

International Election Observers in Africa: The Case of Ethiopia

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Abstract

The question of inviting international election observers to monitor an election is one of the most controversial issues in Africa. Most of the time, the presence of international election monitors in emerging democracies is important to measure whether or not an election is conducted in a free and fair manner. But, sometimes it is regarded as the violation of a nation's sovereignty.

The major aim of this paper is to investigate the role and scope of international election observation. The paper looks at the importance of international election observation through the lens of a specific case study, the Ethiopian parliamentary election of 2005, which was without doubt the most 'monitored' election in the history of the nation. It also describes the merits and demerits of involving international election monitors in the election processes in emerging democracies in Africa. In this paper, international election monitors of three major institutions namely, the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU-EOM); the Carter Center, and the African Union (AU) election observers' team are presented as case studies.

Key words: Africa, Democracy, Election, Ethiopia, International Election Observers.

I. Introduction

In the last decade, a number of researchers examined the role of international election monitors in Africa¹. Countries that started a transition to a multi-party democracy have been getting assistance from well-developed democracies in the West. The forms of these assistances include: finance, material supplies, institutional capacity building and skills development. International election observation is one of the principal elements of such assistance.² According to Reilly³, in many cases in developing countries the efficiency of internal election observers is questionable. Because, "*There are many ways to defraud an*

election, and observes need to be highly trained to detect all but the most blatant forms of electoral fraud". Therefore, involving international observers in election processes in emerging democracies has become one of the solutions to such kind of election problems.

IDEA⁴ defines election observation as,

"The purposeful gathering of information regarding an electoral process and the making of informed judgments on the conduct of such a process on the basis of the information collected by persons who are not inherently authorized to intervene in the process, and whose involvement in mediation or technical assistance activities should not be such as to jeopardize their main observation responsibilities".

International election monitoring in a sovereign country was non-existent until recently. The UN sent international election observers to observe the election process in an independent country (Nicaragua) for the first time in 1989.⁵ International election observation gained increasing momentum since the 1980s in countries that transit from dictatorship to democratic rule. In the mid 1990s, international election observation became a standard procedure and a set of criteria to define the "free and fair" elections were proposed. At present there is a debate over the merits and demerits of assigning international election observation. Usually, governments invite international election monitors to gain credibility, placate the opposition, and to normalize and maintain relations with the international world.⁶ International election observation has five functions:⁷

- (1) It increases the credibility of the election process
- (2) The observers give technical assistance to the hosting country
- (3) The observers give the service of mediating disputes
- (4) The observers make electoral problems public and hence facilitate the chance for solving them.
- (5) Sometimes, observers supervise and administer the election process, and hence assist in peace building process in the host country.

According to the Carter Center⁸, international election observers have the following advantages:

- (1) Most of the time, the members of the international election observation team have extensive comparative experience than the local observers and thus get high level visibility.
 - (2) The assessment of the international election observers has much larger impact on the public opinion (both local and international).
 - (3) Their support to the domestic observers is important.
 - (4) International election observers express the interest of the international community in the achievement of democratic elections, and hence facilitate international recognition and acceptance to the winning party.
 - (5) As widely accepted body, an international election observation body plays an important role in supplying impartial and accurate assessments about the election⁹
- International observers' teams usually comprise members of foreign governments, inter-governmental associations, international NGOs, and multilateral agencies.¹⁰

One of the major weaknesses of the international election observers is their lack of interest in a post-election process. As Clark¹¹ said, "*Today election observation is disproportionately focused on the pre-election and election periods at the expense of the post-election period.*" A similar remark was given by Eric Bjornlund, quoted by Clark¹²: "*International election monitoring often falls apart after election day, after the large delegations have departed and the international media have their attention elsewhere.*"

The other criticisms on international election observation include:

- (1) It is too costly
- (2) Its' impact on the democratization process on the host countries is very limited and temporary.¹³
- (3) In some cases the professional quality of international election monitors is questionable as Benjamin Reilly¹⁴ noted. He said, "*In many cases..... international election observers are not trained professionals but rather politicians or bureaucrats from Western countries.*"

The other problem concerning international elections observation, according to the Carter Center¹⁵ is that "*Host Governments facing difficult elections often selectively invite observer groups they perceive as more sympathetic to their interests.*" Worse than this, "*Instance in which election observation reports are inconsistent among different organizations generates doubts about the methods, professionalism, and credibility of international observation as a whole.*"¹⁶

