

Let's not be distracted by Weyane's Tactics

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The EPRDF ruling party has used legal and illegal means and resources without any moral obligations in a Machiavellian style, turned any stones to stay on power. It has conducted well organized courses of actions. Opposition party members were harassed, jailed, beaten, some killed, others indicted and still others were forced to flee the country. The remaining was forced to disperse. The main opposition parties like CUD were systematically forced to be reorganized by intimidation, interference, and systematic sabotage. The media was repressed, journalists were jailed, the press was frozen and only pro-government or government sponsored news papers and government owned newspapers, radio and TV stations were running well while the government used public resources to jam other radio stations including the VOA. On the other hand opposition parties were given insignificant time and space to race. They were not able to address the people through any of the press or even meetings. Meetings were systematically dispersed and opposition parties could not campaign. Voters were harassed, intimidated and warned of consequences if they do not vote for the ruling party. The regime used donation resources, land, tax, job security, and employment as rewards for supporters while supporters of other parties were systematically punished. Political activists were jailed and even killed in daylight – so far known 6 before the election day and 2 after the election day. Cadres of the ruling party marched voters into voting booths and watched them while voting while local observers were either the ruling party cadres or supporters. Where local observers sought to exercise their duty, they were systematically displaced and intimidated. So voters were not free, but harassed to the last minute. Widespread and systematic cheating took place; pre-marked ballots supporting the ruling party members were observed by native observers but witnesses were systematically obliterated. Independent observers were limited only to 150 for 42,000 polling stations and no independent observer was allowed to go out of the Capital. That was only a piece of the orchestrated iceberg. Weyane's landslide victory must be our last lesson.

This is a practical lesson for us. We have learnt the hard way, because we have ironically contributed to this malice by failing to create a bond that could have reinforced the might of our peoples through a strong organization. Weyane exploited our failures to compromise, our failures to have tolerance to our differences, and our failure to preserve under a popular organization. We failed, because we trusted individuals, rather than being loyal to popular organizations. In short, we did not unite. It is futile to talk about past sacrifices unless we take the lessons and correct our course. We need to change our behavior.

As all of us can agree, formal schools are places of learning. Similar to schools, most people learn by reading books. Development of reading books is an important means to find a key to cultural development. Because, we can compare historical experiences of different parts of the world versus the experiences in our country and try to learn from them instead of learning the hard way. Reviewing a book is also very important; because we can critically see facts and opinions and compare them with the theme of the author, objective conditions or our previous knowledge of the subject matter which helps us redevelop our concepts. Any reader can learn from books anyhow. Any reader can get new

perspectives however much they may not fall into one's frame of thoughts. It is also possible to give objective and educative comments where flaws appear. Systematic reading prepares us to give uncorroborated opinions or erroneous conclusions as long as we are able to support our arguments with facts and irrefutable substance. Teachers can only give instructions to students. This is how monopoly of knowledge gives way to an environment in which people educate each other. This helps us to find truth in life being free from parochialism, character classification or from being obsessed in personality cults. "A wise man changes his mind; a fool never". Knowledge comes either through formal education, reading or practical experience; however, knowledge becomes meaningless unless it makes us change our behavior, which in general terms can constitute to Cultural Revolution. Knowledge in any field of study that is developed can make social changes, as is needed in the political system of our country. If intellectual exercise could have developed, we would not have 150 parties that become fruitless in our country. The core issue is not about running here and there, having scores of of opposition denominations but it is about choosing the right course of action and managing it to attain a certain tangible goal. So, it is not only Weyane that is responsible for the tyranny that it is persistently reigning. We could not learn from experiences of parties like ANC of former Apartheid South Africa. WE have read many times about the French Revolution and how it failed became victim of its own engineers like Robespierre and Danton who reversed it, and how Napoleon Bonaparte eventually rose to dictatorship. It was in the eyes of this generation that the people of Poland united under Solidarity to change the shape of Europe and contribute much to the end of the Cold War. We have followed diaries of the Balkan States and even our neighbors. But we could not analyze things and try to forecast and change our behavior. We have learned theoretically and even through practical life the hard way. We have to admit also that our shortsightedness that failure to create a strong, resilient opposition party has helped Weyane.

