

**SEMI-AUTHORITARIANISM:
THE CASE STUDY OF ETHIOPIA**

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Abstract

In many African countries, including Ethiopia, decades of ruthless dictatorships and civil war, were followed by an almost universal demand for democracy combined with a seemingly willing leadership. However, two decades since this significant upsurge to adopt democratic governance, many are left wondering about the depth of commitment to this effort and the sincerity of political leaders. In fact, many dictators and autocrats have adopted the language of democracy and some of its formal elements. Academics, donor countries, and international organizations are struggling to identify an appropriate model of governance.

The theory of semi-authoritarianism strives to address this issue of ambiguity by placing the responsibility for democratization, or the lack thereof, with the political leadership. The argument here is that many countries seemingly in transition are not. Rather, they are semi-authoritarian by design as the political elite has a vested interest in preventing democratic consolidation. The theory of semi-authoritarianism attempts to explain the continuation of false democracies. However, the theory is too broad and superficial, it raises just as many questions as it attempts to address. The attempt to classify and explain emerging political trends in countries such as Ethiopia without an appreciation of deeper forces beyond elite manipulation can jeopardize a realistic appraisal of the fate of democracy.

I would like to thank Professor Jeffrey Steeves, for handing me the book *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism*, an intriguing book that has left me with many questions, and fuelled my quest to find some answers. I further want to thank Professor Steeves for his guidance, patience, and much appreciated support.

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CHAPTER I

SEMI-AUTHORITARIANISM: A CASE STUDY OF ETHIOPIA

*Research is to see what everybody else has seen,
and think what nobody else has thought.*

~Albert Szent Györgyi~

Introduction

The end of the Cold War in the 1990s brought about a “wind of change” in international relations. It became increasingly evident that the East could no longer bail out dictatorships with socialist agendas, while the West would refrain from its previous policies of extending support to corrupt, anti-communist regimes. Dictatorships collapsed like dominoes. While rejoicing in the superiority of liberal democracy over socialism, due to the new world system where the United States became the sole hegemon and liberal democracy the driving ideological imperative, the international community failed to fully assess the early challenges of democratization faced by many African countries like Ethiopia. As Jane Perlez suggested,

Once avidly wooed by Washington and Moscow with large amounts of economic aid and modern armaments, the impoverished nations of Africa now find themselves desperate for friends. In the last three years, superpower rivalry has been replaced by international indifference [...] Ethiopia and Somalia, which were at the center of the tussle for influence on the African continent in the 1970's, now lie devastated, orphans of the post-cold-war era.¹

After a decade of civil strife against dictatorship, by 1991 there was an almost universal demand for democracy in Ethiopia. Civilians were disillusioned with past

¹ Jane Perlez, “After the Cold War: Views From Africa; Stranded by Superpowers, Africa Seeks an Identity”, in: *The New York Times*. 17 May 1992

authoritarian regimes and demanded greater civil liberties. At the same time, there was a top down movement on the part of intellectuals, educators, and social and religious leaders who advocated the establishment of democratic institutions and an opening for political participation.² However, partly due to an upsurge of democratic euphoria, little attention was paid to the reality of a democratic transition by heavily aid dependent African countries. Democratization was taken for granted without an in-depth assessment of the nature of artificially constructed states formed under imperialist expansion and colonial rule, and further held together by Cold War induced centralized government control.

Under the circumstances, most African governments, including Ethiopia, had to confront the difficult task of maintaining national unity given its multiethnic and culturally diverse citizenry. At the same time, the state was confronted with the challenge of ruling with the legacy of single ethnic dominance and authoritarian tendencies.³

Thesis of Study

Today, academics and policy advisers have the difficult task of researching and assessing the flawed democratization that emerged in Ethiopia from a celebrated political opening in 1991 to the present. Like most authoritarian states, Ethiopia suggested a political opening was emerging along with the establishment of democratic institutions and democratic procedures. However, the democratic institutions and procedures were subject to limitations and significant top down control. Ethiopia continues in a state of

² Krishna Kumar and Jereon de Zeeuw, "Democracy Assistance to Postconflict Societies", in: Krishna Kumar and Jereon de Zeeuw (eds.), *Promoting Democracy in Postconflict Societies*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2006. 5.

³ Earl Conteh-Morgan, *Democratization in Africa: The Theory and Dynamics of Political Transitions*, New York: Praeger, 1997. 95

democratic deficit, a state that some academics such as Marina Ottaway argue is facilitated by a governing elite addicted to the rhetoric of democracy, but which essentially is semi-authoritarian by design. It is crucial though to go beyond the contribution of the governing elite to Ethiopia's democratic deficit. Critically, we are dealing with more than semi-authoritarianism by design by a determined and self-interested elite. In essence, and the central thesis of this study, semi-authoritarianism is more than a system of governance based on elite will, by design, but as well it arises by default, as a consequence of the country's past structures of governance. In other words, Marina Ottaway, and other academics that are more taken by democratization, miss a critical point, semi-authoritarianism is built on a past history of dominance, the only form of governance, which seemed suited to a country driven by ethnic fragmentation and rivalry. The objective of the thesis is to flesh out this critical divergence from accepted political analysis.

In terms of Ethiopia, its emperors based their claims to govern, on the theory of a divine right of kings, which entitled them to rule by a will higher than that of society.⁴ But, as the modern state replaced the imperial structures, state-building ideologies clashed with ethnic aspirations. The last two regimes in power – the Derg under Mariam Mengistu, and the EPRDF under Meles Zenawi – have attempted to manage Ethiopia's over eighty distinct ethno-linguistic groups⁵ by two radically different approaches to state building.⁶ Mengistu based "his authority on a legal function that proclaims that the people

⁴ Amare Tekle, "Continuity and Change in Ethiopian Politics", in: Marina Ottaway (ed.) *The Political Economy of Ethiopia*, New York: Praeger. 1990. 37

⁵ Edmond J. Keller, "Ethnic Federalism, Fiscal Reform, Development and Democracy in Ethiopia", in: *African Journal of Political Science*, Volume 7 Number 1. 2002. 21

⁶ Jannie Malan, "Conflict Resolution: Wisdom from Africa", report from: *The African Centre for Constructive Resolution of Disputes*. 50

have willed the creation of a socialist society of which his 'Marxist-Leninist' party is the sole architect and through which he becomes sole representative and supreme guide".⁷ On the other hand, the current party in power, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), has established a governing system based on ethnic federalism creating a new system of regional governments. However, the Zenawi regime has failed to relinquish central control and implement appropriate power sharing measures. In both recent regimes, ethnic aspirations for power developed into ethnic rivalry. Ethnic awareness intensified based on underlying tensions due to historic grievances, feelings of political and developmental disadvantage in comparison to other ethnic groups and fundamentally, the threat of losing one's cultural identity. What we have then is a past and current political leaders driven by ethnic calculations that see the only way to hold the fragmented State together is to turn to authoritarian patterns of rule. The elite both asserts ethnic dominance and, at the very same time, forces central dominance in order to maintain the State fabric. The cost then is fundamental - the common Ethiopian is merely a pawn in both a calculated and a forced pattern of dominance.

To put the central thesis in a clearer context, two points emerge from the Ethiopian experience. First, old and present regimes regard the individual as a subject with duties rather than citizens with defined, protected rights. These subjects do not possess the freedom to judge between right and wrong, political good and evil, justice and injustice, but have one sole purpose in society: to fulfill the wishes of the leaders.⁸ Second, the cohesive elements of nationalism are lacking in large parts of the population.

⁷ Tekle. 37

⁸ Ibid.

Within the Ethiopian political tradition, the term state, or the equivalent in Amharic, *mengist*,⁹ has slightly different connotations from a modern concept of a democratic state. Given Ethiopia's turbulent history, to its peoples, the term *mengist* carries a connotation of 'imperial authority', sovereignty, divine legitimacy, nation building, and a form of state-nationalism anchored on central control and domination.¹⁰ In the case of Ethiopia, self-serving and very narrow ethnic leadership, combined with the lack of a pan-Ethiopian identity and lacking a widely accepted legitimate, modern Ethiopian state leads to authoritarian rule.

Methodology and Literature Review

The objective of this study is to answer the following question: Is Ethiopia semi-authoritarian by design or default? In order to answer this question, qualitative research methods were applied to 119 sources of secondary data collected from academic journals in the field of study, books, reports, and the documentary *Ethiopia: Betrayal of Democracy*.

Since the early 1990's a considerable amount of research has been done on democratization and democratic institutions with limited functions in Africa. Some of the key authors that have published extensively in the field are Thomas Carothers, Larry Diamond, Staffan Lindberg, and Marina Ottaway. Carothers has been one the most influential authors who has pointed to the fallacy of the 'transition paradigm'. In his 2002 article, *The End of the Transition Paradigm*, he argued that many African countries engage in a democratic 'gray zone' between authoritarian and democratic rule adopting

⁹ Øyvind Aadland, "Sera: Traditionalism or Living Democratic Values", in: Bahru Zewde and Siegfried Pausewang (eds.) *Ethiopia: The Challenge of Democracy from Below*, Nordic Africa Institute. 2002. 29

¹⁰ Ibid.

political forms such as feckless pluralism or one-party dominant polities.¹¹ In other words, opposition political parties are short lived, plagued by divisions, engaged in unstable temporary alliances, and divided by acrimony.¹² Also, despite democratic forms and processes, the political system is dominated by one party, ethnic group, or charismatic leader, in such a way that there seems to be little prospect for power alternation.¹³ In his 2007 article, *The Sequencing Fallacy*, Carothers further argues that democratization as well as open national elections are not necessarily universally accepted principles.¹⁴ In some cases, a democratic opening may lead to illiberal leaders, virulent nationalism, ethnic conflict, and internecine wars.¹⁵ He further argues that the rule of law and a functioning state should be strong preconditions to democratization.¹⁶

Larry Diamond was also critical of the form of democratization undertaken in Africa. In his book *Developing Democracy Toward Consolidation*, he points out that five flawed assumptions lead to shallow electoral democracies in Africa. First, he makes the case that powerful Western democracies have pressed the democratization model on weaker states due to the growing belief that accountable political systems rooted in a strong constitution, will produce better governance and more legitimate stable states.¹⁷ Second, the assumption that the establishment of social and political infrastructure such as legislatures, judicial systems, local governments, civil society organizations, political

