

Let the Light shine, the Vision happen and Democracy prevail in Ethiopia



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The two debates between political parties so far have shown us that building democracy in Ethiopia has reached to a point of no return. The reason I claim so is that in the two debates I have seen the future parties of the country showing their commitment to build democracy in the country. Obviously the most outshining in both debates was EDP. Ato Lidetu of EDP was crisp and eloquent in articulating his party's principles and criticizing both the ruling party and some of the opposition. But more interesting were the two parties' representatives that were so energetic and brilliant in representing their parties. Ato Asfaw Getachew of Ethiopian Vision Party (EVP) and Ato zegeye Redi of Light for Unity and Democracy (LUD) have surprised the heavy weights of the ruling party and the opposition by presenting themselves as real alternatives.

In the two debates what has become prevalent is that two major political sides are emerging as alternatives for the country. The differences are mainly on political ideology and the federal system. On one side the revolutionary democrats who spiced up their ideology with ethnic federalism are leading the country and also are building their capacity to sustain for a long time. On the other hand most of the parties of the new generation are promoting Liberal Democracy and a different form of federalism. In neither of the two is the Forum which is a collection of eight parties. It makes it difficult for the forum to take any of the sides in any of the cases because it holds parties like Ethiopian Socialist Party ESP of Beyen Petros that promotes social democracy and Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ) which claims to promote Liberal Democracy. With regard to federalism the forum contains more erratically different ideological groups. The ethnic federalists like Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement (OFDM) and the Unitarians like Ethiopian Democratic Unity Movement (EDUM). Even though the collection of political giants in the forum give it an apparent image that it is a strong contestant, it is a matter of time before we see it disintegrate before our eyes. This phenomenon, if/when happens, leaves us with the newly emerging parties promoting liberal democracy on one side and the ruling party promoting revolutionary democracy on the other side.

The other reason that the forum is doomed to failure is that despite the fact that the forum is formed by oldies, it has showed no effort to involve the youth. On the contrary its member parties are pushing out their youths. UDJ has lost almost all its youths. Similarly Merara's OPC has lost all its youth to Oromo National Congress (ONC). So it is for sure that the

forum will disintegrate. The only question is whether it will decay through a long time or blasts in to pieces abruptly. That, time will tell.

The ruling party on the contrary has been building its capacity for the past five years and also is preparing to promote its youths to higher levels of authority. By doing so EPRDF is saving itself from decaying. EPRDF is planning to rule the country for the coming couple of decades so that it will have ample time to place it in the row of middle income countries. This wish of the ruling party makes it difficult for the liberal democrats to promote their ideals. What is more challenging for them is the competition amongst themselves. So it is imperative that they look for ways they can work together.

In the first two debates of 2010 election EDP has put itself as the leading liberal democrat party. But also EVP's Asfaw Getachew and LUD's Zeleke Redi have proved that the two parties have brilliant people who promote liberal democracy. The fact that all parties of the new generation promote Liberal Democracy indicates that the future Ethiopia will for sure have a strong liberal democrat party.

Now the challenge for EDP and the other two parties is how they can form the future gaint Liberal democrats' party that can compete with EPRDF toe to toe. I am very much impressed with the way the three parties performed in the two debates. I am more impressed by their names. Ato Zeleke Redi's party of "Light" which represents knowledge and wisdom, Ato Asfaw Getachew's party of "Vision" and Ato Lidetu Ayalew's party of "Democracy". Aren't those what we need? I say Let the three parties come together and build the future giant Liberal Democratic Party. I say Let the Light shine, the Vision happen and Democracy prevail in Ethiopia.

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March 10, 2010