

The 2010 Parliamentary Election
And The Neocolonial State of Ethiopia.
By Girma Bekele

“The entire party should hurl into fire and break the neck of anyone dared trample under foot the scared edict of the party..” Enver Hoxha.

It is no accident that the person who subscribes and practices Hoxha’s twisted ideas today, Meles Zenawi, baptized and christened as “the new breed of African democrat” by the West, is an admirer and student of the former Albanian fascist leader. Alike Hoxha Meles, Zenawi has put in place the entire instrument of oppression to extend the life of his rule in Ethiopia. He is due to hold another Parliamentary election in May, 2010. According to foreign diplomats, political observers, and an article in the Economist magazine, the outcome of the scheduled election is a foregone conclusion that no matter which party will be the people’s choice, Meles and his TPLF regime will remain in power for another five years. Simply put the dictatorial regime will not relinquish its iron grip on Ethiopia through peaceful means.

As preparation to assure his hold on power and aimed at controlling the political, economic, social, and intellectual lives of citizens Meles has enacted various laws and edicts that restricts the rights of citizens to voice their opposition in case of possible vote fraud. From common folks engaged in subsistent farming in rural communities to university students, youth and women’s group are organized and forced to sign for EPRDF, a.k.a. TPLF, membership and support his party in the upcoming election. Ethiopians who are unwilling to cooperate to be party members and support TPLF to victory will be denied government jobs and the opportunity to work in the many enterprises controlled and monopolized by the regime. In a nutshell people who wish to stay neutral and unwilling to be part of Meles’ sinister scheme will be blackmailed, condemned to a life of unemployed, live in perpetual poverty, and hunger as punishment.

In order to muzzle and silence the critics of Meles’ dictatorial rule, members of the independent media are either imprisoned on trump up charges or forced into exile. The new laws enacted for the purpose of criminalizing the public allow the regime’s secret police to arrest and imprison people who publish and distribute articles that exposes the excess of the ruling Tigrian Oligarchy. The collective will of the people became central, not individual freedoms. Another law prohibits members of the opposition party from soliciting and receiving more than 10% of their income from foreign sources. Doing so will subject them to heavy penalty and harsh imprisonment. Additional law is enacted to penalize and expel nongovernmental agencies (NGOS) working in the country in the fields of economic and social developments if they participate in educating the public in democratic practices. TPLF’s secret police watch political activities of individuals and members of opposition parties. Citizens organized as farmers cooperatives, university students, youth and women’s group are bribed and utilized to promote TPLF’s polarizing and divisive politics. The harshest law of all denies and criminalizes peaceful assembly and demonstration by citizens as act of terrorism. This law is specially aimed at restraining the people from demanding accountability for the regime’s

abuses of power and for stealing and stuffing ballot boxes during an election. The darling step child of Bill Clinton, George Bush, and Tony Blair dubbed as the new breed of African democrat has pushed central powers further than before. Meles Zenawi as the modern fascist and totalitarian leader has forced the Ethiopian people to surrender their rights to give him absolute power in the name of preserving order and stability demanded by his western clients. Typical of all previous fascist regimes, Meles does not share the belief that the source of power comes from the consent of citizens. For example, all development programs undertaken for the last 19 years and policies that affect the vital interest of the country were enacted without the consent of the people of Ethiopia. The Eritrean referendum, the denial of Ethiopia's access to its Red Sea port, making it a land locked country, "the Algiers Agreement" that awarded Ethiopian territory to the invading EPLF forces, the invasion of Somalia, the recent transfer of large chunks of land forcefully taken from Ethiopian farmers and presented as gift to the criminal Sudanese regime, and the land lease given to erstwhile Arab enemies of Ethiopia are all examples of policies enacted without the consent of the Ethiopian people. There is no doubt that these policies will be the source of future conflict in the Horn of Africa. The main beneficiaries of Meles' anti-Ethiopian policies are regimes that harbored, armed, and supported secessionist and separatist forces against it, one of which is Meles and his TPLF. Today Ethiopia is in the hands of people who benefited most from it but declared war, ill treated, and abused it. The leader of Tigrian ethno nationalists and his followers are people who have contempt for the Ethiopian people and consider the country as a colony to be plundered and looted.