¹¹ Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm", in: *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 13 Number 1, January 2002. 10

¹² Ibid. 11

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Thomas Carothers, "The 'Sequencing' Fallacy", in: *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 18 Number 1, January 2007. 12

¹⁵ Ibid. 13

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press. 1999. 56

parties, and elections will result in democratic consolidation is flawed.¹⁸ Three, Diamond criticizes the assumption that gradual political learning through a form of imitation of existing democracies could lead to consolidation.¹⁹ Four, he argues that judgments and assumptions at a global level of what is intrinsically good, right, and desirable, including the Western form of democracy, do not necessarily bring about democratization.²⁰ And finally, he points out the fallacy of global standardization, by arguing that it leads to formal symbolic, and hollow as opposed to true democracies.²¹

Perhaps more than any academic, Staffan Lindberg places into perspective the ambiguity associated with democratic opening and democratic practices in Africa. In a 2003 article, *'It's Our Time to "Chop"': Do Elections in Africa Feed Neo-Patrimonialism Rather Than Counteract It?*, Lindberg reports on survey findings that democratization in Ghana has led to increased corruption through patron-client networks and that patronage politics is a viable threat to democratic consolidation.²² In 2006 however, in the article, *"The Surprising Significance of African Elections"*, Lindberg argues that repeated elections in Africa can lead to democratic commitment, and "have a positive impact on human freedom and democratic values".²³ There is a stark contradiction between the two Lindberg perspectives. However, this contradiction points out the African dilemma. Democratic practices, such as elections for example take on completely different dimensions in countries such as Ghana. Yet without elections, from a Western point of view, liberal democracy is impossible.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid. 57

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid. 58

²² Staffan Lindberg, " 'It's Our Time to "Chop"': Do Elections in Africa Feed Neo-Patrimonialism rather than Counteract it?", in: *Democratization*, Volume 10 Number 2. Summer 2003. 121

²³ Staffan Lindberg, "The Surprising Significance of African Elections", in: *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 17 Number 1. January 2006. 140

Ottaway builds on the democratization dialog by coining the term semi-authoritarianism, which is discussed at length in the thesis. In her book, *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism*, she looks at five case studies – Egypt, Azerbaijan, Venezuela, Senegal, and Croatia – to prove the point that democratic consolidation is prevented by political elites that have the ability to serve their interests in an authoritarian state more so than in a democratic one. Ottaway's theoretical guidelines are an important part of this thesis. In accordance with the thesis question, the theory of semi-authoritarianism was applied to the Ethiopian case study. The Ethiopian case was considered from two points of view, first current political trends were analyzed; second, significant importance was also attributed to the two political regimes that have preceded the current EPRDF government.

Ethiopia has a very complex structural, social, and ethnic composition. To gain an understanding, several sources were considered. *Ethiopia: The Challenge of Democracy from Below*, for example, published in 2002 includes essays from 13 authors discussing key issues such as: local governance, traditional governing institutions and democratic values, the relationship between the rural population and the central government, civil society, and democratization. *The Political Economy of Ethiopia* published in 1990, and edited by Marina Ottaway, is another good source of collected essays focusing mostly on continuity in political practices between the Monarchy and the Derg military regime, imperialism along with constitutional engineering and ethnic diversity, as well as revolution, potential national disintegration, development and the Ethiopian economy. Authors such as Jan Abbink looked at the nature of violence in Ethiopia. Edmond Keller analyzed the nature of the federalist state and power sharing between different levels of

government, while authors such as Rene Lefort reported on the 2005 elections, and, Lovise Aalen applied the federalist framework to Ethiopia to determine the potential for disintegration. More recent studies worth mentioning were done by Asnake Kefale who looked at ethnic alliance formation and ethnic negotiations within the federalist structure and the work of Asafa Jalata who analyzed Clandestine Genocide in Ethiopia.

This study is unique as it combines the theory of semi-authoritarianism with the Ethiopian case study where the current regime is not analyzed in isolation, but rather in the larger context of historic political patterns rooted in imperialism and centralization. It also builds in analysis of persisting nation building challenges. The study explores the nature, interrelationships and implications of key aspects of Ethiopian politics to determine if the country is semi-authoritarian by design according to Ottaway's classification. This study does not aim at proving or disproving the validity of semi-authoritarianism as a theory. Research was also directed at current political, social and cultural trends that give strong indications on the surface that the current Ethiopian government consciously and willingly engages in semi-authoritarian practices. However, attention was also given to historic considerations of regime changes and the evolution of a political culture that sustains deference to authority and voicelessness on the part of ordinary Ethiopians. Hence, contrary to Ottaway's framework and indeed the assumptions of many Western and African academics, Ethiopia is semi-authoritarian by default as well as by design. Our analysis of the Ethiopian case throws open a fascinating insight into the failure of African countries to import the liberal-democratic model of politics. Instead of asking why has the liberal-democratic model failed, the thesis unravels the answer by asking why has semi-authoritarianism succeeded.

Chapter Outlines

For the purposes of clarity, the study has been organized into three core chapters followed by a concluding chapter. Chapter Two, “The End of the Third Wave, The Fallacy of the Transition Paradigm and Semi-Authoritarianism”, presents an exploration of democratization trends adopted by the majority of countries deemed transitional since the “third wave of democratization”.²⁴ The chapter will explore the extent of democratic openings experienced by most countries as well as governments’ abilities to limit and cripple the functioning of adopted democratic institutions. Analysis will focus as well on the ambiguity associated with democracy, political liberalization and democratic consolidation. Chapter Two will also include an overview of efforts by the academic community to define the ‘democratic deficit’, as well as introduce key concepts of semi-authoritarianism developed by Marina Ottaway. Discussion will continue with an in-depth analysis of the current Ethiopian regime’s approach to competitive politics as well as power transfer and power sharing.

Chapter Three, “A Close Look at Ethiopia’s Turbulent Political and Ethnic History”, will build on the previous chapter. In order to test the theory of semi-authoritarianism by design in the Ethiopian context, semi-authoritarianism by default must be addressed. The thesis will examine underlying conditions in Ethiopia with a special focus on the politics of ethnicity. This will be undertaken by examining Ethiopia’s last three regimes - the Monarchy under Haile Selassie, the socialist Derg regime under

²⁴ The term was coined by Samuel P. Huntington in his book, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, published in 1991. Huntington points out that over 60 countries in Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa have embarked on a road of democratization in the 1990s. Since then, the catchphrase “the third wave” has been widely used by scholars analyzing democratic opening, democratic transition and democratic consolidation.

Mengistu Mariam, as well as the current EPRDF regime under Meles Zenawi. The Chapter will analyze the nature of change between different regimes, constitutional changes based on radically different ideological approaches, ethnic and regional restructuring, the polarization effect of ethno-nationalism and the emergence of an ethnically organized resistance against authoritarianism. The chapter will establish that Ethiopia's turbulent social, ethnic and political history has created overwhelming structural impediments to democratization.

Chapter Four, "Semi-Authoritarianism and Ethnic Violence" brings coherence to the thesis. In the Ethiopian context, analysis and discussion will point to the underlying themes of African politics such as Dependency Theory, lack of nation unity and the threat of 'national' disintegration along ethnic lines. Analysis will also propose skepticism in allowing multi-party competition in a zero-sum game political environment as well as the critical behavior of political elites anchored in neo-patrimonialism and ethnic competition.

Chapter Five, "Semi-Authoritarianism by Design and Default: Two Sides of the Same Coin", aims at tying together loose ends and affords a final analysis. In more abstract terms, semi-authoritarian political structures can be interpreted in relation to Abraham Lincoln's famous 1858 speech. When accepting the republican nomination for U.S. Senate from Illinois, Abraham Lincoln warned that "a government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free [...] it will become all one thing or all the other". At this crucial point in history, Lincoln was alluding to the division over the issue of slavery, an issue that posed a viable threat to the Union of States. Lincoln's timeless observation is perhaps as viable today as it was in the 1800's. What will be the ultimate outcome of

the relationship between democratic principles and authoritarian traditions is hard to predict. It is clear however that we need to rethink the dissonance between democracy promotion on the part of the Western governments and international institutions and the African reality.

CHAPTER II

THE END OF THE THIRD WAVE, THE FALLACY OF THE TRANSITION PARADIGM AND SEMI- AUTHORITARIANISM

The basis of the democratic state is liberty.

~Aristotle, The Politics~

Introduction

With the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union and the communist states of Eastern Europe, both international and domestic pressures arose for a quantum shift towards the democratic alternative in developing countries. Thirty-seven of forty-eight Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries moved to adopt more open political systems. Part of this shift could be traced to the increasing popular disquiet with the repressive and autocratic regimes of the South. An extensive literature emerged on the process of 're-democratization' including two new academic journals devoted exclusively to the democratic wave that seemed to be sweeping across the countries of the South. One influential academic study by Michael Bratton and Nicholas van de Walle suggested that the wave would come in three distinct stages – first, political protest, second, political liberalization, and, ultimately, democratic consolidation.²⁵ The degree of external and internal pressures for reform seemed inexorable and many academics, international officials, donor agencies and non-governmental organizations joined the chorus of 'democracy promoters'.

²⁵ Michael Bratton and Nicholas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1999

However, the days of optimism only prevailed in the 1990s. With the new millennium it became obvious that the political opening and democratic wave had stalled. Some though insisted that the re-democratization of formerly illiberal developing countries would take time and require deeper reforms than merely adhering to political liberalization. Hence, new pressures appeared for constitutional reform and the turn to 'good governance' and its package of initiatives, which would run far deeper in reforming the political system. To these remaining optimists, developing countries were in a period of transition on the way to democratic consolidation.