II. International Election Observers in the 2005 Ethiopian Election

In the previous election (i.e., May 2000) the Ethiopian government refused to allow international observers to monitor the election. This action brought strong criticisms on the ruling party (EPRDF) and the government.¹⁷ In the 2005 election, however, the government decided to invite international observer after hesitating for some time. To facilitate the election monitoring process, the NEBE (National Election Board of Ethiopia) also formulated a code of conduct for the international election observers. According to the code of conduct (issued on February 25, 2005), the international election observers had the right to access election officials at all levels; observe polling and counting stations and venues; participate in the meetings called by the NEBE Secretariat in relation to election; attend election campaign rallies of political parties; and report any election-related irregularities to the election observers (at the polling stations and counting venues), and to the NEBE.

The obligations of the International election observers, according to the Code of Conduct include¹⁸:

- (a) Respecting the country's sovereignty, the national laws and regulations, and the cultures of the people.
- (b) Follow lawful instructions of the elections officers and security personnel.
- (c) Never giving instructions, and show respect and courtesy to elections officers.
- (d) Being impartial and not showing or wearing any partisan symbols and banners.
- (e) Not carry weapons.

Various international election observers signed a memorandum of understanding with the NEBE. For instance, a memorandum of understanding between the NEBE and the European Union was signed by the NEBE Chairman, Kemal Bedri, Kelo, and Timothy Clarke, the EU representative in Ethiopia, on March 12, 2005 in Addis Ababa.

When we examine the statements from the NEBE and the Media in the pre-election period concerning international observers, it becomes clear that up to the last moment it was difficult to know the composition and the total number of international election observers coming to Ethiopia. For instance, according to SABC News¹⁹, around 320 international observers were expected to come to Ethiopia for the May 15, 2005 election. On the other hand, *Aljazeera*²⁰ announced that there were about 500 foreign observers in the country. According to Kemal Bedri's pre-election statement, the African Union (AU), the Carter Centre, The European Union (EU), the Arab League, the United States, Japan, India, Turkey and China had expressed their willingness to send election observers. Furthermore, it was

declared that many Embassies and diplomatic missions in Addis Ababa would participate as observers.²¹ On May 11, 2005, the NEBE declared that so far it had accredited a total of 319 international observers (150 from the European Union, 50 from Carter Center, and the rest from the Arab League, the African Union, Japan, China, India, Russia and Turkey).²² But later on, i.e., after the election, the Ethiopian Herald newspaper disclosed that in the May 2005 election, the EU, the Carter Center and the AU had deployed more than 300 observers.²³ The principal international election monitors in the 2005 parliamentary election were: the Carter Center, the European Union, and the African Union.

2.1 The Carter Centre

The Centre was invited by the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the full agreement of the NEBE. The Carter Centre was composed of 50 members and was led by the ex-US President (Jimmy Carter) and his wife, (Rosalynn), ex-President of Botswana (Sir Ketumile Joni Masire), ex-Prime Minister of Tanzania (Judge Joseph Warioba), and Johan Hardman (the Executive Director of the Carter Centre). All in all, the Carter Centre assigned international observers from 17 countries. The observers were assigned to seven regions of Ethiopia, in addition to Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa city administrations.²⁴ The Centre deployed small medium-term observers in early April in the provinces. The objectives of this small team of observers were to assess the election preparation, campaigns of the political parties, and observe the political environment.²⁵ Jimmy Carter arrived at Addis Ababa just a couple of days before the May 15, 2005 election though some of his team was in Ethiopia as early as April 2007. As soon as he arrived in Addis Ababa, Jimmy Carter praised the election process and the Election Board, based on parliamentary evidence. His statement drew considerable criticisms from the Ethiopian Human Rights council chairman, Andargachew Tesfaye who challenged the former president's view. *"He has been here how many hours? It is not just Mr. Carter, but other also. [They] arrive in the morning. They see officials in the afternoon and they claim that everything is okay. I wish they would leave it to us or go around and investigate the situation thoroughly,"* he said.²⁶ According to the Carter Centre post-election preliminary statement of May 16, 2005, in its stay in Ethiopia, the Centre officials had talked with government officials, the NEBE, opposition party leaders, civil society officials, and other members of the international observer teams. According to the Centre, Ethiopia had started achieving democratic culture manifested by more open political debate, increased political participation, large demonstrations and rallies, high and huge Election Day turnout. The Centre also criticized the NEBE's refusal to accept local observers.²⁷ It said that

