**ABIY AHMED: FROM MESSIAH TO CAPTOR?**

**By Habtamu Girma Demiessie**

**Editorial Note:** Habtamu Girma is Assistant Professor of Economics at Jigjiga University, Ethiopia. He can be reach at ruhe215@gmail.com.

**Introduction**

The past couple of weeks were quiet special for Ethiopia and Africa. The new generation of African leader, Abiy Ahmed (PhD) of Ethiopia deservedly secured the 100th edition of world Nobel peace prize. The world eying on Ethiopia and its leader, it takes to look the matter from its background to understand how Abiy Ahmed secured the prestigious award. For that, I found the answer in brief sketch of the political biography of Nobel winning prime Minister of Ethiopia. Narratives under this piece also reflects on the highs and lows of a reform process in Ethiopia, for which Abiy Ahmed (PhD) is a leading figure. And readers shall understand that I am honored to dedicate this opinion article to congratulate my Prime Minister.

**Abiy Ahmed’s Government Committed to Prosperity of Ethiopia**

Abiy Ahmed clinched into the chief executive of the country, officially sworn in as the Prime Minister of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia on April 2 2018. For many Ethiopians, Abiy was a newer face in Ethiopian political scene. But the leadership personality of this young, well educated, and energetic leader is well established in his plus twenty years of public services, as a soldier, cyber security officer, a bureaucrat and as a minister.

A recollection from Abiy’s inaugural speech in front of the Ethiopian Parliament was a well reminder that he cleverly identified and well understood the breadth and width of problems Ethiopia. For him, the problem of state governance in Ethiopia was cumulative effect of short run oriented interventions in the past decades, which rather than healing the root causes, the focus of interventions have been against the reflection of a problem. Abiy truly located underutilization of resources and disguised unemployment in the realm of human capital. In state mega projects, he underscored project management issue a chronic problem.
But, whether Abiy will be capable & committed to address those problems was a question to be answered in time. The 18 months of rule of Abiy Ahmed showed the leader is not only able to sort out problems, but also committed to their resolve.

**Abiy Ahmed`s Popular Ratings in Ethiopia: From Messiah to Captor**

The first three months of his power were all to treat the polarized politics in Ethiopia, where he reached out communities in all corners within Ethiopia and abroad. In the first months of his power, Abiy was too popular in Ethiopia. Many even dub messiahs, who sent from God to transcend the people of Ethiopia from tides of all sorts of problems resulted by a predatory mal-politics they faced: which manifested from poverty to internal displacement to mass communal violence that has taken the lives of many.

But as time passed through, things began to change quickly, with popular views on Abiy changed. That is perfectly symmetric about Abiy`s start of political business and his role as a statesman. This time, expectedly a gross applaud would turned out gross condemnation, where a sizable portion of populace began unfounded criticisms, if not hostile look against the leader. In many cases, the elite group has been blaming Abiy`s administration without concrete evidences, where such misguided judgments by these groups amounts shameful (if they feel so), as testified by time.

Though vocal critics of Abiy are rising, the reward for Nobel peace prize is a good reminder for all of us that Abiy`s leadership is fetching global acclaim. That means his leadership principle, MEDEME, has a future to address the multitudes of problem Ethiopia is facing. The Governance Principle of Abiy, which is synergy, or MEDEMR (as in Amharic) focused on the importance of optimizing the potential of his country from: the immense natural resources, rising stockpile of human capital; and rich social capital.

For that Abiy looks on the importance of resurrecting mindsets from all sources of wave of negative energy: hate, animosity, revenge mentality. The Ethiopian leader is staunch on behavioral and moral elements having a catalytic role to quickly fix all breaks Ethiopia is facing: from politics to economics to bureaucracy.
Among remarkable steps forward forged by Abiy Ahmed is his keen action towards healing the fracture of Ethiopian political culture. A typical feature of Ethiopian political culture is low record of resolving differences through dialogue, on give- and –take principle. Sadly, in Ethiopia resolving political differences has been through political playoffs. Abiy has inherited this political culture. And his grand political project is to build a political system that heals fracture of the political culture.

So far, key legal & institutional arrangements were made to achieve that. One such was refurbishment of the national electoral board of Ethiopia in a way that better insulate from political interferences. The national reconciliation commission also installed, aimed at treating the discontent (victims) groups from whatever injustices in the past.

Another front Abiy Ahmed and his leadership set to fight is the rampant leadership crisis sweeping the Ethiopian society, virtually in all departments of life. Leadership crisis is manifested by inability/incapability of the sizable portion of elite group to seeing the bigger picture and decides accordingly that would add to the welfare of Ethiopian populace.

But, Abiy has to struggle amidst those challenges, dealing with those hurdles in patience and wisdom.

In his oratorical speeches, he tirelessly connoted leaders to be thoughtful and pass a grown up decisions in their ventures. In his actions, Abiy has shown the personal pride is below the service of the people he led. In his wise leadership quality, Abiy’s leadership has been showing remarkable achievements. In his charisma, Abiy reinstated Ethiopia’s honor to its height in the world history.