An influential democracy analyst, Thomas Carothers suggested otherwise challenging several of the core assumptions of the optimistic, pro-transition school. The establishment of superficial stability and insincere, artificial democracies prompted many academic experts and policy advisors to lose faith in the prospects of democratic consolidation in the third world. Most experts no longer hesitate to proclaim the end of the third wave, and point out the fallacy of the 'Transition Paradigm'. Democracy promotion is experiencing serious doubt while alternative perspectives fusing democracy and despotism are on the rise. In effect, "fin –de-siècle optimism has given way to early-twenty-first-century gloom",²⁶ as authoritarianism cloaked in democratic disguise gains more and more ground in most of the third world, and honest democratic efforts are further and further scarce.

Democracy and Democratic Consolidation

²⁶ Nicholas van de Walle, "Elections Without Democracy: Africa's Range of Regimes", in: *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 13 Number 2. April 2002. 66

Democracy defined by ancient Greek philosophers as “rule by the people” is perhaps the most complex form of government. Modern democracy was not formulated until the Age of Enlightenment when philosophers established the separation of powers, basic civil rights, religious liberty, and the separation of church and state as the four pillars of democracy. A modern definition establishes democracy as a “form of government, where a constitution guarantees basic personal and political rights, fair and free elections, and independent courts of law”.²⁷ This definition is less than helpful when considering democracy in developing countries. The problem arises from the reluctance of governments in the South to fully adhere to these constitutional guarantees.

With the end of the Cold War, democracy has been increasingly promoted as the only acceptable governing system. However, the number of well-established democracies is relatively small. Studies of democratization vary widely in their approaches as well as methodologies. We have a good understanding of how democracies function but not how they emerge.²⁸ As Thomas Carothers argued, “Democracy promotion can no longer assume a consensus about the preeminence of democracy among the main geostatic actors in the world. It has to return to the challenge of engaging in global debates over the very value of democracy itself”.²⁹ Considerations such as the universality of democracy or its feasible application in culturally, ethnically, economically and historically diverse societies have left modern academics not just with the question of whether democracy is present in a certain political community but also with the challenges of assessing its quality and depth.

²⁷ “Democracy Building”. <http://www.democracy-building.info/index.html> August 2009.

²⁸ Marina Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism*, Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. 2003. 11

²⁹ Thomas Carothers, “A Quarter-Century of Promoting Democracy”, in: *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 18 Number 4. October 2007. 115

The Democratic Deficit Problem

Larry Diamond and Leonardo Molino argue that at a minimum democracy requires universal adult suffrage, recurring free, competitive and fair elections, more than one serious political party and alternative sources of media.³⁰ Based on these criteria the quality of democracy can be assessed through procedure, content and result. Through procedure, they highlight the importance of rule of law, participation, competition, and vertical and horizontal accountability. Content encompasses freedom and equality while the result is responsiveness, in other words, citizen demand and preferences as aggregated through the political process.³¹ Diamond and Molino point out that,

In one sense, we can speak of different ‘qualities’ of democracy, and assess the level of development of each one individually [...] although it is possible to identify different types of lower quality democracy, which are deficient in different qualities, the various dimensions are closely linked and tend to move together, either toward democratic improvement and deepening or toward decay.³²

Although the argument presented by Diamond and Molino is compelling, it fails to provide guidelines for classifying “lower quality democracy”. Their contributions also prove insufficient when distinguishing between countries that are trying to adopt the democratic model but failing, as against countries that are making only a pretense of trying.

The End of the Transition Paradigm

Increasingly, critical academic research challenged the assumed linear path to democratic consolidation suggesting the transition phase was unhelpful and

³⁰ Larry Diamond and Leonardo Morlino, “The Quality of Democracy: An Overview”, in: *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 15 Number 4. October 2004. 22

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid. 28-29

fundamentally misleading. Essentially it is based on false hope rather than realistic analysis. The most ardent critic of the Transition Paradigm, Thomas Carothers points out that it is no longer appropriate to assume that,

- Most countries that adopted a degree of liberalization in the early 1990s are in transition towards democracy
- Countries moving away from authoritarianism follow the Transition Paradigm
- Elections will ultimately lead to democratic consolidation
- Successful democratization depends primarily on intentions and actions of the political elite without “significant influence from underlying economic, social and institutional conditions and legacies”³³
- State building is secondary to democratic establishment

Carothers drew on statistical data to point out that only about twenty out of a hundred ‘transitional’ countries are making any progress towards democracy³⁴ while the rest are neither dictatorial nor democratic. He argued that, “the Transition Paradigm has been somewhat useful during a time of momentous and often surprising political upheaval in the world”.³⁵ However, most countries deemed transitional are not following the transition model; on the contrary, it is clear that they foster authoritarian practices.

Semi-authoritarianism Defined

Given Carothers devastating critique then how do we classify those developing countries locked in what we now know is a ‘non-transition’ stasis. Marina Ottaway, a prominent academic in the field of democracy and post-conflict reconstruction politics,

³³ Carothers. “The End of the Transition Paradigm”. 17

³⁴ Ibid. 9

³⁵ Ibid. 6

built on Carothers' argument and developed the theory of 'semi-authoritarianism' to describe this regime type. She makes the case that regimes that cannot be easily classified as either authoritarian or democratic, but display some characteristics of both, are semi-authoritarian.³⁶ Ottaway addressed head on the problem of classifying these countries as transitional by claiming that,

they are ambiguous systems that combine rhetorical acceptance of liberal democracy, the existence of some formal democratic institutions, and respect for a limited sphere of civil and political liberties with essentially liberal and authoritarian traits [...] Semi-authoritarian systems are not imperfect democracies struggling toward improvement and consolidation but regimes determined to maintain the appearance of democracy without exposing themselves to the political risks that free competition entails.³⁷

Political and Structural Factors of Semi-Authoritarianism

Semi-authoritarian regimes are thus one outcome of more than a decade of efforts to promote democracy by the international community³⁸ and revitalized civil society in developing countries. One clear benefit of the re-democratization movement though is that the military in the third world³⁹ has become increasingly reluctant to seize power due to a massive lack of support for the coup d'état. Even in countries where democratic reforms have stalled, the public has shown a degree of resistance to a return to complete authoritarian rule.⁴⁰ In essence then, democracy has been hollowed out and "most constitutional regimes of the third wave appear 'condemned to remain democratic' only in form".⁴¹

³⁶ Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged*. 13

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid. 133

³⁹ The term "third world" was adopted during the Cold War era. Today, in the democratization literature, third world refers to countries facing challenges such as post-conflict legacies, economic development, democratization, and democratic consolidation, as well as nation building.

⁴⁰ Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged*. 133

⁴¹ Ibid. 63

Ottaway suggests that semi-authoritarian regimes engage in the politics of “survival, not consolidation”.⁴² First, they limit the transfer of power through patronage by co-opting opposition elements. Second, stability is based on the leadership of a small elite group rather than the weak institutions that are set up to appease the international community. Third, the political opening has not deepened economic reform. At the same time, the lack of separation between political and economic elites⁴³ has created a deeply entrenched ruling class unwilling to allow free, open and equal political competition. Finally, such regimes implement restrictive registration laws as well as overt and covert pressures to limit the scope of civil society organizations (CSOs), which are seen as potentially threatening to the ruling class. Civil society contributes to social pluralism but would not be allowed to promote political power sharing⁴⁴ and reflects old social divisions. Ottaway argues that these social divisions are sustained through carefully orchestrated and refined power structures, free-floating elites and transition fatigue.

Asymmetrical Power Sharing

The political elite engages deliberately in corrupt practices to limit the power of democratic actors and disadvantage opposition parties in generating support. Ruling parties resort to manipulation, coercion and even open violence to further their dominance while the opposition parties’ only hope, and a faint one at that, is to win flawed elections. Opposition parties are marginalized with few resources to mount serious challenges to ruling parties which have unlimited access to State resources for

⁴² Michael Bratton, “Second Elections in Africa”, in: *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 9 Number 3. 1998. 11

⁴³ Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged*. 18

⁴⁴ Ibid.

campaign purposes. Furthermore, power is rarely generated through political institutions, “leaders are elected, but their power is rooted elsewhere”.⁴⁵ As Ottaway suggests,

Semi-authoritarian leaders [...] do their best to manipulate elections, but this is only part of the problem, and not the most important one, namely the conundrum of how to transfer, through the democratic process, power that is not derived from the popular will and that resides in individuals rather than in institutions. If power resides in a particular president, rather than in the institution of the presidency, it cannot be transferred to others.⁴⁶

Free-Floating Elites

Transitions to a successful democratic outcome are difficult given that aspiring political leaders engage in shifting alliances designed only to suit their narrow self-interests for accumulation. In semi-authoritarian regimes, the political elites are not embedded, nor do they have a clear political program or ideological message. Some authoritarian leaders did manage to establish at least an emotional link with their constituents through popular or nationalistic rhetoric, but in most cases, political elites regardless whether in power or part of the opposition, merely pay lip service to democratic values.⁴⁷ Ottaway also points out that sincere advocates of democracy have little connection to the population. In many cases, they are tied more to an “international milieu of democracy advocates than to the society they are trying to reform”.⁴⁸ The free-floating nature of these political elites is evident in the idealized view of democracy they embrace. “They portray democracy as a combination of abstract principles, formal political processes and highly technical reforms”.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Ibid. 16

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 180

⁴⁸ Ibid. 181

⁴⁹ Ibid. 182

The international community has contributed to this abstract view of democracy by imposing numerous conditionalities, by removing from discussion some of the most important policy issues confronting countries in transition and by supporting free floating elites by sponsoring civil society organizations that depend on foreign aid rather than on the mobilization of strong domestic stakeholders. At the same time, abstract democratic ideals do not have mass appeal unless they are coupled with other more tangible benefits.⁵⁰ In the end, democracy and democratic principles have little relevance to the people they are meant to serve. Semi-authoritarianism is sustained by a lack of popular confidence in the superiority of democracy as a valued means of achieving worthwhile goals and as an instrument to protect and further people's democratic rights and interests.

Transition Fatigue

Semi-authoritarian leaders create conditions that make democratic progress and hence consolidation difficult. This means that political conditions are ambiguous. They are not democratic but neither are they authoritarian. The conditions that under normal circumstances would foster democratic growth are limited but not limited enough to elicit violent reaction. Ordinary citizens are burdened by what Ottaway terms as 'transition fatigue' and, not surprisingly, disillusioned by the democratic experiment that has attenuated, they now show more concern for economic grievances than political ones.