the measure was inappropriate. However, later on it appreciated the government for its immediate acceptance of the decision of the Supreme Court concerning the issue.²⁸ The election irregularities the Centre observed include: failure to properly check ID cards, minor problems of underage voting, and unrests in some areas like Hossana caused by poor management of the process.²⁹ The Centre also urged all parties and their supporters to pursue their election complaints through the processes established within the NEBE and the courts.³⁰ The final statement of the Carter Center appreciated the pre-election and Election Day process, but expressed its reservation and disappointment on the post-election events.³¹ Both the ruling party and opposition parties appreciated the Carter Center's final statement, but from different angles.

2.2. The EU EOM (European Union Election Observation Mission)

European Union sent 200 election observers to Ethiopia. The European Union Election observatory mission to Ethiopia was headed by Anna Gomez, member of the European Parliament. According to Ana Gomez, the EU observation team was the 3rd largest election observation team the EU had ever deployed. The first was in Indonesia, and the second was in Nigeria.³²

The EU-EOM had been in Ethiopia since March 18, 2005. On the Election Day, i.e., on May 15, 2005, the EU-EOM assigned more than 200 observers including 9 members of the European Parliament, and 2 members of Ireland Parliament.³³ The EU-EOM visited 1034 polling stations on May 15, 2005.³⁴ The EU-EOM released a preliminary statement on May 17, 2005.

In its preliminary statement, it said, "*The elections were generally held in a peaceful and orderly manner.*"³⁵ The EU EOM expressed its disappointment on the decision of the NEBE to bar local election observers.³⁶ According to the chief observer of the European Union, Ana Gomes, allowing international observers to monitor the elections, and the establishment of a joint forum of contesting political parties both at national and state (regional) levels was exemplary.³⁷ In its stay in Ethiopia, the EU-EOM had also voiced its serious concern over the death and detention of many people in a clash with the police and security forces;³⁸ the government's action of suspending the credentials of the journalists of the Voice of America, and the *Deutsche Welle*; the government's monopoly of the state media particularly in the post-election period; and the harassment and confinement of opposition party leaders to house arrests as they were elected members of future parliament³⁹ The EU observer mission's preliminary statement was criticized by the NEBE as contradictory,⁴⁰

condemned by the Prime Minister of Ethiopia as “garbage”⁴¹ and was highly appreciated by the opposition parties. The CUD official, Berhanu Nega, said, “*I think it was good, honest report and now we need dialogue to resolve the current deadlock.*”⁴² The EU-EOM released its final statement many months later after the completion of the election. In the final report, the EU-EOM heavily criticized the government and the ruling party for its heavy handed measures in the post-election period.⁴³

2.3. The AU (African Union) Observers Team

The AU deployed an election observers team composed of 20 members. The team was led by Hon. Dr. Aman Walid Kabourou, member of the Pan African Parliament. The team assigned its members from 20 African countries to monitor the works of the CIPs⁴⁴: they were from Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Swaziland, Egypt, Mali, Liberia, Nigeria, Burundi, Congo, Chad, DR Congo, Zambia, Botswana, Kenya, South Africa, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic and Sudan.⁴⁵ According to Ambassador Patrick Mazimhaka, Deputy Chairman of the Commission of the African Union (AU), the May 15 National elections were “fair and free.” In the interview he gave to the Voice of America (VOA) “English to Africa” program, he said that opposition’s complaints on the elections were exaggerated. He further blamed the opposition for the June (2005) violence that left many dead. He said “*....the riots that led to the deaths of people were indeed organized by the opposition..... there is no doubt about that.*”⁴⁶ The AU Election Observer Team appreciated the NEBE for conducting the election efficiently. According to the preliminary report of the AU team, “*Political parties and candidates, despite a few incidents, generally exercised a high level of political maturity and tolerance during the run-up to and an election day*”

The minor problems encountered in the Election Day, according to the AU report, were⁴⁷:

- 1) The counting process in most of polling stations was slow
- 2) The polling staff had difficulty in filling the forms
- 3) Polling stations were relatively small contributing for the congestion and over crowding.
- 4) Because of over-crowding the accreditation of votes was not properly carried out.
- 5) Civic education for voters was not adequate
- 6) The training of electoral officials was not adequate.

