



Free, fair, or credible election

“Elections are organized explicitly to ascertain and honor the people's will as to who should occupy elected office. Moreover, an anti-discrimination norm obliges states to provide inclusiveness in the electoral process.”
[FECICT]

“Human Rights – The Basis for inclusiveness, transparency, accountability and public confidence in elections.”
[FECICT]

“Ethnically structured society stands at the crossroads, either transition to ethnofascist chaotic society or regression into barbarism. Hence, it is a well-known and indisputable fact that without a free and untrammelled press, without the unlimited right of association and assemblage, the rule of the broad mass of the people is entirely unthinkable.”
[Ademe Bilal]

Preamble

Election as a selection process for those that will represent the interest of the masses, need to be free, fair and credible. For an election to be credible, free and fair in which its result would be accepted by all, actors/stakeholders of the electoral process need to vigorously discharge their respective duties and obligation in the exercise. Evidence from the previous researches proved that Ethiopia is having issues to conduct credible election. This study discovers that for Ethiopia to have a credible election, players involved in the electoral process (such as the **electoral bodies**, the **civil society**, the **judiciary**, **political parties**, the **mass media**, and even the masses who are the electorates) are to be **adequately cultured, orientated, and given awareness on the beauty in discharging their role towards selection process of their leaders**. Despite the fact that, the voting behavior of masses during an election talk more about the success of the system, but the actors or stakeholders involved in the electoral process can influence the level of voters' turnout in an election, by given the electorates regular orientation and awareness on the electoral system in the society. The study makes use of **Morality-Implicit Theory** to explain how the electoral process can be free and fair, if the actors involved in the process imbibed moral value and transparency in discharging their duties to the system without fear or favour. Therefore, **elections require the existence of a multiparty system so that citizens make a political decision by voting for the competing candidates fielded by various political parties holding divergent views and presenting different alternatives**.

Elections are organized to determine accurately and honestly the people will concerning who shall occupy governmental office for a periodic term. Referenda and other ballot initiatives are organized to determine accurately and honestly the people will concerning the issue presented for their vote. In both types of elections, how the people's will be determined has a crucial effect on whether their will is fully ascertained and honored. How the people's will be measured depends on the legal framework for elections and how that **framework is implemented**. Citizens and civic society

organizations therefore need to be knowledgeable about legal frameworks, engage in their development and monitor their implementation.

Apart from the aforementioned challenges facing the democratic system in Ethiopia, its leaders are also found of contributing to the hinderances that prevent rapid democratic transition through the abuse of state machinery for their favor. For election to be regarded as free, fair and credible, it must include:

- build the stable, broad-based and well-organized institutions that form the foundation of a strong civic culture. Democracy depends on these mediating institutions-the voice of an informed citizenry, which link citizens to their government and to one another by providing avenues for participation in public policy
- promote openness and accountability
- right to participate (that is, right to vote and be voted for),
- freedom of association and expression,
- right of voter to cast the vote in secret,
- right for the winner to assume office, right for the loser to challenge the election at the law court among others

In order to yield a fruitful result, there are many stakeholders involved in the electoral process. One of them is the Election Management Bodies. For example, the body comprised of the both the Independent National Electoral Commission and State Independent Electoral Commission. Same applicable to other countries, where the national electoral bodies would be in-charged of conducting general election at the national level, while the State electoral bodies on their own would be monitoring the conduct of local government elections and the likes. Other actors in the electoral process include: political parties and the candidates/contestants, the judiciary, the media, the security agencies, the accredited observers, the legislative assemblies and the electorates.

The conventional wisdom holds that, despite the political overture of the 1990s:

1. there is no place for democracy in Ethiopia because of one-party dominance, restriction of civil liberties, monopolization of the means of mass communication, marginalization of civil society, detrimental economic indicators and disrupting foreign interference
2. Ethiopian elections are, in simple terms, window-dressing rituals with no real political meaning other than the *stuffing of the ballot boxes behind closed doors*
3. as the country marked by deep cleavages among a diversity of ethnic groups, elections seem to provide the opportunity to legitimize the political and economic pre-eminence of one group, to reward supporters of that group and compel them to adopt greater political conformity, and to reimpose a firm hand on challenging elements within or outside that group.
4. as there is no framework of democratic institution, as Deja vu, it merely represents an artificial exercise the results of which are instinctively manipulated by a ruling party in order to prevent opposition political parties winning elections despite the fact that citizens might courageously vote for change

The cumulative effect of such a misdemeanor will be, unfortunately, political uncertainty and the sharpening of ethnic politics which will, in turn, inspire the widespread disillusionment of Ethiopian

citizens who will be forced to rethink that the solution to prevailing problems cannot be found within the framework of democracy.