This paper is mainly based on a book "Ethiopia Risks of Omnipotence", author Tefera Dinberu, and its relevance to the prevailing circumstances in our country. I was able to attend a book review that was conducted here in Minneapolis in Loft Literary Art Center in April, 2010. The author has dealt with ancient Ethiopian History in the introduction part of the book. He has comparatively showed that ancient local states of the present day Ethiopia that exercised a type of federation and confederation and how they lost their right of self-government by the latest monarchy that broke this relationship; and that the regimes that followed the rule of monarchy became even more oppressive. I was amazed to know from the book that Ethiopia was one of the four pillars of the world when most of Europe including Germany, France, and England were suffering from a state of barbarism. The author substantiates his statements by citing references. What most amazed me was that Ge'ez language was both a spoken and written official, state language before 2,000 BC. Our strength is eroded when we fail to respect our heritage; because, one that does not respect the big family and neighbors cannot live in oneself as unity starts from the respect of a common heritage. What made me even proud is that the archeological discovery that proved this was found in Ethiopia in 1959. I learnt from the book that Ethiopian ethnic groups had indigenous common ancestors and were very few in number before they spoke different languages; and that the Ethiopian topography and unique history , without ruling out factors of immigration and integration, contributed especial circumstances for the denomination of the

present ethnic groups who have much more common things than differences. The author himself expresses his pride in being among such diverse people. In fact, it is mind-boggling.

At the same time, I have learned that trying to be champion in language or newer imposition of medium of communication does not take us anywhere other than widening the gap of divergence that Weyane uses as a divide and rule mechanism; however, language is an instrument of communication and should have a universal value for anybody. But development and growth of language should be seen as a reflection of the culture of the people that depends on the economic basis of the society. We have to recognize that growth of language is based on economic development and we have to facilitate this not by multiplying boundaries but by lessening boundaries and creating smoother relationships in a free environment. If it is not for the maltreatment of shortsighted politicians, multiplicity of languages that corresponds to nations and nationalities does not have any negative implications, but strength and mosaic configuration of Ethiopians. In fact the author suggests that democracy can work even better in our ethnically diversified society. The author has impartially treated the question of self-determination of nations up to cessation. I have cleared many blurred thoughts related to this. He states that dictators fan nationalism and in actual fact ethnic politics has served power monger individuals – like Meles and his tentacles rather than oppressed nationalities. In fact since Meles and his cohorts cannot be willing to release power to the rightful people on their own free will, different nations and nationalities of Ethiopia have to stand in unison and struggle to attain it. The more we run separately, the weaker we become which makes more favorable for tyranny to reign or stay longer. Toleration of our differences, compromising individual interests, and focusing on common objectives is the sole choice to get rid of repression once and for all times. So, Tefera's book shows us that many generations of localized feuds only helped to shift power monger despots with other power monger despots that on the other hand undermined our peoples and forced them to be servants of series of oppressors for generations; but this must stop now. Since nobody can generously give us freedom and prosperity, there should be a turning point when we have to compromise on our differences and dedicate ourselves to work together for a greater common good.

Here I would like to mention Professor Mesai Kebede's article. He said that:

If two competing individuals decide to build a house together, their cooperation makes sense if the house becomes their common interest, that is, if both intend to live in the same house. However, if one of the partners is at the same time building another house, whatever partnership they had comes so suspicious that it comes to an end... it is when we decide to live in the same house, no matter what, that we would be inclined to better the house. (Mesai Kebede. On the right to self-determination, August 19, 2009)

Weyane's orchestrated elections can take place from time to time and Meles can give many more interesting promises that include his resignation; personalities can be changed in which a tyrant can be replaced by another tyrant. The most important point referred here is Weyane's application of Machiavellian principle of different means to get on to state power and stay as a dictator. Tefera has beautifully explained with examples how communists used the theory of Marxism to justify their dictatorship by camouflaging their tyrannical rule. He has well expounded how leaders like Meles

Zenawi and Robert Mugabe have camouflaged their dictatorial rules and cheated the people through popular issues such as land, language, ethnicity, and economics.

The 2010 election was only an advanced orchestrated act of Weyane to stay on power by cheating the Ethiopian peoples. All democratic and humanitarian organizations and democratic countries of the world, including the USA, Great Britain and the European Union have followed up this immoral practice of Weyane. They have all been convinced more than ever before that the political race was totally marred by curtailing the press, harassment of opposition parties and supporters, imprisonment, torture, and elimination of activists in day light shooting.

Tefera clearly indicates that the past and the present elections in our country are simply means of legitimization of persisting dictatorial rules. The other important point that is educative is that state structure based on ethnicity does not play any role other than a divide-and-rule mechanism of dictatorship. Oppressive regimes like Weyane would like to encourage us if we aspire to be independent princes or neo-*mesafints*; because they get the chance to play with us separately. Hence, when we organize on ethnic lines we tempt to struggle against each other and fail to exploit our common strengths and eventually fall astray to the mercy of the oppressors. Since we do not have any guarantee to justice until our peoples get their legitimate power and true, genuine and popular democracy reigns, we have to reorganize ourselves under an umbrella organization in way that no one can step on the other where minorities can also enjoy their legitimate rights.