The African Union election observation preliminary report recommended⁴⁸:

- a) The compilation of a permanent voters’ register that is reviewed regularly

- b) Continuing voter and general civic education
- c) NEBE should closely monitor private organizations that give civic education
- d) All stakeholders in the election to accept the people's verdict
- e) To settle election problems legally.

In the final observation report, the AU Observer Team forwarded the following recommendations:⁴⁹

- (a) Announcing the election results without any delay
- (b) Insuring the independence of the NEBE
- (c) Establishing an efficient ballot-paper tracking system
- (d) The sharing of information among stakeholders including the civil society to avoid mistrust and suspicions
- (e) Civic education for the people to enable them fully understand the complex nature of democracy.

The final observation report of the African Union team got a very high acceptance by the ruling party, the EPRDF, while it was demonized by the opposition parties.

III. Discussion

One of the most controversial measures the Ethiopian government took in relation with the election was the expulsion of a senior European election observer, Siegfried Pauswang,⁵⁰ and three American organizations (NDI, IRI, IFES)⁵¹ from the country. Siegfried Pauswang was accused by the NEBE of having pre-conceived ideas and failure to be a neutral observer.⁵²

In addition, on March 30, 2005, the Ethiopian government told three American Organizations that came to Ethiopia to assist the election process, to leave the country with 48 hours due to their failure to register properly.⁵³ All of them were told to leave the country within two days. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia the representatives of the three organizations entered Ethiopia with a tourist visa, "*without getting any authority or without making any agreement with the concerned bodies.*"⁵⁴ Therefore, these US organizations were not registered in Ethiopia.⁵⁵ These three Washington-based groups came to Ethiopia with 1.69 million grants from the US Agency for International Development. The grant was a portion of a \$10 million fund allocated by the American Congress to promote democracy in Ethiopia by training voters, election observers and promoting cooperation between political parties.⁵⁶ For Shari Bryan, Director for South and East Africa for the

National Democratic Institute in Washington, the expulsion order was “*another troubling sign that the Ethiopian government is not comfortable with participation of democracy organizations*”⁵⁷ The expulsion had also puzzled many in the West. For instance, Director of African Programs at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, J. Stephen Morrison, exclaimed “*I’m a little mystified by what’s going on*”⁵⁸ However, according to Mr. Morrison, there was a suspicion that Ethiopia expelled these American Organizations in retaliation for the American State Department highly critical report of Ethiopian’s human right abuses. The State Department had also expressed its disappointment to Ethiopia, in response to the latter’s decision. According to Mr. Morrison, the Ethiopian government tended towards authoritarianism but admitted that the human rights record of the current government was better than the previous Marxist government. Mr. Morrison said, “*Elections have been problematic in Ethiopia, but anything remotely electoral or democratic is a great improvement.*”⁵⁹ The Carter Centre also was not happy in the governments’ decision to expel the organizations. Jimmy Carter said, “*I personally would prefer if Ethiopia had welcomed those three organizations to participate. We have worked hand in hand with some of them often*”.⁶⁰ Furthermore, David Carroll, Acting Director of Carter’s Centre Democracy Program said, “*It is troubling. We know these organizations do good work.*”⁶¹ Donald Yamamoto, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Africa in Washington,⁶² addressing the United States Congress’ House Subcommittee on Africa on May 5, 2005, described the expulsion of these organizations as “*troubling and confusing, especially since it is the first time these organizations have been expelled form any country.*”⁶³

The international community contributed for the country’s democratic process not only by sending election observers, but also by working to defuse the post-election political tension. The most active in this aspect was the European Union.

