

We (ETHIOPIANS) GET THE GOVERNMENT WE DESERVE?

By Tecola W Hagos

Introduction

In a couple of weeks, Ethiopia's national election is upon us in the middle of a year full of unprecedented cruelty and barbarism against defenseless Ethiopian migrants in Libya and South Africa. We have individually and collectively suffered the barbarism of some Arabs in Libya and the savagery of some Zulus in South Africa. This is only the tip of the iceberg, for things will turn out even worse unless we make some fundamental and profound changes in the leadership of the Ethiopian Government and in each of us Citizens of Ethiopia.

Elections are supposed to be periods of excitement of precious moments for people to evaluate their political leaders and either affirm or dismiss them from elected offices. Under all that fanfare the process is as old as mankind. I am quite sure if the caveman of tens of thousands of years ago is somehow relocated to our "modern" era, he will understand our political game perfectly, and might even want to get involved in the process stone-axe and antelope horn tipped spear and all. In other words, elections need not be mystified, but be observed as a political process ever manipulated and corrupted even under the best of circumstances. There can be neither a pure form nor incorruptible processes of elections. It is simply a matter of degrees and intensity.

The Government We Deserve?

The current Ethiopian national election has all the signs of highly manipulated and micro-managed set-up of a single-party getting its way to national power. Despite such clear sham of an election, I think of the process as a learning experience, and I insist that Ethiopians must participate. At the very least, it is an acknowledgement that the votes of the Ethiopian people are legitimizing necessities. This acceptance of the right to vote even if corrupted is just a step behind a process of a legitimate democratic election. Now with full awareness of the organic defectiveness of the election process, we can still ask about the critical issues whether we get the government we deserve or the government we aspire for. There is a famous saying: "Toute nation a le gouvernement qu'elle merite." It is often rendered in translation as "Every nation has the government it deserves."

The statement I quoted above is, in fact, attributed to Joseph-Marie, comte de Maistre (1753 - 1821), a cynical worn-out Sardinian subject and a Sardinian Government functionary from the Nineteenth Century, living soon after the devastating Napoleonic war that engulfed France and the

rest of Europe. Let us note that the statement by de Maistre was made within a striking distance, fresh in memory, of the atrocities committed in the name of the French people's revolution by absolutely depraved individuals like Georges Cauthon, Jean-Francois Delacroix, Maximilien de Robespierre, Louis Antoine Léon de Saint-Just, and Marie-Jean Hérault de Séchelles et cetera, whose equivalents we find also in our time and in our two revolutions. Thus, de Maistre's cynicism and his ultra-conservative outlook is very understandable. However, I question how such broad-stroke political brush-work is binding on every generation that comes after, and how the outcome of any election and the reality of any government is fateful and invariant.

I challenge emphatically the notions of inevitability, fatefulness and defeatist state of mind that accept our existential reality as the one and only single incident that is invariant and permanent. Nothing is invariant, for the future is determined by the individual moment by moment without the confine or dictate of the past. Neither the past nor the future is real, what is eternal is the present. Even more so in human affairs that it is impossible to show the single causal nexus of events in any situation that involves thinking and rationality as is the case with almost all actions involving human beings. We did not deserve Emperor Haile Selassie; we did not deserve Mengistu Haile Mariam; we did not deserve Meles Zenawi; we did not deserve Hailemariam Desalegn either. Those characters are simply incidents of history. They just happened. There is nothing inevitable about any one of them ruling in Ethiopia. If we look into how they started out their individual lives, assuming for argument sake the reality of causal nexus, none of them was a likely candidate to become a leader. So much for epistemology and metaphysics.

Solution requiring courage and fortitude.

The recent "Ethiopia and Horn of Africa Conference" was an experiment in futilities where I heard on video some "drum beating and saber rattling" by ageing scholars who could hardly swing their table knives. It is absolutely irresponsible to stock the fire of violence in Ethiopia while living at safe distance in the Good Old USA. I am not criticizing those individuals for ideas of taking action, but for their unrealistic fantasies. I wish they have learned a thing or two from ancient wisdom about "right" and "wrong" actions. There is this recently posted wonderful article of great wisdom that I wish people would read before making statements about belling the cat: Read

"ኢትዮጵያ የአይበገሬዎችና የቆራጥ ልጆቿ እናት ነች" የኢትዮጵያውያን ከጀግንነት ውጭ የፈሪነት ታሪክ የላቸውም!"
posted, 14 May 2015.