Another face of Abiy Ahmed’s change oriented leadership style is his appreciation to power. Quite different from his predecessors as heads of governments in Ethiopia, Abiy has broken the old faceted notion on state power taken for granted a self-enrichment and build own images by political leaders. From the first day of his appointment as head of FDRE government, Abiy has been living power an instrument to bring change and serve people. His move in this regard starts by inspiring his cabinets with his path breaking leadership personality, with humility, selflessness, and a serving mentality.
Abiy stressed the need to develop the culture of volunteerism to serve popular interests. In all public projects and/or activities required public mobilizations, Abiy appeared up front with his exemplary deeds, influencing the leadership in his circle and the wider Ethiopian populace to follow suit his steps.

With a good records of implementations of state projects so far, Abiy and his leadership has shown rich account of knowledge in the area of project management.

In the venture of international relations, the success stories of Abiy Ahmed’s governments so far tells the leader understood and was firm to the essence of globalization. Globalization featuring our world today, countries are expected to consider the global interests, the Ethiopian leader is understand such conception a price of piece, that countries has to pay to live in an ever interconnected world to reap from sustained peace & collective prosperity.

Such conceptions on globalization is behind Abiy’s remarkable success to be able to solve some of disputes remained unsettled in more than three decades of engagements in just few months of his power. A good example is how Abiy contributed to his vital role to two decades long war between end of Ethiopian and Eritrea war in just two months. The 2019 Nobel Peace prize winner was the architect of a recent Sudanese peace deal too. His visionary move to turn the geopolitics of horn of Africa from problems to prosperity is well appreciated by IGAD and Africa Union.

Apparently, the Nobel peace prize committee announced Abiy’s win largely accrued to his wise and humble personality in those path breaking peace buildups in the horn of Africa and the world at large.

The world has well understood the leadership qualities of Abiy. For Ethiopians though, it seems the magic power of their leader is seemingly unrevealed yet. The vocal critics of Abiy often raise the prevailing instabilities here and there in different parts of the country. But, it is unfortunate that they are deaf to learn those problems are results of a political decays cumulated in the past three decades.
But, how can interpret the scores of achievement by Dr Abiy Ahmed?

In his congratulation notes to Abiy Ahmed, the President of Finland, Sauli Niinisto said “…the Nobel Peace prize was 10% a recognition credited to tireless efforts you exerted so far for peace of the world; and 90% is debited to heavy duties you will held responsible in times ahead to add to world peace”.

Perhaps Abiy seems to have well understood that such global recognitions of a rank like Nobel award is much to add responsibility. While Abiy Ahmed proved to be promising to elevate his country to prosperity in few years, he is humble towards worldwide applaud he is receiving. In his speech on the inauguration ceremony of his book, MEDEMER, held on October 19 at Millennium hall in Addis Ababa, Abiy reckoned his award was credited to Ethiopians. He was bold to tell all Ethiopians that enough for celebrations or condemnations on his Nobel win, rather it takes to be ready for another struggle, another achievement.

Ethiopians shall not look at Abiy; they ought to look at where Abiy is looking

The irony is that all sorts of stereotypic judgments continued against Abiy Ahmed by Ethiopian elites, even against his honor as a Nobel laureate. To the dismay of Ethiopian image by the world, some local political oppositions blamed Abiy`s score as sponsored by the western powers.

The good thing is that those unfounded critics were all weak to retard a leaping forward Prime Minister. Abiy reiterated this in a recent speech on an inaugural event of a multimillion dollar park project, Andenet Park. Abiy said “…..no any force would stop his leadership from moving on, though it may have delaying effect. He was passionate to tell 'his leadership will not lose heart'.

Whatever the empty critics from ultra-ethnic conservative groups; anti-establishment camp or populists, Abiy is firm that their rhetoric is either outdated, if not justified by jealousy.

Above all, the News from Oslo, Norway heralding Abiy Ahmed (PhD) a Nobel Laureate proved the critics against Abiy has been unweighing.

In my opinion, the prize is not just a personal reward for Ethiopian Premier, but also hope for every one of us that tones of love, peace and reconciliation have a place in today's turbulent time
when leaders in all corners voice out against those essential values of humanity. And the world must be thankful for a visionary leader, Dr. Abiy Ahmed, who in his successes proving that positive energy still has a place when negative energy is on the edge of possessing the world populace.

My message to fellow Ethiopians is that while it takes to being vigilant if Abiy may not getting out of his lines of promises, we have to understand mistakes are inevitable in the process of any work. Ethiopians has to stand beneath our visionary leader to minimize from mistakes and maximize from benefits of the process of change that we all are desperate about. For that, let us not to look at Abiy, let us look at where Abiy is looking.

MAY GOD BLESS ETHIOPIA AND ITS PEOPLE !!!