

Election ... Democratic or Oppressive Tool?

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Many believe that election is a sign of democracy. Yet it is few, who understand that election is in fact a double edge sword, and could also be used as an oppressive tool to pacify opposition and dissent into conformity. Election is a tool often used to foment competition and violence among different groups (political, ethnic and religious) within the same people. Political capitalism uses money, military power, and disinformation to determine the results of elections. Through money votes could be bought, through military power people could be terrorized to vote for a certain group, and through fraud and misinformation the votes of “free” people could be easily prejudiced towards a specific direction.

Election is considered the ultimate expression of free sovereign democratic nations. Freedom is the essential component for any sovereign country to be democratic so that its people would exercise election. Without freedom a nation could be coerced to “elect” its government. Political capitalism uses military power (local or foreign) to terrorize people and force them to elect certain leaders. Many tyrant and corrupt regimes had been elected this way. We had seen this form of election in old Soviet Union, in South American countries which had US military bases on their soil, in South African countries, and in the Arab world.

The ugliest form of militarily enforced election is that “exercised” under foreign occupation. The American new concept of exporting democracy through war is a flagrant form of this militarily enforced election. This is obviously seen in Afghani and Iraqi elections under American occupation. It is also seen in Palestinian election under Israeli occupation. These elections are characterized by terror, violence, restriction of movement, and control over the electoral process to elect a government loyal to or at least conforming to the occupying power. Many of the “undesired” candidates are assassinated or imprisoned. American administration understands this very well, that is why it demanded an end to “Syrian occupation” of Lebanon to end and the Syrian troops to withdraw from Lebanon before the Lebanese could have their own election. Unfortunately this democracy-encouraging administration did not similarly demand end of Israeli occupation of Palestine before Palestinians could have their own election.

Political capitalism uses money to sway the results of election. This is the “modern” form of “political occupation”. Votes can be bought. Political parties can be bribed and controlled through political monetary contributions. American administration favors this type of intervention through its USAID programs to control elections in foreign countries as it did in South America throughout the last two decades. The latest such intervention was in Venezuela when the administration financed the opposition to demand a recall of the election. American campaign money (\$2 million) was also spent in Russian Georgia during 2004 election to get rid of Shevardnadze. Campaign money is also being poured in Haiti to influence its coming election and its political future.

The American administration (the exporter of democracy) buys elections with its USAID program. It ties the economy of poor countries with its aid that they become so dependent on it and would conform to American dictates for fear of losing this aid that keeps their economy going. Usually this money is used for projects that greatly benefit the ruling elite of that country, and becomes a leash to curb them.

The American administration, recently, has hastened to spend \$2 million in the form of USAID projects before the start of the Palestinian Parliamentary election to boost Fatah's chance of winning. The money is designed to improve the image of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and its Fatah party. Their image had suffered tremendously in the eyes of Palestinians due to their incompetence, corruption, and collusion with the Israeli government. To maximize its credit PA's name alone was written on these projects as a proof of its effectiveness. A consulting firm (Strategic Assessment Initiative ASI) has been subcontracted to plan and to run daily events in the name of the PA during the election week. Such events included street cleaning, food and water distribution on border crossings, youth sport activities, and donating computer systems to organizations.

Some of the money was paid directly into bank accounts of Fatah candidates and their campaign organizers. The Palestinian Information Center had published on its website a letter that has the official stamp of the American Embassy in Tel Aviv sent to PA Information Minister Nabeel Amr in response to a letter he sent to the embassy dated October 9th of last year asking for financial support for Fatah's electoral campaign. The official letter states that US is ready to support Fatah against Hamas, and asks Mr. Amr to provide 30 bank accounts in Israeli banks for Fatah's members in order to deposit the money.