Pointing out problems is not enough. No matter how clumsy a solution, it is better to act than being paralyzed with fear and trepidations. In

the Mahabharata (**Bhagavad Gita**), on the great battlefield of Kurukshetra, Arjuna, who was hesitant to attack the vast army assembled against him, was advised by his charioteer (actually Krishna in disguise) that positive action is better than non-action. We are mostly at war of some sort throughout our lives and we need to take appropriate actions at such moments. I refer to the Gita because it has the earliest documented statement on the philosophy of “action” in the face of difficulties, with rich text of discussion of the distinctions between the right action and hubris and fantasies like those of our Ethiopian scholars drum beating and saber rattling.

In numerous essays and commentaries, I have expressed my skepticism about any opposition leadership capable of leading Ethiopia intact without leading it into an accelerated disintegration. I still maintain that skepticism especially after watching the participants and hearing some of their speeches. They are exclusively organized and a fringe population in the Diaspora from Addis Ababa and Gondar areas with a few Gurages and even fewer Oromos. It is a disturbing divisive faction that was thus assembled probably financed by Issayas Afeworki. They projected as a whole hate of Tygreans, not just the individuals in Power in Ethiopia, but all people “different” from them by their esoteric measurements. Why should anyone support such polarized group? I would sacrifice such a divisive and polarizing group if they are real treat to the continued existence of Ethiopia, my Motherland that we created from scratch and built and maintained with our blood for thousands of years.

After watching in the video on the “Ethiopia and Horn of Africa Conference” such degree of exclusivity, narrowness of purpose, and association with a known enemy of Ethiopia, and naked unabashed hunger for power, I have now a different perspective in that we, who love Ethiopia warts and all, must rethink our attitude toward the current Ethiopian Government. I am suggesting that we need to approach the Parties in power in order to work with them improve their leadership and correct some of the harms they caused on Ethiopian citizens that we see and read about in the media. Better to correct the defects in the current Ethiopian Government leadership and maintain the integrity and continued existence of Ethiopia than allow to create disastrous conflicts and rebellion by such power hungry fantasy ridden, hateful bunch of over-educated, and over-experienced, deteriorating and ageing politicians represented arrogantly in the “Ethiopia and Horn of Africa Conference.”

In order to preserve Ethiopia from fracturing across Kilil lines and ultimately disintegrate into several ungovernable mini states, I offer here my alternative solution to use the Turkish Government model in

changing the Ethiopian government structure and political divisions of the country into administrative small scale regions after the May 2015 National Elections. These forms of structural changes will be provisional systems to get us time to get our house in order.

The first step is to establish by the new Representatives a central independent military command consisting of five senior commanders from the Army, the Air Force, and the Police. Once established the military command becomes a self-perpetuating command board with a Chief-of-Staff as its chairman, revolving every year within the members of the command board. The command is free of all direct civilian oversight and is not directly answerable to the Representatives or the head of State or the head of government, except the scrutiny and auditing of the Ethiopian Auditor General. The command will have as its sole duty the national security of the country against foreign aggression and internal insurrections. The Representatives would choose the national executive leadership, and the national judiciary. They will not have any direct command relationship with the Ethiopian defense and security forces.

The next step is to open all land for ownership by individual farmers to develop with some governmental assistance. And also promote enterprising individuals through liberal loan systems and governmental agencies set up for such promotions. There will be tremendous corruption in such process. The best remedy against such corruption is to have truly free press and publication system. This means the immediate release of imprisoned journalists, such as Eskinder Nega, Reeyot Alemu, the nine Bloggers et cetera.

This model of decoupling the Ethiopian Military from civilian command might remind some of you as a remote model similar to that which exists as a military culture to this day in Turkey. Egypt is also another such nation where the military has played the role of national guardian and stepped in to avert national disaster by civilian rule. I often feel that "I am a weight-lifting Snowman" [I heard that on *Shark Tank*, (2012)] meaning the more I exert my energy into lifting heavy weights (read Ethiopia's problems), I melt down by that much too; another way of saying a lighted candle consumes itself too. .