The post-election situation in Ethiopia, according to Mr. Timothy Clarke, the Head of the European Delegation in Ethiopia, had been full of difficulties and tensions. He noted that there was a mutual distrust among the main political parties. He pointed out that the opposition political parties distrusted the NEBE. According to his observation, “*This has colored the entire electoral process from the beginning.....It is not clear whether the opposition parties will agree once the results are finalized, and the consequences of that could be very difficult for the government and the country.*”⁶⁴

In his interview with Capital, one of the most known newspapers in Ethiopia, he noted that there were three options that would solve (or complicate) the post-election deadlock:⁶⁵

- (1) Acceptance of the results of the May 15 election by all political parties, and forming the next parliament accordingly. This could end all problems associated with the election.
- (2) The rejection of the election results by the opposition parties, and refraining themselves from joining the next parliament-but, they do not disturb the activities of the next government.
- (3) The rejection of the election results by the opposition parties and refusing to join the next parliament, and the eruptions of peaceful protests mass protests, and violence etc. in the country, and “*then Ethiopia would be in trouble for some time ahead, with very unpredictable consequences*”. The mistrust between the EPRDF and the opposition parties, according to him, was due to personality problems, and partly due to policy differences.

The European Union (EU) had played a major and active role for the fruitful completion of the May 2005 Ethiopian election. As stated earlier, in addition to sending the EU-EOM to Ethiopia to monitor the election, the EU, through its representative in Ethiopia, Ambassador Timothy Clark was able to arrange a face-to-face talk between Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and leaders of the opposition, Dr. Berhanu Nega (CUD), and Dr. Beyene Petros (UEDF). In the meeting, according to Tim Clarke, “*The opposition were told by the Prime Minister that they have to make a choice in the coming days on whether they are in or out of the process and face the consequences.*”⁶⁶ Actually, the Prime Minister agreed to have a talk with the UEDF and the CUD officials after the two parties promised and confirmed that they would abide by the constitution, and cancelled their call for a three-day strike which was aimed to show their protest to the government’s ban on their planned demonstration. According to Dr. Beyene, “*The meeting, which was explanatory, was cordial and open.... It was very fruitful.*”⁶⁷ Although, the two opposition parties earlier demanded that the government, should resign and pave a way for the formation of a unity government, this talk with the Prime Minister did not even address the issue. In fact, even before the face-to-face talk begins, it was clear that the government did not want to consider this proposal. For instance, Bereket Simon⁶⁸ said,

*“As the opposition has accepted to work within the constitution and the rule of law by renouncing violence, the government will meet them this afternoon to discuss as how we are going to work in the parliament and other similar issues... It is a meeting on how to implement constitutional rule.”*⁶⁹

Moreover, the EU tried to reduce the polarity of the EPRDF and opposition parties and the tense political atmosphere, by arranging a meeting in Brussels. In the Brussels meeting,

EPRDF was represented by Berhane Gebre Kristos, Ethiopian ambassador to the European Union, and CUD was represented by Dr. Berhanu Nega, while Dr. Negede Gobeze represented the UEDF.⁷⁰

Perhaps, the EU and the US played a prominent role in the whole election process due to their strong position and influence on Ethiopia as development partners of the country. Ethiopia was expected to demonstrate its path to democracy at this election because the US administration had openly declared that the US will no longer need authoritarian allies, and rather gives priority for democracy and freedom. To use the words of Jimmy Carter, ex-President of the USA, “*A democratically elected government would be an ideal partner of the United States in the war against international terrorism.*” Roughly, the donor countries give \$1.9 billion annually in assistance to Ethiopia and they have been pressuring the government to conduct free and fair election. It is believed that the presence of strong opposition in parliament would push the government to work hard in delivering basic services and deliver basic goods like food and housing to the people.⁷¹ For the Donor countries that contribute \$1.9 –billion a year aid to Ethiopia, the election would serve as a litmus test of the ruling party and the government’s commitment to democratic reform. That is why, Louis Michel, the EU Development and Humanitarian Aid Commissioner said, “*We are in a much stronger position to make progress on human rights issues with direct budget support because the stakes are so much higher.*”⁷² The EU alone, for instance, has pledged to give Ethiopia \$466million in budgetary support in the coming three years, and this pledged financial support could be used as “leverage” over the Ethiopian government authorities, as noted by Louis Michel.⁷³ This notion is reinforced by Helga Graefin Strachwit, German ambassador to Ethiopia. She said,

“The question of good governance, including democratization, is definitely one of the criteria for direct budget support.....you wouldn’t give budget support to a country where you were not convinced that good governance would at least be a high topic if it were not already in place....to give budget aid you must be convinced that the right direction at least is being taken.”⁷⁴

When we check the aid flow from the donor countries to Ethiopia, we can say that it had been increasing every year except in the two years of the bloody border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea (1998-2000) that caused the reduction of the donor aid to Ethiopia by about \$600 million. Ethiopia needs increasing aid and more money to achieve its Millennium

Development Goals (MDGs). According to the estimates of the UN, the World Bank and the government of Ethiopia, the country needs \$122 –billion over the next ten years to achieve its targets by 2015 that includes achieving universal primary education and reducing poverty by half.⁷⁵ Therefore, it was beyond doubt that in order to get this aid, Ethiopia needed a clean election in May 2005.