Withholding aid money is a form of intimidation and coercion to effect changes in the election results. The American administration has threatened to stop its aid money to Palestinians if Hamas (labeled as a terrorist group by the administration) enters or wins the election. American resources warned that the administration would "review" its financial aid to Palestinians due to American prohibitions on providing any "material support" to groups on Washington's terrorist list. The US reserves the sole authority to establish such a terrorist list and force it on the world. David Welch, Assistant Secretary of State, warned that "there should be no place in the political process for groups and individuals who refuse to renounce terror and violence or refuse to recognize Israel's right to exist or refuse to disarm."

EU officials had expressed similar reservation (threats) if any group who advocates violence might win election. They threatened that donor countries might withhold their monetary donations if Hamas wins the election. It is worth mentioning here the fact that those donor countries had withheld much of its money to Palestinians due to Fatah's PA corruption. The donated money is supposed to be spent on humanitarian and economical projects and not to be politicized. Palestinians considered these threats as a clear attempt of the Western countries to buy their consciences and their freedom of choice and to dictate the results of election. They wonder what kind of democracy these so-called democratic countries are trying to spread when they try to buy the electoral votes.

After the unexpected landslide Hamas' victory in the election (total of 80 seats out of 132) European countries followed the American lead and jumped on Hamas' back demanding that it acknowledges Israel's right to exist, renounces terror (resistance) and disarms in order to be recognized as a legitimate government and to enter peace negotiations with Israel. It seems that they have ignored the fact that Israel is the real terrorist state; Israel is

the occupier of Palestinian land, the murderer of civilians, the destroyer of civilian homes, and the breaker of international laws (Israel had violated at least 429 UN resolutions against it). Successive Israeli government calls for "Greater Israel" that means the annihilation of Arabs from Nile to Euphrates. The fact is Hamas sprang out of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Hamas did not invade another country; rather it is fighting to free its own country from the Israeli ruthless occupation. Hamas does not consider peace negotiation as an end result as presented by the US and Israel; rather as means to an end. Hamas believes that negotiations without power do not yield good results and sites the last ten years of Fatah's negotiation with Israel as a proof.

Hamas is a real obstacle to the Israeli expansion. The Israeli government tried uselessly to remove this obstacle through force. Its use of the military force, including tanks, helicopter gun ships and F-16 bombers against Palestinians inside heavily populated areas, its imposition of collective punishment measures such as closures, its checkpoints and restriction of movements, its continued build up of the Israeli colonies in the occupied West Bank, and its building of the jailing wall and barbed wire fences had failed to eliminate resistance. On the contrary, the more oppressive measures the Israeli army inflicts on Palestinians the more determined the Palestinians to resist, and the more ingenious they become in their methods of resistance.

Since Hamas is not a political body international political pressure has no effect on it. Israel and US resorted to election as a way to contain Hamas. Becoming part of a Palestinian government, it is hoped, Hamas would be bound by all the past political agreements PA had signed on, and Israel would be able to apply all the international political pressure against it, and eventually would be vindicated when it completely destroys the Palestinian Authority since it would have a "terrorist" element within it.

Hamas had entered the election to revolutionize the Palestinian political system. Hamas claims it wants to turn the system from a single to a multi-party rule, where all factions would share into decision making. It wants to end corruption, curb expenditure, and maintains public money. Reforming Palestinian Liberation Organization to really defend Palestinian rights is another goal of the organization. Most importantly it wants to draw attention to the fact that the core of the problem is the Israeli occupation, and that its resistance to this occupation is a legitimate right.

Many state that Hamas' immediate problem is money to manage the daily affairs of the people, in particular to pay wages of government employees especially those within the Palestinian Security Forces. The American donated money to the PA has been designated to pay the wages of the Security Forces. When this money is withheld it is expected that the mostly Fatah Security Forces would revolt against Hamas' government. Hamas is planning to bring the PA out of its isolation back to the Arab and Islamic countries for financial and political support. Many of the Arab countries (Egypt, Jordan, and the rich Gulf countries) are close partners within the American war against terrorism and have close economic ties with the US, thus they would not be able to extend any support to a Hamas government (a terrorist government according to the American standards). We have to wait and see if Hamas have plans to get out of this Israeli/American "democratic electoral" trap.

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