Semi-Authoritarianism by Design

Thus, Marina Ottaway's major contribution is to suggest that semi-authoritarian regimes are not in transition or failed democracies, but rather "carefully constructed and

⁵⁰ Ibid. 184

maintained alternative systems”.⁵¹ In other words, most countries considered ‘transitional’ are semi-authoritarian by design and the political elite have a vested interest in disallowing further liberalization. Those in power have mastered the political game and effectively balance international pressures for democratic consolidation with the challenges of competitive politics and the ‘problem’ of power transfer.

Ottaway argues that in semi-authoritarian states, the political elites are excellent at manipulating elections, winning voter’s support, and flaunting endless campaign finance.⁵² Flawed elections are usually engineered carefully. The ruling party takes advantage of favorable periods or national holidays to time elections. In addition to adopting tactics of intimidation and violence, the government also tampers with voter registration, abuses safeguards against voter registries, introduces overly stringent registration procedures, refuses to issue identification documents to ethnic minorities and discriminates against émigrés.⁵³ Opposition supporters are usually prevented from participating in elections, and districts that favor or vote for the opposition, receive little development funding. A proportionately decreased number of polling stations in opposition areas forces voters to travel great distances, or to wait for hours in barely moving lines only to find that the polling station has closed before their turn has come.⁵⁴

Ruling parties have the ability to set up Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to access donor support, reach different segments of society, and establish control over the population. They effectively engage in ‘Big Man’ politics,⁵⁵ where

⁵¹ Ibid. 7

⁵² Ibid. 139

⁵³ Ibid. 141

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Patrick Chabal and Jean Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*, Oxford: James Currey. 1999. 34-37

personal relationships take precedence over formal rules and the leader's personal decisions carry more weight than the laws that those decisions might contradict.⁵⁶ Accordingly, power is maintained through the personal charisma of leaders, patronage and taking advantage of the populations' fears of instability and change. The governing elite successfully delegitimizes competitive politics by taking advantage of the state treasury to finance political campaigns and allocate government funds not only for patronage purposes but also for self-enrichment. Corruption helps consolidate their hold on power. Incumbent governments allow political challengers to run for office, but the ruling class remains confident that their 'safeguards' will prevent an alternation in power. The result is an entrenched political class able to repress, manipulate or coopt challengers in a system designed to keep the opposition off-guard and constantly in disarray.⁵⁷

Semi-Authoritarianism and the Case of Ethiopia

Ethiopia is a classic example of semi-authoritarianism. In 1991, due to the initial enthusiasm to follow the democratization trend, little attention was paid to the depth of the transition. In the government's attempt to gain popularity as well as international acceptance, key elements of democracy appeared the new constitution drafted in 1995. Accordingly an ethnically diverse coalition government fostered the signs of national integration and multi-party elections were introduced. An independent media was encouraged and civil society organizations received support. In spite of this, the political atmosphere did not foster democratic consolidation. The political elite soon reverted to

⁵⁶ Daniel N. Posner and Daniel J. Young, "The Institutionalization of Political Power in Africa", in: *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 18 Number 3. July 2007. 127

⁵⁷ Richard Joseph, "Africa: States in Crisis", in: *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 14 Number 3. July 2003. 161

less than democratic methods of governing and feigned attention to “bottom-up or grassroots activities such as teaching people how to participate in the democratic process, or adapting indigenous democratic procedures and attitudes to modern requirements”.⁵⁸ A substantial democratic deficit became evident.

Dealing with the Challenges of Competitive Politics

The Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) was established in 1991. With its commitment to human and civil rights, its initial mandate was to end Ethiopia’s violent history, mend ethnic divisions and establish a democratic government. The TGE’s commitment to tolerance, peaceful assembly, freedom of association and the right to engage in unrestricted political activity quickly evaporated as opposition parties began to emerge. The government’s increasingly authoritarian policies became more apparent as the date for regional and local elections approached. Therefore, throughout 1992 and 1993 the TGE used social and economic restrictions, existing statutes, and outright harassment against those critical of policy recommendations by the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), the dominant political party.⁵⁹ As Makau wa Mutua pointed out early on in 1993,

The first main sign that the EPRDF does not intend to compete politically for power with its rivals came during the 1992 elections. EPRDF security and armed forces, which also serve as government forces, engaged in the widespread harassment, intimidation and arrest of non-EPRDF political actors and individuals [...] since the election, the TGE has become increasingly intolerant of dissent.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Paul B. Henze, “A Political Success Story”, in: *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 9 Number 4. 1998. 41

⁵⁹ Walle Engedayehu, “Ethiopia: The Pitfalls of Ethnic Federalism”, in: Georger Akeya Agbango (ed.) *Issues and Trends in Contemporary African Politics: Stability, Development, and Democratization*, Peter Lang. 1999. 212

⁶⁰ Ibid.

The government's insincere commitment to democracy reignited tribal mistrust and strengthened ethnic fragmentation. Paranoid of Amharan supremacy,⁶¹ the government viewed the All Amhara People's Organization (AAPO), along with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)⁶² as major threats, and party officials as well as supporters were subjected to frequent harassment. The OLF decided to leave the EPRDF coalition while the newly constituted second coalition was further narrowed in 1993 when the TGE government ousted five political groups known as the Southern Coalition for endorsing a resolution adopted at the conference of opposition groups in Paris calling for the dissolution of the ruling council.⁶³ Due to increased international pressure, in December 1993, the government allowed a "peace and reconciliation conference" organized by internal as well as exiled groups. However, in a continuing pattern opposition leadership was harassed, some of whom were detained and only released after the conclusion of the conference.

During the 2005 elections, 36 political parties registered to compete but the EPRDF once again won a majority of seats. To regular Ethiopians, who perhaps for the first time in their lives were able to cast a vote, the election was "a heavy burden fraught with dangers".⁶⁴ The general perception of voters, most of them farmers, was that despite which party would be victorious, those who cast their vote in a 'disloyal' manner would be penalized by restricted access to their means of production by the government. The

⁶¹ Both under the Monarchical Rule of the Emperors, and the socialist Derg military regime, the Amhara ethnic group was dominant. Most ethnic groups in Ethiopia regard both regimes as having been imperialist and oppressive.

⁶² The Oromo are the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia with 34.49 per cent of the total population. They are concentrated in the fertile highlands with access to resources, a common history, language, and strong ethnic identity. The Oromo are regarded by some ethnic groups as a threat to Ethiopian unity.

⁶³ Engedayehu. 212

⁶⁴ Rene Lefort, "Powers – Mengist – and Peasants in Rural Ethiopia: the May 2005 Elections", in: *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Volume 45 Number 2. 2007. 254

ruling regime had a near total monopoly on credit inputs such as fertilizers and select seeds.⁶⁵ Therefore, the major occupation of voters was to guesstimate which party would win a majority so that they could express their political wish in accordance.⁶⁶ The accepted attitude became that it was better “to delegate-decision making to authorities than to take any initiative”.⁶⁷

For the most part, the government was to blame for the general attitude adopted by most of the voting population. Unlike the general elections of 1995 and 2000 where the opposition was restricted to the point where it was marginal or nonexistent, the EPRDF decided that it would allow the 2005 elections to be free, fair and competitive. The underlying assumption was that the opposition was unorganized, inexperienced, divided and small. As a result, the EPRDF expected a landslide victory.⁶⁸ However, the government overestimated its own popularity. “Despite being the power in place the party never gained the popular support, in part because it was perceived as anchored in the peripheral Tigreyan minority”.⁶⁹

In mid-April, one month before the elections, the party made drastic policy changes. It undertook major efforts to mobilize material as well as human resources while the security forces openly abandoned their “semblance of neutrality”.⁷⁰ The EPRDF also proceeded to resort to coercion by exerting direct pressure on individuals. According to Lefort’s research, Ethiopians reported that,

⁶⁵ Ibid. 259

⁶⁶ Ibid. 254-255

⁶⁷ Ibid. 259

⁶⁸ Ibid. 262

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 266

Two persons, generally one militia member and one cadre or a sub-*kebele*⁷¹ official, would walk door to door to ask people to sign a register committing them to vote for the EPRDF. If not, they would face ‘the consequences’ after the elections, which could go as far as ‘forbidding us to go on living here’.⁷²

Most people who signed the register clearly felt compelled to vote for the EPRDF. This was due in part to the government’s decision to resort to a show of force as well as to rumors that the ballot was not secret. After all, the widespread perception was that the government had ways to find out who voted for whom.

On Election Day, the outcome of the ballot was uncertain for “people would cast their ballot in a manner contrary to the rationality on which democratic voting is supposed to be founded, but that is entirely rational on their own context”.⁷³ According to Lefort, voters waited until last minute to find out who their fellow citizens voted for in order to better anticipate the winning party and cast their ballot accordingly. Some went even as far as to hope that the ballot was not secret in order to view how those who went before voted while others intentionally spoiled their ballots or abstained from voting altogether.⁷⁴

Furthermore, not all who wanted to observe or study the elections were granted access by the government. In late March 2005, the government became increasingly restrictive. It accused three USAID-funded organizations in Ethiopia to observe and monitor the election to leave the country on the grounds that they had not applied as NGOs.⁷⁵ Shortly after, a senior European Union Observer, Dr. Siegfried Pausewang,

⁷¹ Kebele is the lowest tier of administration. Its role and function in the current governing system is not clear.

⁷² Lefort, 266

⁷³ Ibid. 269

⁷⁴ Ibid. 270

⁷⁵ Amnesty International, “Ethiopia: The 15 May 2005 elections and human rights recommendations to the government, election observers and political parties.” 29 April 2005. <http://www.reliefweb.int>. Retrieved February, 2010

“withdrew and left the country after the government claimed he would not be objective on account of his criticism of the democratization process and the human rights situation in the country in an academic article”.⁷⁶ Amnesty International also reported widespread human rights violations in the country featuring prolonged detention without charge or trial of members of opposition groups; torture of political prisoners; ‘disappearances’ of journalists and government opponents; extrajudicial execution of civilians; and inter-communal conflict or military opposition against armed opposition groups.⁷⁷

Preventing Power Transfer and Power Sharing

Manipulating electoral results is not the only means by which the current government seeks to prevent a transfer of power. There is evidence to indicate that the EPRDF coalition is asserting an increasingly vigorous Tigreyan dominance. At the same time, the EPRDF facilitated ethnic fragmentation to prevent power sharing. Initially, the EPRDF was confronted with two primary challenges. First, in the midst of post-liberation movement turbulence, it had to keep control over the country, and second prepare the ground for democracy. To address these challenges, despite little experience with federalism and decentralized administration, the EPRDF opted to introduce what is termed ‘ethnic federalism’ into Ethiopian politics.