Ethiopia is one of the poor countries proposed to be involved in the debt relief programme. Moreover, the G8⁷⁶ debt relief was offered to 18 poor countries in the first phase. These were: Benin, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guyana, Honduras, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Nicaragua. In order to receive the debt relief, the poor countries were expected to meet the minimum standard of good governance.⁷⁷ The planned debt relief has its own stages: Eighteen countries, in the G8 deal would be the first to get debt forgiveness. Other nine countries would get the same relief when they qualify over 18 months. Other countries such as Eritrea and Haiti could qualify in the future. The criterion for this debt relief is good governance. As the result of this debt relief measure, countries would get ample chance for invest their money in other developmental activity such as health and education, instead of repaying money to the West.⁷⁸ In Bob Geldof's words, this debt relief is a "Victory for millions."⁷⁹ The reaction in Ethiopia to this debt relief in Ethiopia was mixed. One of the leaders of CDU, Berhanu Nega said, "*Any attempt to ease the economic burden of this country is very welcome*". But, he further remarked that the debt relief should not be seen as a reward for steps to democratization in the country. For Iqbal Jhazbhay, an expert on the Horn of Africa, the May 15 election was "*the best election Ethiopia has had so far, and that's saying a lot, given the country's long history of dictators and coups.*"⁸⁰ Though, it was widely believed that EPRDF tried to make the May 15 election more democratic to get international appreciation, Meles refuted this assumption. In the interview he made with Radio Fana in connection with the May 28 victory that heralded the demise of the Mengistu's government, he said, "*We have not done anything to please the international community. If EPRDF had had any intention of pleasing the international community, it would have changed its land policy, which many of them wanted be changed.*"⁸¹

IV. Conclusion

In one way or another, the rise of international election-monitoring to defend democratization manifests the gradual and unnoticeable erosion of traditional state sovereignty. The growing economic interdependence of countries in the "global village" made states vulnerable to

outside influences that involve political and economic pressures to democratize. With the aim of avoiding this perceived threat to sovereignty there are many countries that preferred domestic (local) observers than international election observers.⁸² As I already indicated, international election observation has considerable weaknesses. However, as Clark⁸³ remarked, “*International election observation is work in progress, much like the international democratic system it aims to promote and develop.*”

According to the IDEA⁸⁴ the “*ultimate objective*” of the international election observation “*is to help a country consolidate its own democratic processes and capacities so that international election observation becomes redundant*”. As Hameso⁸⁵ said, citing Abbink & Hessling⁸⁶, “*In a political atmosphere where the state has had its legitimacy and trust worthiness repeatedly questioned, election observation was needed to boost public confidence in the democratic process and to secure the fairness of the elections.*”

According to the UN,⁸⁷ international election observation conveys the interests of the international community for the rule law, respect of human right, and for the general achievement of democratic elections. International election monitors should be free from any of multilateral and bilateral considerations that compromise their neutrality, and concentrate in civil and political rights. The international election monitors also recognize “*that it is the people of a country who ultimately determine credibility and legitimacy of an election process.*” Generally speaking, international election observers’ analysis of an election is influenced by (1) the objectives of the observing government or organization, and (2) the particular goal of the election. International election monitors examine human rights and the general political situation very closely in countries that are in the early stage of building a democratic system than in the countries that have almost completed the transition stage of building democracy.⁸⁸

As everyone agrees, the May 2005 election in Ethiopia was the most contested poll in the history of the nation. Until the count process where irregularities made it questionable, the election was admired by the international body. European observers of the election called the campaign and the voting, “*the most genuinely competitive elections the country has experienced.*”⁸⁹ Therefore, we can say that from the whole election process, the campaign and the voting were accepted and supported by the international body of observers. But, the count procedure in the post-election process was the one which drew a lot of criticisms. To be honest, the contending parties had complained even the pre-election period and the voting. Accusations and counter accusations involving the alleged intimidation of voters by gun men, forcing people to vote for certain political parties, the disappearing and stuffing of ballot

boxes were regularly witnessed. It was also reported that in some constituencies the number of ballots exceeded the number of registered voters.

