

Reading from President Obama's Blueprint

By

Zena Mewael

(zenamewael@yahoo.com)

October 9, 2009

Like many other people, I was excited by the reality of a black man in the White House as President of this great nation of ours. I even shed my share of tears of joy while watching Barack Obama address his enthusiastic supporters at Grant Park, Chicago, on the occasion of his election victory. In its own time and space, my faith in the American democratic ideals was reaffirmed when a black man of humble upbringings took the stage to claim his resounding triumph after running the most organized and aptly grueling election campaign for nearly two-years for the World's powerful position—the U.S. President. It was a historic election.

We are reminded, once again, of the sacrifices paid by the American people in general and African Americans in particular. Those sacrifices paved a way not only for Obama's election victory but also for people like me who enjoy the freedom in our new country. Therefore, I am hopeful that America will be even stronger with Barack Obama in the White House for we have proved to the whole world that every child has equal opportunity in realizing his/her dream. All children can dream big—the sky is the limit. America was congratulated by the whole world for being the beacon of hope for all human beings.

All that celebration was then—November of last year. Soon after the election, the American people expected him to deliver on his campaign promises. In less than nine months time since taking office, Obama has tried his best to address those promises—fixing the economy; ending the Iraq war; closing the Guantanamo Bay prison; improving America's image in the world. But, most of these grand schemes haven't been materialized, except America's image in the world as witnessed by the recent Nobel Prize for President Obama that surprised many people.

Still others—extremist Ethiopians in the Diaspora for example—hoped the President would bring change in their home country. And as it stands, they are not happy with the President's performance thus far. They mistook Obama's famous campaign slogan, "**Change We Can Believe in**" for "**Change We Can Belie in.**" He is not listening to the vocal Diaspora's plea to intervene in the internal affairs of a sovereign country. Clearly, he is able to discern between genuine yearning for democracy and a phony movement led by power hungry individuals.

Judging from what has happened thus far and the reality on the ground, I am afraid that Obama won't attend to the demands of the vociferous Diaspora for the following five good reasons:

EPRDF-Supporters Forum

The American System of Governance: Even though Obama is the president, he is just a partner in the system regardless of his status. As president, all he can do is push agenda that he thinks will have a good chance of sustaining the “nay” votes of the U.S. Congress members—the essence of “Checks and Balances”—separation of powers. He has to play the game, according to rules and regulations of the congress. That is the beauty of the U.S. Constitution.

Too many problems on his plate: Reality check will save all of us from unnecessary disappointment over Obama’s administration. Barack Obama has taken over a country that is going through so many problems of its own—with economy in recession, and two unconventional wars on the table. Americans expect him to tackle these issues head on. After all, the economy was number one issue for voters who helped Obama clinch the road to the White House, and he knows it wholeheartedly. The norms of globalization dictate that—in times of economic crisis—the United States of America cannot afford going it alone—it needs the cooperation of other countries in the world.

Global War on Terrorism (Overseas Contingency Operations): The nature of the wars the U.S. is engaged in requires global cooperation—especially from friendly countries such as Ethiopia, and others that have been fighting against international terrorism way before the September 11, 2001. By all account, Ethiopia will continue to be an important ally of the U.S. in the most hostile region of the World—the Horn of Africa. The Obama administration cannot afford losing a crucial friend that has historical ties to the United States. Both countries have been attacked by terrorists, and have mutual interest in fighting Global terror by coordinating their resources. Both countries need each other until terrorists are surely defeated and beyond.

Ethiopia’s commitment for Democracy: Ethiopia has embarked upon the current democratization process not to please or displease anyone, but out of its staunch belief that democracy is an essential ingredient for development, and prosperity of the country. The demand for democracy was born out of the ardent struggle waged by the nations and nationalities of Ethiopia. Therefore, Ethiopia takes no instructions from anybody on how to run its internal affairs, nor does it need a reminder to stay the course. Any attempt to lecture Ethiopia on the importance of democracy is tantamount to preaching to the choir. Suffice it to say, Ethiopia is not at the beck and call of the United States of America. As sovereign country, it is free to administer its territory as it sees it fit the reality on the ground. Hence, the Obama administration knows its territory when it deals with Ethiopia, and won’t venture on any political maneuvering that may have the potential of damaging the good relationship of the two countries. This is more so at a time when China is increasing its presence in Africa more than ever.

Lack of Loyal Opposition in the Country: A trustworthy opposition is part and parcel of a democratic society, and the current government understands that quite well. The proof is in the pudding. Opposition parties have mushroomed in Ethiopia due to the favorable political environment created by the EPRDF-led government. In fact the number of opposition groups in Ethiopia dwarfs that of the United States. Ethiopia is more Catholic than the Pope in that regard. The problem with the opposition parties in Ethiopia is, however, their lack of clear

EPRDF-Supporters Forum

political agenda that could benefit the country and its people. They--with the exception of Lidetu's Medhin party and few others-- are highly disorganized, and ill defined to the point that no amount of help from the Ethiopian government or from the United States of America would make them true to the ideals of democracy they utter for political consumptions.

In closing, if you have been wondering why the Obama administration turned a deaf ear to the frequent demonstrations staged by few vocal Diaspora in front of the White House—now you know the reasons behind it. After all, Americans elected Obama for the U.S. Presidency with a clear mission; to avert the looming economic crisis and to end the two protracted wars that consumed billions of taxpayers' money. Hence, he has enough things to worry about before he entertains the idea of resuscitating the members of the defunct "kinijit" party and its sympathizers, so to speak. In light of the aforementioned issues the U.S. now faces, the unrealistic expectations in the reality of Obama Presidency will most likely stay for some time to come without getting Obama's Midas touch. Just read the tea leaves. Or, Shall I say: Please read President Obama's lips?

The writer can be reached at zenamewael@yahoo.com