From a theoretical perspective, decentralization has become an essential political agenda to provide opportunities for people at the local level to be involved in determining their economic and political choices. Over the years, politicians and development policy makers have argued that decentralization is necessary to empower local communities to be responsible for their development [...] decentralization is directly associated with

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

good governance, including consensual decision making, equity, representation, accountability and responsiveness of public institutions to community concerns.⁷⁸

In accordance with the new federalist form of government, jurisdiction was constitutionally apportioned between central and regional governments. Both federal and regional governments were accorded legislative, executive and judicial functions, while national defense, foreign policy, currency, inter-regional trade, and citizenship were established as major functions of the federal institutional power. Regional governments in turn were in charge of establishing economic and social development policies and strategies, managing a regional police force, and maintaining public order. The new federal structure became known as ethnic federalism, because ethnicity and language became the main factors in zonal divisions. In principle, the main objective of Ethiopia's regionalization was to enable the different ethnic groups to develop their culture and language, manage socio-economic development in their respective areas, exercise self rule and bring about an equitable share of national resources among the regions.⁷⁹

The failure of the federalist structure however is rooted in the failure of power sharing and the further ethnicization of Ethiopian politics. First and foremost, local governments do not exercise sufficient decision-making power and self rule to act as autonomous entities. Second, elected politicians in local governments do not exercise authority on budgetary, economic and social affairs. Rather, they are tightly controlled by officials in regional public services. Third, regional administrations themselves suffer from inadequate administrative and personnel capacity, as well as a poor revenue base, which ensures their continued reliance on the central government. Finally, politicians at

⁷⁸ Meheret Ayenew, "Decentralization in Ethiopia: Two Case Studies on Devolution of Power and Responsibilities to Local Government Authorities", in: *Ethiopia: The Challenges of Democracy from Below*. 130

⁷⁹ Ibid.

the zonal level increasingly are chosen by the central government and are accountable to the federal administration as opposed to the people. The “system maintains a heavy monolithic structure, that ensures the heavy influence of the center on the periphery”.⁸⁰ This ineffective devolution of power and responsibility is not only visible at the national and sub-national level, but also at the local *wereda*⁸¹ and *kebele* levels.

As with the earlier centralized political system, the current federal structure in Ethiopia can be characterized as semi-authoritarian ethnic federalism”.⁸² Semi-authoritarianism is used to describe the tight control exercised by central authorities on lower levels of governance “through the instrumentality of single ethnic-based parties that are affiliated with the ruling party”.⁸³

The challenge of many federal systems is to correct regional disparities and bring about even and balanced development among different regions. Unless governments are able to provide equal development opportunities the persistence of regional economic differences can generate resentment that can threaten the viability of the federal arrangement.⁸⁴

So far, the heavy reliance on the central governance by the regions⁸⁵ has created central government monopoly over the most lucrative sources of revenue, economic underdevelopment of the regions, a lack of revenue sources and a limited capacity to mobilize adequate resources for development.⁸⁶

Conclusion

⁸⁰ Ibid. 137

⁸¹ Wareda is a multi-purpose local government unit in the current state structure. Although not mentioned in the federal constitution, it is recognized by all regional constitutions and has been given elaborate powers and responsibilities. As an autonomous self-governing unit, it has an elected council and an extensive committee and administrative structure. Formally this level of government can prepare and approve its own budget, prepare and implement economic and social development projects, set up and manage public services and exercise democratic decision making at the local level.

⁸² Ayenew. 137

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 138

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Based on the level of structural and political adjustments made by countries that liberalized but went no further, it is clear that a major democratic deficit has emerged in many developing countries. Marina Ottaway has described and defined this political phenomenon as semi-authoritarianism. She argues that countries with semi-authoritarian characteristics can no longer be accurately described as transitional and are in a semi-authoritarian state by design. The current analysis of recent political trends confirms her hypothesis that most countries, including Ethiopia, are semi-authoritarian by design. However, while Ottaway's framework is designed to make sense of current political patterns, it neglects complex historic adversities that to a large extent have facilitated the emergence of semi-authoritarianism. Appropriately, the next chapter will analyze the past three regime changes that have facilitated this major political restructuring in Ethiopia and it will attempt to identify patterns that may have had a direct effect on the emergence of semi-authoritarianism.

CHAPTER III

A CLOSE LOOK AT ETHIOPIA'S TURBULENT POLITICAL AND ETHNIC HISTORY

*To foretell the destiny of a nation,
it is necessary to open the book that tells of her past.*

~ José Rizal~

Introduction

To this point, we have asserted that the current Ethiopian government is semi-authoritarian by design. Ottaway's theory is valuable in identifying the current trends of democratic deficits. However, it ignores critical factors, which can help to situate semi-authoritarianism such as inherited political legacies, dictatorial traditions, ethnic divisions and development differentials. Accordingly, this chapter will analyze Ethiopia's political trajectory from a historic perspective. Specifically, focus will be directed to Ethiopia's last three regimes: the Monarchy, the socialist Derg regime, followed by a consideration of the EPRDF. In order to fully ascertain whether or not Ethiopia is semi-authoritarian by design, semi-authoritarianism by default must be ruled out. In the Ethiopian case, semi-authoritarianism by design is supported by current policy decisions, while past political organizational practices give evidence of semi-authoritarianism by default.

Background Information

As Javier Gozalbez suggests in *Touching Ethiopia*, "the origin of Ethiopia is largely the origin of us all". Indeed, anthropologists believe East Africa's Great Rift Valley traversing Ethiopia from southwest to northeast is the site of the origin of

humankind. Today, the Horn of Africa, comprised of Ethiopia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan, is the “hottest conflict zone in the world”.⁸⁷

Recorded Ethiopian history can be traced back 3,000 years to the Axumate Empire originating in the central highlands of the present day Tigray, and it was extended into the Amharan highlands by Emperor Tewodoros II. In 1872, the Tigreyan chieftain became Emperor Yohannes IV, who took the empire into present southern Oromia and the far southeastern part of Somali land. Ethiopia’s imperialist expansion continued under the king of Shoa, Menelik II, who expanded Ethiopia’s borders into Somali land, as well as the current provinces of Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s Regional State, southwestern Oromia and Gambella.

With the exception of five years of Italian occupation from 1936 to 1941, Ethiopia never relinquished sovereignty to a European power. At the end of Word War II, the last emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, took advantage of Italy’s defeat by the allied forces and brought Eritrea into Ethiopia as a federated State. He eventually dissolved the federation in 1961 and Eritrea became part of Ethiopia until Eritrea’s independence in 1991.

Under the Devine Rule of the Emperor

Ethiopia’s monarchs exercised absolute power and were the ultimate source of law. Menelik II prided himself on being a direct descendant of the Shewan branch⁸⁸ of the Solomonic Dynasty, which claimed descent from King Solomon of ancient Israel, and

⁸⁷ *Migration Information Source: Fresh Thought, Authoritative Data, Global Reach.*
<http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=604> February, 2010

⁸⁸ BBC News – *Timeline: Ethiopia.* <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1072219.stm> June, 2009

the Queen of Sheba, who is said to have brought the arc of the covenant to Ethiopia.⁸⁹ Legend was used to sanctify the house as well as gather the support of the Ethiopian people and define Ethiopian nationality.⁹⁰ Consequently, the Ethiopian state did not build on local identities, but rather placed these identities under the feudal dominance of the Shewan-Amhara ruling class.⁹¹ Two thirds of conquered lands were confiscated and declared state domain for the benefit of the imperial army, and only the remaining one third was left to the conquered peoples.⁹²

Selassie further consolidated Menelik's imperial legacy not only by illegally annexing Eritrea, but also through the introduction of a national taxing system, the prohibition of local taxation by regional lords, the establishment of a paid civil service, the creation of a national army, and the prohibition of any local feudal armies.⁹³ Selassie further accentuated the myth of a divine monarchy. For example, a poster displayed in Addis Ababa during the first parliamentary elections following the enactment of the 1955 constitution depicts the emperor receiving the new constitution from an angel, a clever allusion to Moses receiving the Ten Commandments from on high. The depiction of a "voting booth in the corner of the poster was the only reminder that in a constitutional system citizens actually play a role".⁹⁴

Clearly, Emperor Selassie governed through a highly centralized power structure grounded on the monarch's divine right to rule, and artificially constructed symbols of

⁸⁹ W. John Haberson, "State and Social Transformation in Modern Ethiopia", in: *The Political Economy of Ethiopia*. 75

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Habte Bereket Selassie, "Empire and Constitutional Engineering: The PDRE in Historical Perspective", in: *The Political Economy of Ethiopia*. 116

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid. 119

⁹⁴ Ottaway, "Introduction: The Crisis of the Ethiopian State and Economy", in: *The Political Economy of Ethiopia*. 6

the institutionalized monarchy such as Orthodox Christianity. He successfully established a hierarchy of elites and governed through patrimonial rule. According to witness accounts,

People would approach His Benevolent Highness by turns, saying why they needed money [...] Any expenditure, anywhere in the Empire, of more than ten dollars required his personal approval, and if a minister came to ask his approval for spending only one dollar, he would be praised.⁹⁵