In conclusion, considering the big size of the country, and the complexity of the socio-economic and political problems, the number of assigned international observers was not sufficient to control the whole election process. As remarked by one of the opposition supporters in the Diaspora, Dr. Getachew Haile.⁹⁰ *“The May elections took place in the absence of enough observers. Indeed, the European Union and the U.S., through the Carter Center, has fielded about 300 observers. This number is insignificant, given the rigged nature of the country where 80 per cent of the voters live.”*

NOTES

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- ²⁷ The NEBE at first forbade the local observers from observing the election. But later on, complying with the decision of the Court, the NEBE allowed the local observers.
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- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ The Carter Centre, “Ethiopia Elections: Jimmy Carter Trip Report, Post Election Statement.” <<http://www.cartercenter.org/viewdoc.asp?docID=2097&submenu=news>> (Retrieved on 02-07-05)
- ³¹ The Carter Centre (September 2005): “Final Statement on the Carter Centre Observation of the Ethiopia 2005 National Elections.”
- ³² The Ethiopian Herald, 4 May 2005.
- ³³ EU-EOM 17 May 2005.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation), (2005/04/07).
- ³⁷ The Ethiopian Herald (Wednesday 4 May 2005): “EU Chief Observer Speaks of Election. Process Positive Trends,” Vol. LXI, No. 202.
- ³⁸ In the post-election period, there were series of violent clashes between the opposition supporters and the government forces in June 2005, and Nov. 2005 that resulted in the death of more than hundred people and the detention of more than 10, 000 people.

³⁹ Ethiopian Reporter, “Anna Gomez Leaves for Brussels.”
<<http://www.ethiopianreporter.com/displayenglish.php?id=2345>>

(Retrieved on 11-07-05)

⁴⁰ The Ethiopian Herald (Friday 26 August 2005) “EU EOM Reports Contradictory: NEBE”.
Vol. LXI, No. 300. *See also*, The Ethiopian Herald (Friday 26 August 2005): “EU Election Observer
Mission Issues.

Preliminary Statement Regarding Election” Vol. LXI, No. 300.

⁴¹ Ethiopian News Agency August 27, 2005.

⁴² *Times Daily*, August 25, 2005.

⁴³ EU-EOM (European Union Election Observation Mission). “Ethiopia: Legislative Elections
2005. Final Report.

⁴⁴ To solve the alleged election irregularities, the NEBE and the political parties decided to settle the
election irregularities by forming two bodies, the Complaints Review Board (CRBs), and the
Complaints Investigation Panels (CIPs). The responsibilities of CIPs include:

- (1) Determining facts whether the alleged irregularities occurred or not
- (2) Examining witnesses or any other documentary evidence to determine the complaint is fact or not.
- (3) If necessary, visiting the constituency where alleged irregularity took place.

(For more details, see The Ethiopian Herald, 17 July 2005, “The NEBE and Complaints Investigation
Process,” Vol. LXI, No. 266.

⁴⁵ AU (African Union) Observer Team, “Report of the African Union Observer Team on the Ethiopian
National Elections Complaints Investigation Panels, June29-July 20, 2005.

⁴⁶ The Ethiopian Herald (14 August 2005): “Ethiopia’s Election free, fair, opposition complaints
“grossly exaggerated”: AU official “Vol. LXI, No. 290.

⁴⁷ The Ethiopian Herald (Saturday 4 June 2005): “AU observer Team Lauds NEBE for Conduct
of Electoral Process.” Vo. LXI, No. 229.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ AU (African Union) Observer Team. “Report of the African Union Observer Team on the Ethiopian
National Elections Complaints Investigation Panels. June29-July 20, 2005.

⁵⁰ Sudan Tribune, (April 4, 2005): “EU Poll observer quits after Ethiopia’s bias accusation.”

⁵¹ The National Democratic Institute (NDI); The International Republican Institute (IRI); and the
International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), formerly, the International Foundation for
Election Systems.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) (2005/05/06): “Ethiopia PM Warns of ‘hate’ Poll.”