It is under these circumstances and under the total domination of a minority ethnic war lords that an election will take place. In order to control the minds and hearts of the Ethiopian people, the regime's media and Meles' foreign benefactors glorify his regime as democratic and progressive. Nothing is further from the truth. Meles is not alone in subjecting the Ethiopian people to unprecedented suffering and political oppression. He is able to do this with financial, military, political, and diplomatic support from Western powers and through an advice on the use of propaganda techniques from China and other totalitarian regimes. Past and present historical facts point out that all efforts to develop democratic rule in majority of African countries under dictatorial regimes have been hampered by mostly the short sighted policies of Western powers that seem to be giving help yet in reality sabotage the effort by siding with anti-democratic regimes. The man adorned and esteemed as an ally in a war against terrorism is the very personification of a terrorist whose hands are stained with the blood of many people murdered and disappeared.

For all practical reasons neocolonialism is evident today everywhere in Ethiopia. The World Bank, the IMF, the European Union and China are all participate in pacifying the aspiration of the Ethiopian people for freedom and the rule of law by supporting the corrupt and dictatorial regime of Meles Zenawi. Neocolonialism is defined as "the establishment of a form of sovereignty or control of a state without the encumbrance of physical possession or actual colonial rule." I would argue that the Arab regimes, Korea, Pakistan, India, and to some extent China are the neocolonial powers in Ethiopia because

they influence the regimes policies by their economic authority exercised through their land lease holdings. In the case of the United States and the European Community Meles' policies are influenced by grants for budgetary support to pay for his security services, the military and generous loans from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund for the exclusive development of his ethnic base. It is very troubling that Arabs and Pakistanis are landowners in a country where citizens are denied the right to own land. It is also doubly troubling to see nations that breed terrorists, radicals, and religious fanatics are exporting their criminal elements as farm laborers to Ethiopia for their sinister plan of exploiting and planting religious conflict. Racist Arabs that mistreat Ethiopian domestic workers and political exiles in their homeland are welcomed with open arms to own lands denied to Ethiopian citizens. Thanks to generous petro dollar kickback to TPLF, Wahabi religious sect from Saudi Arabia is opening Madrassa to teach Ethiopian children its jihadist and radical views against Christians. The beheading of Christian worshipers and burning of churches in Agaro, Jimma, by Islamic terrorists a few years ago are the direct results of instigation by the Wahabi sect.

Proponents of foreign aid may argue that funds provided by grants, land lease, and loans are improving the lives of ordinary citizens. In reality the sole beneficiaries are the extended mafia families of Meles Zenawi and his cronies. Critics of neocolonialism argue that investment by foreign capitalists enriches few in underdeveloped countries, and causes humanitarian, environmental and ecological devastation to the population which inhabits the necolonies. A good example of this in Ethiopia today is the latest revelation about Gilgel Gibe 2 hydropower project fiasco.

According to Peter Bosshard, the policy director of International Rivers, "The undertaking was plagued by shoddy management from the beginning. In violation of Ethiopian law, the government negotiated the project contract with the Italian construction company Salini without competitive bidding. No-bid contracts for public works projects are a big red flag of corruption. The Gilgel Gibe deal was awarded without a feasibility study, and construction started without the legally required environmental permit." Mr. Bosshard raises the question, "Who pays the price for such development failures?" He answers the same questions: "The dubiously negotiated contract for Gilgel Gibe 2 exempts Salini from geological risks, so the Ethiopian electricity consumers and tax payers ended up paying for the cost overruns."

<http://www.internationalrivers.org/peter-gosshard>).

The reason why there was no competitive bidding for the project suggests that the contractor have given bribes to TPLF officials who negotiated the deal. Bribery given to TPLF officials by foreign project contractors have made them multi millionaires and owners of high rise buildings in Ethiopia and the Gulf States. It is public knowledge that with money ill gotten through kickbacks and stolen from Ethiopian treasury TPLF officials have investments in real estate in Dubai, England, and the U.S. Africa is blessed with corrupt regimes but the TPLF mafia boss and his extended family of highway robbers are bold and excel by far from others in squeezing money from foreign donors and project contractors through blackmail and intimidation tactics.