Although he preferred ruling through propaganda, favors and personalized alliances, Selassie did not shy away from coercion and repression. He preferred to maintain his power through a well-paid army. During his rule the budget allocation to the army and police, together composed of one hundred thousand members, was forty percent of the national budget, while thirty million farmers received only one per cent.⁹⁶ Such budgetary allocations did provide the emperor with the desired security establishment, however it also increased dissatisfaction among his subjects. Fear was occasioned by the use of a widespread and intrusive intelligence network turning neighbors into spies for the monarchy. As Ryszard Kapuściński suggested, "...ears appeared everywhere, sticking up out of the ground, glued to the walls, flying through the air, hanging on doorknobs, hiding in offices, lurking in crowds, standing in doorways, jostling in the marketplace".⁹⁷ Emperor Selassie used the tools of intimidation and coercion to maintain loyalty and unswerving support. Moreover, he drew on State resources to anchor a patrimonial series of networks benefiting the few while proclaiming his rule for all. However, he unintentionally created a point of no return. First and foremost, he provoked an intensified identity awakening among ethnic communities, and

⁹⁵ Ryszard Kapuściński, *The Emperor*, Random House Inc. 1978. 43

⁹⁶ Ibid. 93

⁹⁷ Ibid. 94

second, his use of patron-client networks bred a predatory elite without any leadership vision:

“Development” enabled the emperor to strengthen his personal rule through his skill in co-opting modernizing elites to the service of traditional institutions. Such cooption of “modernizing” elites weakened both their inclination and their capacity to force Haile Selassie’s government to accommodate in reality more of the extensive and broadly based change its “reforms” appeared to envisage. Such elites enhanced their wealth and privilege within a system that left the majority vulnerable to economic and ecologic catastrophe, thereby creating a leadership vacuum when that system began to crumble in 1974.⁹⁸

Coup D’état: A Thunderbolt from the Clear Blue Sky

Haile Selassie’s biggest policy mistake, and certainly the one that received the most international attention, was his inaction in addressing the overwhelming famine in the provinces of Tigre, Welo and east Ogaden where whole tribes perished of hunger in the early 1970s.⁹⁹ In 1973, Jonathan Dimbley, a young journalist from London, produced a documentary under the title of *Ethiopia the Unknown Famine*. The documentary facilitated an outburst of unprecedented humanitarian response both in aid and aid workers, as well as an invasion of foreign correspondents. Media reports caused further embarrassment for the Monarchy by pointing out that thousands of Ethiopians were dying of hunger next to markets and stores full of food. They highlighted that mass starvation was a direct result of the established feudal system on top of aid misappropriation.¹⁰⁰ More precisely, drought caused a poor harvest and farmers had to give up all the food to the landowners. Speculators in turn drove prices upward on the open market such that hardly anyone could afford the price of wheat.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Haberson. 80

⁹⁹ Kapuściński. 114

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 115

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 114

Ethiopian society as a whole was experiencing more and more unrest leading to calls for a revolution. The initial ambition of the revolutionaries was to unmask the deity. According to Kapuściński, Mengistu Neway, the commander of the Imperial Guard carefully orchestrated one of the turning points of the “revolution”. He demonstrated to university students in Addis Ababa the dry bread the rebels fed to dignitaries closest to the Emperor.

This event was a shock that the students never forgot. One of Haile Selassie’s closest and most trusted officers represented the Emperor – a divine being, with supernatural attributes – as a man who tolerated corruption in the Palace, defended his backward system, and accepted the misery of millions of his subjects. That day the fight began, and the university never again knew peace. The tumultuous conflict between the Palace and the university, lasting almost fourteen years, engulfed scores of victims and ended only with the overthrow of the Emperor.¹⁰²

As unrest intensified and the army experienced increasing mutinies, the Emperor’s perspective was that the 1968 uprising was like a “thunderbolt from clear blue sky”.¹⁰³ Events progressed quickly and simultaneously. While the Imperial Guard was busy maintaining order in the capital, soldiers in the southern province of Sidamo rebelled and arrested their superiors. Due to an international crisis in energy, the Ethiopian Minister of Commerce raised gasoline prices prompting taxi drivers, followed by teachers and high school students to strike. In the midst of confusion, despair and abuse, police forces killed three students and wounded two. To show support, angry and embittered university students took to the streets and strikers made a move towards the palace. At the same time, the second division of the army rebelled in Eritrea and the army’s fourth division proceeded to surround Addis Ababa. During the last few months of the rebellion, the emperor made a futile attempt at organizing a succession ceremony.

¹⁰² Ibid. 101

¹⁰³ Ibid. 95

At the same time, the Provisional Military Administrative Council (PMAC), Derg in Amharic, started arresting dignitaries, in a clever attempt “to encircle the ancient monarch in his own Palace, in his lair”.¹⁰⁴ Five hundred dignitaries and courtiers were gradually arrested creating a “sinking emptiness around the Emperor”.¹⁰⁵ The Derg made their final move by arresting His Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie, “the head of Church, the Chosen one of God, the ruler of men’s souls”.¹⁰⁶

Ethiopia Tikdem: Ethiopia Under the Derg

The Derg, formally known as the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, Police and Territorial Army was established on June 21, 1974 with Major Mengistu Haile Mariam of the Third Division as its elected leader.¹⁰⁷ Although coup organizers utilized the suffering of every day Ethiopians, change under the new administration was controlled from the top, through the military, not the people. The revolution brought neither social justice nor economic development. Populist and egalitarian demands by the military were addressed under the motto of *Ehiopia Tikdem*,¹⁰⁸ meaning Ethiopia First, but there was no agreement among Ethiopians about what the state should be, either politically or territorially. Some of the opposition movements, the Eritrean ones in particular, proposed state disintegration in their quest for independence, while others foresaw a change in the unitary structure of the country to a federal one. Others still accepted the Ethiopian state as a unitary one with its existing borders calling for a new

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 139

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 151

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. 41

¹⁰⁷ Ayele Negussay, “The Ethiopian Revolution: Political Aspects of the Transition from PMAC to PFRE”, in: *The Political Economy of Ethiopia*. 14

¹⁰⁸ Ethiopia First

form of political administration, but they lacked consensus as to what form the new administration should take.¹⁰⁹

Differing opinions were soon manifested in emerging fractions of the elite with the emergence of new political parties such as the All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement, with the Amharic acronym of MEISON, composed mostly of returning political exiles. Another party with a strong indigenous base was the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP). The Derg in turn set up an elaborate selection process of a fifty member civilian advisory council, the *Yememakert Shengo*, which it consulted on selected policy decisions. Soon the *Yememakert Shengo* issued its version of Ethiopian socialism, or *Hebrettesebawiner*, a philosophy of revolution which stated: "equality, self-reliance, the dignity of labor, the supremacy of the common good, and the indivisibility of the Ethiopian nation".¹¹⁰

The EPRP infiltrated the youth and labor movements and had influence in rural areas, while MEISON established a closer working relationship with the Derg. To deal with the challenges of multi-party politics, by February 3, 1977 Mengistu reasserted his authority and what came to be known as "red terror" was unleashed on the EPRP and sympathizers. The MEISON leadership, which always had at the ready lists of people to be appointed and people to be executed, was only too happy to provide the names of EPRP ringleaders and members to be eliminated summarily. The reactions against EPRP were all the more violent because it was the EPRP that started the assassination cycle with its own "white terror", "killing whole families, killing children in school yards, gunning down husbands waiting in cars for their wives and fathers dropping their kids off

¹⁰⁹ Ottaway, "Introduction: The Crisis of the Ethiopian State and Economy". 2

¹¹⁰ Negussay. 17

at school, assassinating young members of a family and dumping the bodies in front of the house to shock and brutalize the rest of the family”.¹¹¹

The Peoples’ Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE), Bureaucracy and the Constitution

In 1979, the Derg’s process of party formation yielded the Commission for Organizing the Party of the Workers of Ethiopia (COPWE). The Commission began recruiting for the Workers’ Party of Ethiopia (WPE), which was launched officially in September 1984. With the formation of the WPE, high priority was given to the formation of the Peoples’ Democratic Republic with the goal to stabilize the political system, and bring to fruition what was promised in 1974 and spelled out in the 1976 National Revolution Program.¹¹² Thus, a 354 member Constitutional Draft Commission convened on February 14, 1984 to discuss and endorse a draft constitution prior to its being debated and endorsed by the people at large.¹¹³ The draft constitution sought to consolidate the gains of the revolution by incorporating Marxist principles and structures into a new socialist, democratic and revolutionary order.¹¹⁴ The key provisions of the constitution included Article 3 stating that power is vested in the people, not the Emperor, and Article 85 outlining that the executive is accountable to the *Shengo*,¹¹⁵ which represents the working people.

¹¹¹ Ibid. 22

¹¹² Ibid. 24

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ The supreme organ of state power under the Derg regime was the National Assembly or the National Shengo. Its responsibilities included amending the constitution; determining foreign, defense, and security policy; establishing the boundaries, status, and accountability of administrative regions; and approving economic plans. The National Shengo was also responsible for establishing the Council of State; the Council of Ministers, ministries, state committees, commissions, and state authorities; the Supreme Court; the Office of the Prosecutor General; the National Workers' Control Committee; and the Office of the Auditor General. In addition, the National Shengo elected the president and officials of the Council of State and approved the appointment of other high-ranking authorities.

On February 1, 1987 ordinary Ethiopians participated in their first referendum. Ninety-six per cent of registered voters participated with 81 per cent approving the constitution, 18 per cent rejected it, and one per cent cast invalid votes.¹¹⁶ The referendum was followed by a national election on June 14. This time 87.7 per cent of those registered voted, and 813 National *Shengo* deputies took their seats in the PDRE Founding Congress.¹¹⁷ The National *Shengo*'s first order of business was the approval of seventeen proclamations, with the most important ones being:

- The adoption of the Constitution as the law of the land
- The declaration of the establishment of the People's Republic of Ethiopia
- The country's reconfiguration into administrative structures involving the creation of five regions: Eritrea, Tigray, Aseb, Dire Dawa and Ogaden, each with a degree of internal autonomy¹¹⁸

The Derg and Polarization of National Identities

The Derg hoped to find an acceptable solution to Ethiopia's ethnic diversity. The government went to great lengths to effectively weaken tribal institutions. They were viewed both by the state and some radical members of the local community as primordial and inimical to modernity and socialism. The Derg also believed that the traditional associations would hinder the universal solidarity of oppressed peoples.¹¹⁹ The first signs of radical political change appeared with the formation of units of political advisers or 'cadres' whose mandate was to re-educate ethnic groups and radically reform 'tribal' and

¹¹⁶ Negussay. 25

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 26

¹¹⁹ Yacob Arsano, "Seera: A Traditional Institution of Kambara", in: *Ethiopia: The Challenge of Democracy from Below*. 56.

kinship-based relations.¹²⁰ At the grassroots level, people were instructed to abandon their ‘primitive’, ‘bad’ customs along with ‘unproductive’ behavior.¹²¹ The ‘cadres’ have strategically tried to eliminate the traditional rituals of chiefs and folk-healers and dishonor them by stripping them of traditional body decorations and armor associated with their status, and forced them to break traditional dietary taboos.¹²² Through theft, blackmail, the destruction of valuable cultural property and arbitrary imprisonment, government officials caused social upheaval and internal conflict in many communities.