In his conclusion Tefera tried to enlighten his readers that power that emanates from strong organizations is more feasible than power that emanates from reputed personalities. He says that:

Power mongers used one or another form of sects and the history of Ethiopia became the history of wars, not the history of inventions, or scientific discoveries, or economic advancement that could have taken place from its rich culture based on its natural resources. Since the 16th century alone, it has to be remembered that, many hundreds of wars took place in the country, at times many battles in a year (p 143).

He emphasizes that we have to change this culture of running separately and following power monger personalities that are not reliable in course of time; but our peoples should rely on strong organizations, and hence we have to work hard in order to make parties more broadly and popularly based to have reliable, resilient, qualitative objectives that can tie opposition groups for common and lasting ends. Tefera appreciates the other aspect of our diversified people's culture and states that politicians always want to exploit it:

Had it not been for our respectful culture and our peoples' integrity, our immature ethnic politicians exploited our diversity and ignited civil conflicts that could have escalated to unabating civil wars. We have to dedicate ourselves in unison for only one thing so that we can easily prevail. And that is to empower the people so that they can have an environment of democracy and justice, where there will be political races, where our local cases will be dealt with by ourselves and the rest of our true representatives and where history of wars remains memory of the past depicted only in museums as we see it in developed countries. Once the

people are empowered, we will not have other problems but to muster our potential forces for development and make our common natural resources available for our citizens and reinvigorate our past common heritage so that our people's standard of living advances and the coming generations can have dreams of equality and prosperity for all our peoples. In order to do that, we have to change ourselves; we cannot afford to indulge in old ways of carrying guns and going to the jungle. We need to stop staggering in the old ways; a turning point is needed. We have to fight first with our own minds and arm ourselves with principles. We have to open our doors for discussion and also take the initiative to talk with our adversaries. We must learn how to conduct dialogues and compromise individual issues to come up to reconciliation in order to promote our common objectives. We have to choose the course of action that does not incur casualties. Our differences are natural; but we should not react to our primitive instincts; magnifying our differences takes nowhere; however we have to find out our common interests and based on our common interests, first of all we have to find common solutions to our social problems peacefully; and then we have to tackle nature and then prevail other common enemies one by one (p 188).

According to Tefera, we have abundant potential of natural and human resources; but our peoples have been suffering from a series of domination of a bunch of dictators who echo different slogans from time to time mainly due to our failure to unite; and that we must tolerate our differences to get rid of our common oppressors and hence behave differently to achieve our common goals. Tefera also enlightens this generation that it is easy to condemn past regimes but not possible to get nothing out of past good or bad histories unless we do the right things today. He says that:

We cannot correct past mistakes and it is not possible to live in the past. However, we can try to correct the present mistakes and mistakes that we inherited from the past and do the right thing not to repeat them, but to make a better future. Instinctive reaction to the past does not help today. What is helpful today is to know how to learn from the past and avoid future mistakes and create the basis of equality and fairness in all social and economic spheres (189).

The author's presentation is interesting to know about our brothers and sisters – the background of different Ethiopian nations and nationalities. I have learnt many things on the rise of Oromo nation that I had never heard of before. For example *gudifecha* and *guma* legacies of the Oromo culture that the Ethiopian civil code has absorbed. It was my first time to read a real history of these people with specific historical and dated events. I would like to appreciate if the author can elaborate more on the history of other Ethiopian nations and nationalities, too, so that an ordinary person who has not read on related issues can easily understand more about our society. Further development of such historical events would be helpful to show the foundation of our historical background especially for the young generation.

It is possible to read historical facts here and there from different sources; however, the important thing that I learned from Tefera's book is his combination of facts and its relationship with the persisting circumstances in our country in order to come up to a lasting solution. We have to relate history with existing conditions in our country with foresighted vision of the future.

We have to create conditions in which we can exchange our historical, traditional and cultural values so that we know each other more than in names and develop our cultures. Hoping democracy from Weyane is like believing manna to fall from heaven. There must be a turning point; we have to tolerate our differences, come together and solve our common problems. That means we have to open our doors and invite our adversaries for discussion to come to terms. Our destiny is in our hands. However the fact remains wishful unless we are prepared to change the old ways of doing things. Unless opposition parties compromise on their differences and have tolerance, and focus on how to meet common terms, freedom can still be farfetched phenomena. We can lose it again if we cannot use our common potential power. However, if opposition parties make a turning point to be governed by universal democratic principles rather than parochial practices, bright future is ahead; because, Weyane is being alienated more and more every day. It is up to us to fill the gap.

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