Inclusiveness is a *sin qua non* for democratic election

The interrelationships between and among the right to genuine elections and other internationally recognized civil and political rights illustrates that democratic elections must be inclusive both for citizens who want to exercise their right to vote and for those who seek to be elected. An anti-discrimination norm obliges states to provide inclusiveness in electoral processes. The norm against discrimination takes the force of a principle for democratic elections as the requirements for universal and equal suffrage combine with the general prohibition against discrimination, the rights to equality before the law and equal protection of the law and the right to remedies that effectively redress rights violations. Provisions concerning all of these concepts are found in international human rights instruments. The principle of inclusiveness is a central consideration in the choice of a country's electoral system. While there are numerous types of electoral systems and possible combinations of systems, to be democratic, the principle of the authority of government deriving from the will of the citizens - expressed through universal and equal suffrage - is a prerequisite that must be respected. The principle of inclusiveness also applies to the development of the combination of laws that make up the legal framework for election processes. The decision-making process concerning the structure, composition and powers of election administration also must be a subject of inclusiveness, because that governmental body has to demonstrate that it is free of discrimination towards the electors and the electoral competitors and that it is capable of "guaranteeing" that the free expression of the will of the electors will be accurately recorded and honored.

For elections to be genuinely democratic, other internationally recognized human rights must also be broadly exercised in the electoral context, without discrimination or unreasonable restrictions, including:

- The right to associate into political organizations (such as political parties, candidate support organizations or groups favoring or opposing referenda propositions);
- The right to peacefully assemble for meetings, rallies and to otherwise demonstrate support for electoral competitors;¹⁶ The right to move freely to build electoral support.
- The right to be free of the threat of violence or other coercion, while making political choices or exercising political expression.
- The right to hold political opinions without interference.
- The right to freedom of political expression, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas in order to develop informed choices required for "the free expression of the will of the electors"

Thus, the founding pillars of any democratic political system, whether considered fragile or established, remain undoubtedly elections which can simply be taken as the most critical and visible means through which all citizens can peacefully choose or remove their leaders, and which are evidently costly affairs

Methodology and electoral system

All things considered, the most important institution is the electoral commission, which is the permanently functioning institution charged with the task of preparing and conducting elections. The institutions such as the electoral commission ought to **be independent, competent and perceived as completely fair by all the candidates and parties participating in the [electoral] process**. Furthermore, the electoral commission's standing will depend on its ability, including resources and real legal prerogative, to impartially handle election-related complaints and effectively redress irregularities, thus effectively facilitating the resolution of a Kenya-like electoral dispute which can easily speed out of control. Only in this way, can electoral commission build the confidence of the electorate and political parties alike which is essential to generate a credible electoral process.

- present opportunities for individual citizens to review existing legal frameworks and comment on proposed changes, as well as to suggest modifications
- ensure that citizens are guaranteed their right to vote and have a genuine opportunity to exercise that right, and for citizens to ensure that they are presented with a full range of electoral choices and the ability to make an informed choice among them,
- be aware of legal framework issues and the processes surrounding their formulation and execution. Learning about those processes requires a degree of direct investigation, though most citizens become aware of such matters through the media and civic organizations
- be cognizant that elections require the existence of a multiparty system so that citizens make a political decision by voting for the competing candidates fielded by various political parties holding divergent views and presenting different alternatives. There is general agreement among political scientists that one of the essential components in a healthy democracy is **the existence of an enduring opposition that critically checks the day-to-day activities of the ruling party**
- makes use of Morality-Implicit Theory: this theory is explaining how morality translated to the behavior of people which in turn guide their actions and reactions in the society. An example of this could be source in the Declaration of Independence of the Thirteen United States of America, 1776 that says:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights...That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men...That whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government.

The central theoretical contribution during the sixtieth social revolution was to outline a method of revolutionary transformation in which the people's democratic revolution was understood not merely as a struggle for institutional power, but as the construction of a new way of life and new cultural understandings which would guarantee the liberation of a people's spirit. **The inherent characteristics of election process is dialectical/naturally interconnected to democratic institution, established within democratic state. For this process not to collapse into civil war or counter-revolution, it is essential for social democratic EPRP's that it be carried out by a majority of the citizenries with a commitment to basic political freedoms and democratic institutions.**

Democracy is not a set of institutions, structures and policies imposed by government on society; **democracy is active/fluid, not passive and is kept alive through the activity that flows through society.** The reality is, whether through their participation in mass strikes, or helping a party or casting a vote in an election, or reading about or taking part in debates and discussions on political, social and economic affairs, **Ethiopians must be involved actively in establishing their own democratic government that can secure and ensure the pillars of democracy.**



It is necessary to extract the kernel of democratic society from its ethnically structured shell!