The Derg continued to take steps to institutionalize its revolutionary policies and made its ‘nationalities policy’ clear in the “Program of the National Democratic Revolution” in 1976. The Program guaranteed the rights of formerly oppressed groups to their culture and language while the Constitution guaranteed “equal development of all nationalities [...] in accordance with the teaching of Marxism-Leninism”.¹²³ Article 35 of the Program stated that the “historical identity and class unity of all nationalities who have for centuries lived together bound by blood, common customs and history, under state administration, shall be encouraged”.¹²⁴

The identities of Ethiopians were further polarized with Article 9 of the Constitution, which restructured the country into 24 “administrative and autonomous regions”, in order to “give democratic expression to the rights of nationalities and a Marxist-Leninist solution to the “nationalities issue”.¹²⁵ The government drafted a new map of ‘autonomous’ and ‘administrative regions’. The Institute for the Study of

¹²⁰ John Abbink, “Deconstruction of ‘tribe’: Ethnicity and Politics in Southwestern Ethiopia”, in: *JES*, Volume 24, November 1991. 10

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.* 11

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ J. Edmond Keller, “Constitutionalism and the National Question: The Case of Eritrea”, in: *The Political Economy of Ethiopia*. 107

Ethiopian Nationalities (ISEN), a politically oriented research body directly responsible to the Workers' Party of Ethiopia, was established in March 1983.¹²⁶ The Institute identified 74 nationalities.¹²⁷ The definition of nationality was based on four points: common language, common culture and historical unity, common territory and limited economic autonomy.¹²⁸

The radical restructuring of rural society into twenty-four administrative regions and five autonomous regions, was somewhat problematic due to the fact that “ ‘tribal’ groups are not fixed, unitary or bounded units with an immutable cultural profile or neat territorial boundaries”¹²⁹ in fact, some groups are spread over two or three states. As anthropologist John Abbink argued:

The drawing of such a map is based on one historical moment in time, a ‘freezing’ of labels. It also omits reference to the politico-economic dimension affecting group relations, and does not reflect the actual composition, varying degrees of self-identification, and social dynamics of groups. The classification has an obvious prescriptive dimension: they are defined from above.¹³⁰

State restructuring, resettlement schemes, and villagization schemes¹³¹ as well as the ‘re-education’ of populations by government officials and cadres resulted in the erosion of traditional identities. It has also interfered with settlement patterns and social organizations that had previously maintained a relative isolation from encompassing state

¹²⁶ Ayele. 24

¹²⁷ Abbink. 11

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Abbink. 11-12

¹³¹ In 1985 the Derg formed the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC). The original idea behind the RRC was to move people from overcrowded over utilized lands to more fertile and spacious areas. Mengistu's purpose was to divert negative international attention from the famine Ethiopia was experiencing. The resettlement program's mandate was to relocate 4.6 million people in Shewa, Arsi, and Harerghe into more than 4, 500 villages between December 1985 and March 1986. Phase two of the project was to be carried out in 1987 with the relocation of 10 million people into 9,435 villages followed by an additional 3 million relocations in October. The program was carried out with unusual ruthlessness and disregard for human life. Resettlement policies came to be regarded as competition grounds for elites who wished to gain favor with Mengistu. In the process, social, economic, cultural and other factors were ignored, and the result was economic chaos, increased resentment, and an exodus of refugees.

arenas.¹³² Indeed, the Derg regime artificially instilled and enforced a system where ordinary people had no choice but to adopt an elementary herd behavior. People were artificially “made to ‘discover’ their newly detected identities, without subjecting the process to critical examination”.¹³³ Thus, the end result was a political culture where rights to cultural expression, territorial recognition and the use of native language was guaranteed by the Constitution while at the same time government policy set in motion an aggressive process of large-scale ethnic fragmentation. These policies along with the oppression of civil liberties have led to an increase in distinct small ethnic groups and unrest among the larger ones such as the Tigray, the Oromo and the Somali manifesting in almost two decades of civil war. The Derg’s policies undermined the cohesion and order of traditional Ethiopian society. The administration successfully eliminated natural local leaders, traditional political participation at a local level and destroyed any remaining confidence in national identity and government at the national level.

Ethnic Resistance and the Liberation Movement

The Derg’s emphasis on the nationalities projected a newly found sense of pride, strength and confidence among ethnic communities. Not surprisingly, political opposition as well as armed resistance against the Derg became anchored in an ethnic identity. Resistance groups such as the Tigreyan People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF), the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) mobilized around identity. Their only sense of solidarity was in their common agenda to overthrow the Derg.

¹³² Abbink. 12

¹³³ Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*, Norton & Company, Inc. 2006. 10

From a political perspective, the end of the Mengistu regime was signaled by an abortive coup orchestrated in 1989 while Mengistu was on a state visit to East Germany in search of military aid.¹³⁴ Mengistu returned and brutally suppressed the coup. However, in the process, his army began to collapse from within. Whole military units defected to join opposition forces. Over the next two years, the TPLF and the EPRDF came to control all of Tigre, large segments of Wollo, Gondar, and Shoa.¹³⁵ In Eritrea, all but the major towns of Asmara, Massawa, and Assab were under the EPLF's control.¹³⁶ In 1991, due to increased pressure from the civil war, Mengistu fled to Zimbabwe thereby ending 17 years of military dictatorship.¹³⁷ The power vacuum, resulting from Mengistu's "self-imposed exile",¹³⁸ was filled by the EPRDF, which advanced into the capital and took power.

EPRDF's ascension to political power was first sanctioned at a U.S.-brokered peace conference held in London on May 27, 1991 among representatives of the EPLF, EPRDF and OLF.¹³⁹ The conference was a major turning point in Ethiopian political history as the EPRDF announced that it intended to maintain law and order in the capital and establish a "provisional, broad-based government responsible for introducing a democratic system based on political pluralism".¹⁴⁰ At first, the EPRDF sought to rectify some of the underlying problems that made ethnic fragmentation so predominant in Ethiopian politics. The plan was to form a broad-based political pact involving twenty

¹³⁴ Keller, "Remaking the Ethiopian State", in: William Zartman, (ed.) *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*, Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc. 1995. 131

¹³⁵ Ibid. 131-132

¹³⁶ Ibid. 132

¹³⁷ Sandra Joireman Fullerton, "Opposition Politics and Ethnicity in Ethiopia: We Will All Go Down Together", in: *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Volume 35. March 1997. 387

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Engedayehu. 204

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

different political organizations and groups.¹⁴¹ However, groups opposed to the EPRDF leadership such as the EPRP, and the All-Ethiopian Socialist movement and the Coalition of Ethiopian Democratic Forces (COEDF) were excluded.¹⁴²

The EPRDF and Ethnic Federalism

The increased politicization of peoples whose political ambitions were repressed under the previous regimes was expressed in ethnically organized liberation movements. In order to address the country's ethnic diversity, the newly formed Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) attempted to draft a Constitution where power would be decentralized from the center to the states introducing 'ethnic federalism'. The Federal Republic of Ethiopia was divided into nine states and two special cities, Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. Six states – Afar, Amhara, Harari, Oromia, Somalia and Tigray – were dominated by a single ethnic group while three, Beneshangul/Gumuz, Gambella and the Southern Nations, were multiethnic.¹⁴³ States were further divided into 66 administrative zones, 550 wereda and six special districts.¹⁴⁴

In accordance with the liberal vision, Ethiopia's new Charter also articulated the TGE's commitment to the fundamental principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights according individuals' freedom of conscience, expression, association and peaceful assembly as well as the right to engage in unrestricted political activity.¹⁴⁵ In a dramatic and unique innovation, Article 2 of the charter "asserts the right of all of Ethiopia's nationalities to self-determination, the preservation of national identities of

¹⁴¹ Ibid. 206

¹⁴² Keller. "Remaking the Ethiopian State". 133

¹⁴³ Keller. "Ethnic Federalism, Fiscal Reform, Development and Democracy in Ethiopia". 34

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Keller. "Remaking the Ethiopian State". 135

each group, and the right of each nationality to govern its own affairs within the context of federated Ethiopia”.¹⁴⁶ Article 13 further states that “there shall be a law establishing local and regional councils defined on the basis of nationality”.¹⁴⁷ However, the Charter failed to outline what self-determination entailed and by what means autonomy could be achieved. Many Ethiopians viewed the provision of the Charter and the creation of administrative zones as the balkanization of their country. As one critic notes:

The leadership of TPLF does not understand that the problem of ethnic identity is one, which is fraught with many complexities. A person can be defined as a member of an ethnic group in one of three ways: by history, by choice and by opposition. ... Dividing Ethiopians along ethnic lines runs the risk of accentuating and freezing ethnic identities in ways that may undermine the meaning and value of Ethiopian citizenship. The more ethnic groups turn upon themselves and concentrate on what divides them from others, the more it costs their members in terms of their chances/opportunities in the larger system. Also, to freeze ethnic identities runs the risk of inter-ethnic friction and conflict, a risk that has already materialized in much of southern Ethiopia.¹⁴⁸

The government’s attempts to decentralize power have resulted in what Keller terms as “a type of putting together federalism”. In short, the federal government has not honored its commitment of power distribution. This can be seen with revenue sharing between the two levels of government. For example, most taxing powers rest with the federal government while most of the expenditure obligations are the responsibility of the regional authorities. Thus, administrative regions cannot help but be reliant on the central power for revenue transfers, which prevent independent decisions and any significant locally defined development.

