affairs of democratization. As a result, a poor and backward country with next to nothing democratic culture is thus forced and dictated to portray the same responsiveness, transparency, fairness, and peacefulness much like a seasoned democratic country in the West.

There is no singular and common rigid protocol that has to be followed to legitimize the process of democratization to which a democracy subscribing people should adhere to. And yet, unimaginative overboard activism, coupled with this lack of comparative knowledge is driving bitter critics of Ethiopia to ignore the social, economic, and political history of the people that may stand to benefit from a **relatively** fair, transparent, responsive, and peaceful election. Consequently, without deeply analyzing the context under which the election is being held, these acerbic critics of Ethiopia would love to set rigid protocols that they don't even prescribe on their own backyard.

These bitter critics will never ever stand in support of a violent riot that jeopardizes the lives and properties of **their own people** for any reason. And yet, they have the temerity to tell us Ethiopians otherwise. These critics are in most likelihood citizens of America who're accustomed to a peaceful life with immense alacrity to keep it that way, and also with a determination to take action on a crowd who's bent on destroying their property and their beautiful life. And yet, they still have the temerity to tell us otherwise for as long as they stay over the fray very far away in their cozy American homes. This is the ultimate in hypocritical political life that the bitter critics of Ethiopia's election are well known for living.

Can you imagine a life-ending riot anywhere in America being only dealt with batons, water canons, and a friendly police force? What citizen of America tolerates a crowd who's bent on destroying his property and poses danger to his life without flashing his handgun or what ever is on his hand? What individual in his right mind would enter the compound of an American resident with the intent to terrorize and harm another individual and hopes to walk scot-free? What kind of an American government would allow the killing of its Federal Security Officers and the burning and destroying of public properties without using a deadly force to assert its authority?

Should Ethiopia react any differently to these types of violent scenarios than what the conventional wisdom asks for? Should Ethiopia answer to any future criticism on the appropriateness of its legitimate force, say from America, while America is harboring one of the terrorist ringleader and hundreds of his followers who would love to see such a violent outburst in the upcoming election "by any means necessary?" The answer is an astounding no.

Ethiopia is cognizant of America's political posturing and the intentions of these bitter critics to handcuff its legitimate force, perhaps not knowing that an election in Ethiopia is unlike any other election in America. Nonetheless, if America chooses to harbor a wanted terrorist ringleader and his followers knowing well about their pure intention to use violence to bloody Ethiopians, America's acceptance of such unlawful intention should induce Ethiopia to take actions on two fronts; one, Ethiopia should highly scrutinize and or block American election observers, and two, it should deal resolutely not to give a breathing room for any of what the insane Doctor and Ginbot 7, ONLF, OLF, the one-man Eritrean state, and others are hoping for. In the aftermath of its defensive measures, Ethiopia should worry less to answer to any entity for having taken a resolute action on terror-prone group(s). After all, it's Ethiopia's life that is at stake and neither any authority nor any issue can ever take precedent over defending the lives of Ethiopians.

Mindful of this adamant National Security stance of Ethiopia, these animus critics would love to find ways to attenuate the powers bestowed on the legitimate government of Ethiopia, by wishing to impose rigid protocols that they don't even prescribe on their own backyard. **If they have their way, they will ask us to spray water on those who will sneak on us with Hand grenades and ask us to strike with batons those who had made it apparent to spray us with bullets.**

Instead of asking the Ethiopian government to follow a rigid set of protocols in the upcoming election, these bitter critics should ask themselves the following questions. Is it possible to install democratic maturity and indifference in any of Ethiopia's contending political forces in short period of time? Does the Western notion of democracy lend itself to be attainable in fairly short period of time, if the imperative issues at hand are issues of equalizing the many diverse people of Ethiopia who had been deprived of their fair political, social, and economic standing? Is it possible for those who have a completely different notion of Ethiopia to accept the axiomatic democratic principle that calls for those who were deprived of their fair standing in Ethiopian political arena to govern themselves as they see it fit? Why should Ethiopia be the subject of strict lecture and dictation to incorporate the Western notion of democracy as it's perceived by Westerners? Should the desire for the Western notion of democracy take precedent over the strenuous struggle of Ethiopia for economic development?

In our part, we should all ask ourselves, who if any gave these bitter critics from the West the monopoly in moral authority to render what's right and wrong about how democratic election should proceed? How is it possible for these bitter critics to judge Ethiopia without having a solid idea where Ethiopia is coming from and where it prefers to go? How are they to judge Ethiopia without having a clue about the prevailing social, political, and economic factors that dictate the form, mechanism, and timing of Ethiopia's own democratization? Why should Ethiopia be the perpetual student/subject of these bitter critics from the West for all of the good things that democracy brings forth? Isn't it about time for us Ethiopians to strongly assert our own authentic democratic voice for our own sake instead of somebody else's?

Finally, what if any is driving these bitter critics of Ethiopia to behave in such away? The answer: a shortcoming in comparative knowledge about democratic elections and democracy. A discourse about democratic election and genuine democracy in absolute terms is impossible, since democracy in a nutshell cannot be more than the continuous approximation of fairness in all fields of human needs. One may even plausibly argue that democracy and fairness are interchangeable concepts that we often give lukewarm attention to. The interchangeability of the concepts of fairness and democracy may become apparent in a society that grows to treat its citizens fairly, if and only if that given society is engaged in the act of continuously ridding itself from unfair practices of past and present deeds.

Social, political, and economic misdeeds of past and present times may be amended either by incremental social affirmative policies or by profoundly overhauling the unfair system in play. The American experiment for one is a perfect example as it's struggling to grow fairer to its colored people

and women by continuously ridding itself from past and present deprivations. The bold and fearless contemporary Ethiopian experiment is another example that is growing fair every day by empowering its diverse people to govern themselves as they see it fit. In both cases, the common thread is the struggle to create a fair system dictated only by the needs of the indigenous people respectively. Nonetheless, these acrimonious critics seem to be missing the point, that democracy in its final analysis in Ethiopia as much as it is in America is the continuous approximation of fairness in all fields of human needs. By extension, an incremental and relatively fair peaceful procedure is what an Ethiopian election needs, not a rigid foreign protocol with a shortcoming in comparative knowledge about democracy and democratic elections.