Blame the "Devil" foremost, least the Ethiopian Government

I read Graham Peebles's sanctimonious article "Suppressed at home, neglected abroad: Ethiopian migrants," (in CounterPunch, 9 May 2015) wherein he heaps all the blames on the Ethiopian Government for not looking after the welfare of Ethiopian citizens migrants in hostile communities with minimal criticism of the atrocity itself. I find ironic that Peebles writes with such passion blaming the Ethiopian

Government and yet simply mentioned as an aside-information the vicious Zulu culprits, the devilish perpetrators of the atrocities against innocent Ethiopians. Peebles's article sounds more like blaming the parents of a young lady for being raped because she is pretty.

Certainly, the Ethiopian Government has the singular duty to protect its Citizens wherever they may be residing legally or illegally. If Ethiopians are illegally residing in a community, they may be properly prosecuted not persecuted for violation of local laws, but never dehumanized and savagely murdered by mobs without proper protection of the local government. I do not see any action by the Ethiopian Leaders pursuing with zeal the criminals who committed such atrocities against Ethiopians. What I learnt from the Ethiopian Government Media was that the Ethiopian Government was rounding up allegedly members of the Blue Party and charging them for some criminal offences for protesting disturbing mourners. What an irony.

It is sad to me to watch the obvious nonchalant attitude of the Ethiopian Government officials in the face of atrocities being committed by foreign governments directly or indirectly against Ethiopian citizens in Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Yemen, Libya, Lebanon, Turkey, Kenya, et cetera, and in some instances to the point of slamming the doors of Ethiopia's foreign mission headquarters in the face of Ethiopian citizens who were seeking protection from violent mobs and those fleeing even from individual attackers. We saw it happen in Saudi Arabia. This are matters that can be easily fixed, but because of inefficient Government officials, such problems become major items of criticism in the hands of opposition politicians.

Conclusion

I see no follow-up action of removing Ethiopians from dangerous places. What I witnessed in videos is Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi stepping in and rescuing Ethiopian young men from another barbaric slaughter in Libya. I had long ago written my appreciation of el-Sisi, and now his courageous and generous action saving Ethiopian lives confirms my faith in the leadership of el-Sisi. I have quoted below what I wrote in an article "*Declaration of Principles: Ethiopia got a loaf and a half,*" 30 March 2015.

"I heard President el-Sisi's speech addressing the Ethiopian Parliament with great hope and anticipation. I heard him with the simultaneous translation of his speech into Amharic—probably the most authentic before it is reconstructed to reflect the special interests of diverse groups. I am more than satisfied in the content of his speech and even more watching on video his genuine reaction to the way the Ethiopian Parliamentarians received him. I admit that I liked el-Sisi from the day he toppled the terrorist Mohammad Morsi and his fanatical Muslim Brotherhood spread havoc in the short time they were in power. "

The President of Egypt el-Sisi, after having rescued young Ethiopians from a gruesome murder, welcomed them with red-carpet treatment personally receiving them when they disembarked from an Egyptian plane, in a truly moving formal ceremony. By contrast, the Ethiopian President Mulatu and the Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam were nowhere in sight when that same group of Ethiopians arrived home. Only the Foreign Minister Tewodros and some Senior Advisors and lower level officials were at Bole Airport to welcome them home.

Maybe the President and the Prime Minister thought that such battered Ethiopians rescued from the gate of Hell were not valuable enough to be welcomed by them. Forget humanism and kinship, the Ethiopian President and the Ethiopian Prime Minister could not even see the great political mileage they could get out of such gesture. Such are errors that should not stain the political administrative life of the Ethiopian Government.

I suggest that all concerned Ethiopians take a second look at the programs of all opposition groups. Are the programs of such groups doable and their goals achievable? By contrast consider what I am suggesting to be pragmatic and influence in a constructive engagement the current Ethiopian Government to minimize divisiveness, and remove the negative impact of the *Kilil* system by changing the States and redrawing viable administrative provinces. At all time, we should be acutely aware of the fact that we are living in a rough neighborhood. If we show any degree of weakness or fracture, our neighbors will not hesitate to tear us up into hundreds of strips and transform our Motherland into a place that will be Hell on Earth. .

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