History shows that foreign aid given to third World dictators in the form of loans, bearing high rates of interest, had contributed to the underdevelopment of many African nations because the collection of interest ultimately impoverished the people and the loans ended up in the pockets of the dictators and their foreign bank accounts. If indeed Ethiopians benefited from the billions and millions of aid money poured into the country for the last 19 years, it does not require a rocket scientist to figure out and understand why there is wide spread poverty today than during the reigns of Emperor Haile Selassie, and Colonel Mengistu's Derg. Why over 9 million Ethiopians are affected by famine? Why young Ethiopian girls are exported as commodity for slavery in the Middle East? Why 150,000 orphans and homeless children roam the streets of Addis Ababa, and why there are thousands of unemployed youth with no hope of finding a job in a country that imports Arab, Chinese, Indian, Nigerian, Pakistani, and Turkish teachers and laborers? Worse of all the down turn in the educational system under Meles have made Ethiopian high school and university graduates functional illiterates.

These despicable scenarios are the results of misguided policies of foreign donors who help dictators survive through generous budgetary support to the security and military apparatus of tyrannical power holders. Although donor nations have leverage over the Ethiopian dictator by withholding aid money and through public pressure, obviously their own interest is paramount to the suffering of the Ethiopian people; therefore, they are reluctant to use this leverage. The irony of it all is that if you ask donors why they reward regimes that operate above the law they will say budget support is needed to help the majority of the people. A study by the Think Tank Cato Institute pointed out that "foreign aid simply won't reform dictators." The study further revealed, "The aid agencies, (namely The World Bank and International Monetary Fund) never met a dictator that they didn't like and wouldn't subsidize—generously." <http://www.cato.org>

In The Washington Post article, a University of Pennsylvania Professor reported to have said, "It's easier to rig an election voting machine than a Las Vegas Slot machine. That is because Vegas slots are better monitored and regulated than American voting machines." <http://www.Washingtonpost.com/wp-yn/content/graphic/2006/03/16/R2006031600213...>

What about rigging the forth coming election in Ethiopia? I must assume that given the unique capacity of a minority dominated regime to control the machinery of the government, the military, security, and the entire economic sector of the country, it will be an easy task to steal votes and claim victory as happened in 2005. It is a well known fact the vast majority of Ethiopians (save for a few diehard ethnic peddlers and bigots who worship him to the altar as Messiah due to ethnic kinship) hate and detest Meles as a power crazed mercenary, an arrogant prick, a thug whose ultimate aim to fame is the destruction of their country. His 19 years in power is replete with bitter polarization of the nation by injecting ethnicity and religion as the defining factors of "democratization". It is doubtful that Meles and his so called EPRDF party (the cover name for TPLF) will win the hearts and minds of the Ethiopian people and extend his life in power through democratic means and supervised ballot boxes. Everyone knows villains may not win in democratic election, but they hold up a creepy underground master plan for domination.

Once again the Ethiopian people will demonstrate to the world by going to the polls to cast their votes hoping for a change for the better. Yet once again their votes will be stolen and Meles will declare victory before the votes are counted. Selected group of observers, well wishers from London to Washington, Ambassadors from donor nations will shower him with congratulatory messages followed by American and European media headline flash, **“Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia won another term in office.”**

At the cost of being accused as a pessimist, I hold the view that the forthcoming Ethiopian election is an exercise in futility. As long as the primary forces driving Western policy towards African dictators are the protection of their economic and security interests, the undemocratic nature and human rights record of the Ethiopian dictator will amount to nothing in their eyes to support the people in their struggle for meaningful change. The rationale for supporting and sustaining Meles and his dictatorial rule by Western powers will be their well known argument that “the people in the victim country are incapable of democratic rule.”

In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, “Corruption and hypocrisy ought not to be inevitable products of democracy, as they undoubtedly are today”.

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