Synopsis: The crisis of Ethiopian “OLF-Prosperous Party “and the fabric of interethnic conflict thereto

Mass slaughter has become the tiresome and monotonous business of the Abiy-Woyane monoethnic regime and the end is no closer. Ethiopian scholars, those stumbling rascals, have been whistled off the social revolutionary stage long ago. Across the country stretched thousands of greedy hands to snatch up the fruit of the sixtieth social revolution and the dialectical progress toward democratic society. Business of ethnic cleavage thrives in the ruins. Urban cities become piles of ruins; villages become cemeteries; countries, deserts; populations are beggared; churches, horse interrupted. International law, treaties and alliances, the most sacred words and the highest authority have been torn in shreds. There are food riots across the country, there is plague, misery and despair everywhere. Ethiopian rampant ethnofascistic trend brought about hate/murder among neighbors, family members who are interethnic married. Violated, dishonored, wading in blood, dripping filth - here **stands ethnically divided and identity mongering society. This is it in reality. Not all spic and span and moral, with pretense to culture, philosophy, ethics, order, peace, and the rule of law - but the ravening beast, the witches sabbath of anarchy, a plague to culture and humanity. Thus, Woyane-Abiy’s “MEDEMER” philosophy reveals itself in its true, its naked form.**

As history deciphers the objective reality, the petty bourgeois elites come out of the most shameful defeats as unmarked as they naively go into opportunistic world; they come away with the newly gained conviction that they must be victorious, not that they or their party ought to give up the old social transformative principles, but that conditions ought to accommodate them. The overwhelming toiling masses and determined social revolutionaries come out of historical tests differently as its tasks and its errors are both gigantic: no prescription, no schema valid for every case, no infallible leader to show it the path to follow. Historical experience is its only school inamoratas. Its thorny way to self-emancipation is paved not only with immeasurable suffering but also with countless errors. Martyrs’ revolutionary and dynamically accelerating knowledge gave the working classes (the peasants, labors, educators, youths, etc.) of Ethiopian people a compass by which it can make sense of the welter of daily events and by which it can always plot the right course to take to the fixed and final goal-to social democratic society.

It is foolish and futile to imagine that we need only survive the TPLF-OLF twin fights, like a rabbit waiting out the storm under a bush, in order to fall happily back into the old routine once it is over. Not that the basic format of ethnically structured societal development, the life-and-death of interethnic conflict between neo-ethno-Nazism and the people, will experience not any amelioration. Moreover now, in the midst of the interethnic conflict, the masks are falling and the old familiar visages grin at us. **The tempo of development has received a mighty jolt from the eruption of the volcano of ethnocentrism and ethnomania.**

Do the current ethnofascist rulers and ruling elites expect the peoples to permit this awful genocide, internal displacement, hate, savagery, and violation of the right to life? Will not a cry of

horror, of scorn, of outrage not seize the peoples and cause them to put an end to this murderous insanity? Will they not ask: For whom? what's it all for?