⁵⁴ AP (The Associated Press), (March 31, 2005): “Ethiopia Orders U.S. Workers’ Expulsion. “ *See also*, VOA (Voice of America), (31 March 2005): “US Disappointed by Ethiopian Expulsion of American Democracy Workers.”

⁵⁵ Ironically, as David Shinn, a former US Ambassador to Ethiopia (1996-1999) speaking at the conference of the Oromo studies Association held in Minneapolis, Minnesota on July 29, 2006 remarked, other non-governmental organization called the Women’s Campaign International (WCI) “*was not registered and allowed to remain*” in Ethiopia, while the other three organizations were expelled. He guessed that the government did not expel WCI perhaps “*EPRDF had put forward far more female candidates than the opposition and might have perceived that WCI’s program ‘could disproportionately benefit EPRDF candidates.’*”

Source: US Information, Department of State, 02 August 2006, “Women Lawmakers in Ethiopia Upgrade Skills with U.S. Help.” Ambassador Shinn rates USAID-NGO partnership a success.

⁵⁶ The Associated Press, March 31, 2005.

⁵⁷ Cox New Service, (Friday, April 15, 2005):“Carter to View Ethiopian Vote.”

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Ethiopian Reporter, “Democratic Gov’t an Ideal Partner to US: Carter.”

<<http://www.ethiopianreporter.com/displayenglish.php?id=2247>>

(Retrieved on 11-07-05)

⁶¹ *Cox New Service, April 15, 2005.*

⁶² The current ambassador of the US to Ethiopia

⁶³ Mail & Guardian, (May 14, 2005):”Third Time Lucky?” (By: Andrew Heavens).

⁶⁴ Capital (Ethiopia) (Wednesday, July 27, 2005): “EU’s post-election scenarios.“

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) (2005/07/29), “Ethiopia’s PM meets poll rivals:

Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has met opposition leaders for the first time since May’s disputed polls.”

⁶⁷ The Courier Mail, (Oct. 3, 2005), “Talks defuse political crisis.”

⁶⁸ Information Minister and election campaign head of the ruling party, the EPRDF. Currently, he is a special advisor to the Prime Minister.

⁶⁹ *The Courier Mail, Oct. 3, 2005.*

⁷⁰ Capital (Sunday June 26, 2005): “Brussels Hosts Ethiopian Talks,” Vol. 7, No. 342.

⁷¹The Christian Science Monitor (May 31, 2005):”Democracy gains in Ethiopia, a key US ally in terror war: Initial results Monday show opposition parties have won at least 174 seats, up from 12.”

⁷² Mail & Guardian online, (19 December 2004): “All Eyes are on Ethiopia’s Poll Next Year.”

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ The G8 is sometimes called “the rich-nations club.” Its’ members are: Britain, Canada, France, Japan, Germany, Italy, Russia and the United States.

⁷⁷ AP (The Associated Press), (06-11-2005), “Africans Give Cautious Welcome to G8 Debt-Relief Package.”

See also: Guardian, (Sunday June 12, 2005), “\$55bn Africa Debt Deal ‘a Victory for Millions;’”

Mark Rice-Oxley (July 07, 2005), The Christian Science Monitor. “The G-8’s bottom line on helping poor nations.”

⁷⁸ The Guardian June 12, 2005.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ The Christian Science Monitor, May 31, 2005.

⁸¹ The Ethiopian Herald (29 May 2005): “Interview with Prime Minister Meles Zenawi” Part I. Vol. LXI, No.224.

⁸² Carter Center 2006: 2.

⁸³ Clark 2006: 1

⁸⁴ IDEA 1999: viii

⁸⁵ Hameso, Seyoum (December 2000): African Studies Quarterly. Book Review. Election Observation and Democratization in Africa, John Abbink and Gerti Hesseling (Eds.). New York: St. Martin’s press.

⁸⁶ Abbink & Hessling 2000.

⁸⁷ UN (United Nations (Oct. 27, 2005). Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers, New York, p.1.

⁸⁸ IDEA 1999: 4.

⁸⁹ EU-EOM (European Union Election Observation Mission) (25 August 2005), “Preliminary Statement on the Election Appeals’ Process, the Re-run of Elections and the Somali Region Elections; EU-EOM (European Election Observation Mission), Preliminary Statement (17 May 2005): Addis Ababa.

⁹⁰ The Washington Times, October 30, 2005.