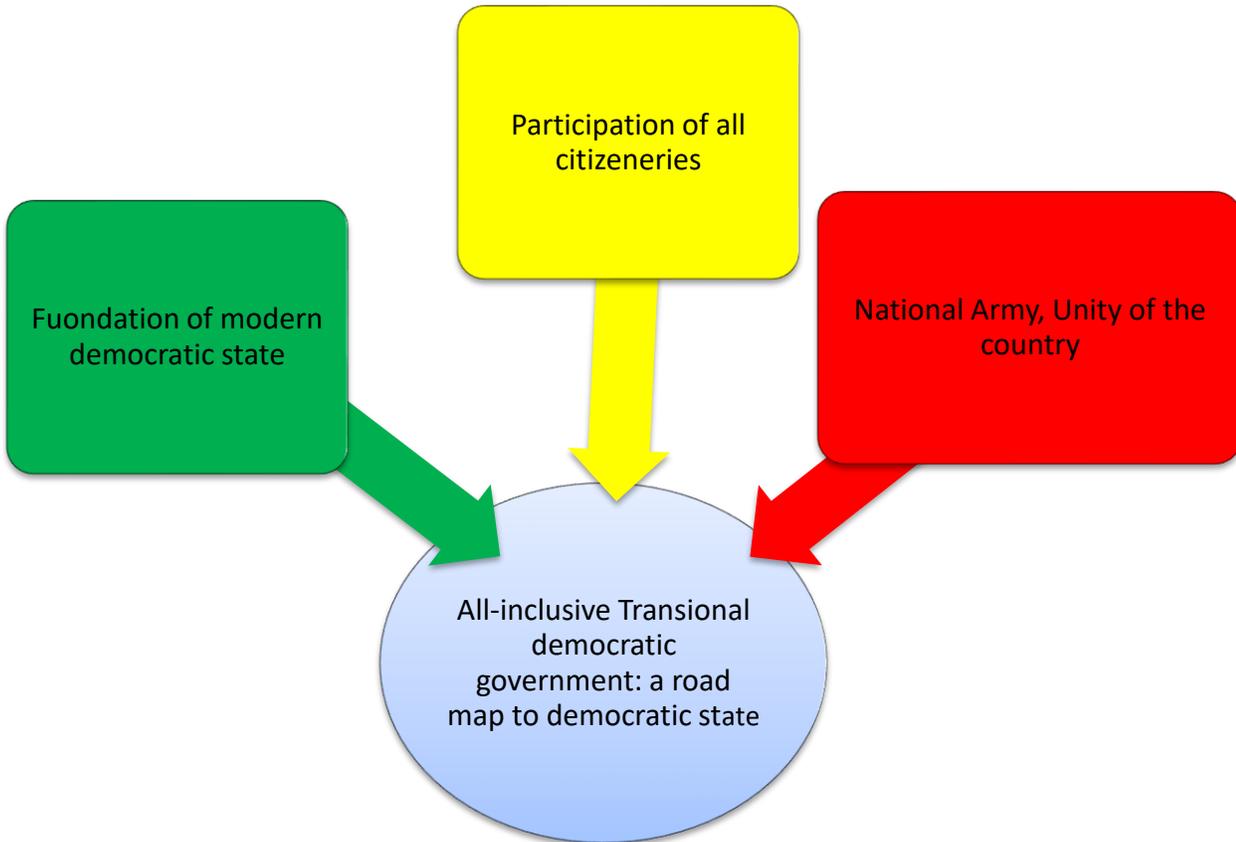
Social transformative action/reflection praxis understands cognitively and rationally:

- Democratic election must be formed through the active consent and participation of the masses
- Epistemological rationalism has always revealed the hard kernel of social inequality and lack of freedom hidden under the sweet shell of “the floating in the thin-air “Prosperous party” of OLF. How can then be “democratic election can be conducted under this kernel? Social democracy must proceed step by step out of the active participation of the masses; it must be under their direct influence, subjected to the control of complete public activity, it must arise out of the growing, political training of the mass of the people.
- The kind of active participation that the population will have in social democracy is active involvement in decision-making, with power flowing not from the top down but from the bottom up, just as in the history of the social democratic movement.
- Social democracy is a pluralist, mass participatory, democracy; its institutions and structures taking time to develop and remaining responsive to change. In social democracy, active participation will not be confined to voting and joining associations. Mass participation will be concerted political action that, crucially, will include spontaneous coming together with leadership responding to that spontaneous action.

Having demonstrated from the above analysis and in the **frame of democratic society**; it can be argued that each actor of the electoral process has a significant role to play in order to have a credible election in Ethiopia. Similarly, masses who are the electorates is as vital as the action maker in an election. This is so because, the electorates are the leader-makers that will finally choose candidate(s) to represent their interest during the decision making. Thus, without its involvement, voting, sorting, counting, announcement of result and winner declaration will never be attained. Nevertheless, the conduct of free, fair and credible elections could be achieved in Ethiopia if necessary, precautions are taken from the concerned quarters. The electoral bodies, the mass media, judiciary, civil society, the masses/voters among others, are the drivers that can make an election to be free and acceptable by all in the society. Therefore, the success of an election is not the responsibility of only electoral bodies, but also the duties of all in the system: ***via all-inclusive democratic transitional government not via ethnofascist regime or proponents of identity politics by despised elites. Democratic state is the sole driving force and has the capability of achieving the desired result for Ethiopia towards the realization of its goals and objectives for peace and rapid development in the nation.***

In nutshell, a democratic system of society should only be, and can only be, an historical product, born in the course of its realization, as a result of the developments of living history. Conditions in which poverty, ill health, long hours of work and poor education do not sap energy and enthusiasm and where willingness to participate and ability to do so are enriched through training in and experience of **democratic structures and institutions, including a free press and the freedom to form associations and to protest.**

All-inclusive transitional people's democratic government is not a theory, but rather a framework within which any correct various paradigms of democracy just fit: the democratic people's government where justice, equality, freedom, and humanity prevail, and all of these are grounded in these frameworks. It is the law of nature and society which cannot be derivable from any human construct ideologies-as any human being is born free.



Comprehensive Transitional People's democratic government is universal panacea! [The Martyrs]