Symbolic power sharing has led to an inability to determine who controls the resources of an area and who are the beneficiaries. This creates a problem in provinces with multiple ethnicities since people resort to violence to solve their grievances as

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Engedayehu. 219- 220

opposed to looking for policy deficiencies in the system. For example, in 2003, some 400 Anuak civilians were killed in Gambella by mobs and soldiers.¹⁴⁹ Human Rights Watch officials documented military raids on Anuak neighborhoods and villages. According to eyewitness accounts, “many of the victims have been shot down from behind as they tried to flee [...] others were killed in chance encounters with military patrols in the countryside”.¹⁵⁰ The genocide was a direct result of ethnic conflict as well as power struggles for control over resources especially ancestral Anuak land which had been taken over by Sudanese refugees. Oil resources have been discovered as well in Gambella, which has generated intense interest in asserting central government control. The overemphasis on primary identities mixed with struggles over key resources such as land and oil, can quickly inflame ethnic tensions and lead to violence and further fragmentation.¹⁵¹

In this same context, the federal system has ignited more ethnic conflict due to the fact that the Tigreyan peoples have made the central government as their preserve. Other ethnicities see the federal model, given the way it is, used by the centre to assert dominance over the regions, as a Tigreyan drive to become pre-eminent. Moreover, ethnic groups have different concepts of territorial boundaries while other groups are faced with historic grievances. For example, the Amhara, one of the largest ethnic groups in Ethiopia is not represented in the Tigreyan-led government. Amharans that constitute a third of Ethiopia’s population feel victimized by the current government. From a historic perspective, Amharans consider themselves to be politically and culturally dominant, and

¹⁴⁹ Human Rights Watch. “Ethiopia: Crimes Against Humanity in Gambella Region”. <http://hrw.org> February 2010.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ *Ethiopia: Betrayal of Democracy*. A video documentary created by the University of Saskatchewan Division of Media and Technology in collaboration with the Anuak Justice Council in 2006

they argue that the EPRDF government is exploiting this history to conduct propaganda campaigns, labeling the ethnic group as “exploiters, colonialists and oppressors”.¹⁵² The government is also trying to prevent Amharas from taking office in the southern regions of the country, and through a process that is termed ‘ethnic cleansing’ by the group, many Amharans are also removed from civil service positions by their political opponents.¹⁵³ Ethnic tensions also rose in Oromo areas sometimes erupting into armed conflict. In part this was due to the pace by which administrative reforms took place and Oromo expectations that “reforms could eventually position the Oromo peoples to declare their independence from Ethiopia. Elements of the OLF had long hoped to establish the independent state of Oromia”.¹⁵⁴ However, it is clear that the TGE’s intentions were to grant regional autonomy to ethnic groups only in the context of a unified Ethiopia.

Due to a lack of genuine power sharing experience as well as an attempt to maintain central government subjugation, the EPRDF engages in divide and rule tactics to maintain power. As pointed out by Lahra Smith in her analysis of ethnicity and voting patterns,

African citizens are members of two types of political communities in the same temporal and spatial world. The first is their civic-republican community, which is most often their ethnic or communal group. This community demands participation and fulfillment of duties to the collectivity. But at the same time, these individuals are citizens of modern nation-state, guided by liberal conception of status and a focus on rights rather than duties.¹⁵⁵

This concept of dual citizenship with an emphasis on one’s ethnic group and tribe emerged as a necessary survival element under Selassie, the Derg, and now the EPRDF.

¹⁵² Engedayehu. 213

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Keller, “Remaking the Ethiopian State”. 135

¹⁵⁵ Lahra Smith, “Voting for an Ethnic Identity: Procedural and Institutional Responses to Ethnic Conflict in Ethiopia”, in: *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Volume 45 Number 4. 2007. 570

If one is responsible first and foremost to fulfill his/her duties to the community then political leaders are chosen based on their power to deliver goods and services to their ethnic base rather than their ability to advance the interests of the Ethiopian state. Corruption and patrimonialism are not only entrenched in the political and administrative systems but are also culturally expected and accepted. In neo-patrimonial political systems, personal, face-to-face informal relations substitute formal relations and decision-making in modern institutional settings. Kin, clan and ethnic community are the bedrock for such instrumental relationships.¹⁵⁶ Firmly anchored ethnic power barons compete at the centre for access to State resources, and, ultimately the more ambitious seek to build coalitions to displace the political leader. Thus, “rulers regularly rotate office holders ‘to regulate and control rent seeking’ to prevent rivals from developing their own power base, and to demonstrate their own power”.¹⁵⁷ In a similar fashion, mutually benefiting obligations and transactions are set up where administrative and military personnel are ultimately responsible to the chief patron and not to the electorate they claim to represent or to the hierarchy of command that is supposed to formalize authority in the military and police.¹⁵⁸

The institutionalization of patrimonialism is in part a direct result of cultural linkages. However, it must be pointed out that patron-client systems are also rooted in a general lack of national unity combined with a poor understanding of liberal democracy and its institutional norms. According to Lefort, many Ethiopians believe that one’s power to govern emanates from God: “It doesn’t matter who I vote for, since it’s God

¹⁵⁶ Tobias Hagmann, “Beyond Clannishness and Colonialism: Understanding Political Disorder in Ethiopia’s Somali Region, 1991-2004”, in: *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Volume 43 Number 4. 2005. 516

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 517

who decides who will be elected”.¹⁵⁹ Thus, to submit oneself to the absolutism of those in power is to act in accordance with divine will.¹⁶⁰ In this context, core elements of democracy such as “competitiveness among voters, candidates, parliamentarians or members of congress in articulating their public views, developing consensus”¹⁶¹ are absent. It is also perceived that those who acquire wealth are more intelligent than the rest of the population for they are more aggressive and have more political clout. Hence, they emerge as the natural leaders creating a system where money and individualism influences politics rather than virtue, issues and equal competition. People attach themselves to the wealthy in order to have any chance of reducing their vulnerability and to improve their life chances. Similarly to the place of wealth in driving political ambition, ruling political parties, which have access to State resources are tremendously advantages over opposition parties.

Conclusion

The current Ethiopian government engages in the politics of a centrally controlled system of regional governments under the banner of ethnic federalism. Ethnicity is the most crucial and controversial force in Ethiopian politics. The EPRDF maintains the principle of unconditional rights of nations, nationalities and peoples to self-determination including secession. However, the Constitution is a superficial document adopted as a necessity due to Ethiopia’s turbulent history and ethnic revival. First and foremost, the highly politicized threat to ethnic identities in Ethiopia is a direct consequence of Ethiopia’s long monarchical rule. Until his removal from power, emperor

¹⁵⁹ Lefort. 258

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

Haile Selassie attempted to project the image of an ethnically unified Ethiopia while suppressing the ethnic claims to self-determination of Oromo, Somali and Afar peoples. His imperial state maintained control over these territories through force. *Ketemas*¹⁶² were established throughout the country in order to administer Oromo and Somali areas.¹⁶³ These towns housed soldiers designated as “‘watchman’ of the crown”¹⁶⁴ and were given the authority to maintain law and order as necessary.

In turn, the Derg regime took advantage of the lack of an Ethiopian national identity to re-ignite ethnic consciousness and destroy the myth of monarchical divinity. Both the Derg and the EPRDF attempted to address and manage Ethiopia’s ethnic question but change in both cases was implemented from the top down with a complete discrepancy between the policies envisioned by the political elites and the experiences and perceptions present at the grass-root level. Accordingly, resistance against the Derg was ethnically organized. Cooperation with the EPRDF could not be won without promising ethnic groups self-determination and equal participation in governance.

Conversely,

Today, as the federal system based on new ethnic regionalization is being implemented, the integrating forces of ethnic freedom appear to lose out against the centrifugal influences of ethnic conflict. The political experiment of adopting multiculturalism of ethnic groups is in danger of falling apart. In light of the historical context, basing nation building on a vision of multi-ethnic entity holds the potential for massive conflict as it may also fragment ethnic groups along lines of clan and lineage.¹⁶⁵

Thus, we can argue that the ideological, ethnic, religious, linguistic, regional and other cleavages, that often intertwine and conflict with one another, can be overwhelming to handle all at once by any government. In the case of the EPRDF, a centralized, semi-

¹⁶² In the Amharic language, the word ‘ketema’ means fortified encampment

¹⁶³ Keller, “Remaking the Ethiopian State”. 127

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Aadland. 35

authoritarian model of governance is all too familiar and inherited from previous regimes. Consequently, there are strong dimensions to suggest that Ethiopia is semi-authoritarian by default as opposed to design.

CHAPTER IV

SEMI-AUTHORITARIANISM AND ETHNIC VIOLENCE

War made the state, and the state made war.

~ Charles Tilly ~

Introduction

This chapter builds on arguments presented earlier to show that the absence or presence of democratic governance is not a function of the governing elite alone. In the case of Ethiopia for example, different regimes tried to tackle administrative, structural and ethnic challenges through different political models. Yet it is clear that patterns of ‘negative ethnicity’ are too great to be solved by democratization.¹⁶⁶ Despite different ideological and structural agendas, regimes adopt similar patterns of rule, in other words, “individual political leaders or governments have limited influence on the establishment or preservation of democracy because of wider ‘systemic’ factors”.¹⁶⁷ Consequently, this chapter is designed to draw attention to the effects of centralization on multi-ethnic societies through the framework of dependency theory, democratic understanding and commitment at the ethnic level, nation building and potential disintegration, political skepticism and the role of the political elite in Ethiopian politics.

Dependency Theory

Dependency theorists argue that the absence or presence of democracy alone in the Third World is not a function of individual countries alone. Individual political leaders or governments have limited influence on the establishment or preservation of

¹⁶⁶ For a classic study of ‘negative ethnicity’ in another country context, see: Koigi wa Wamwere, *Towards Genocide in Kenya: The Curse of Negative Ethnicity*, MvuleAfrica Publishers. 2008

¹⁶⁷ Aadland. 34

democracy because of wider ‘systemic’ factors. Aid donors, financial institutions, the international community at large, as well as influential powers such as the United States and the former Soviet Union, encouraged centralization in the third world because it fit with their framework of development, hierarchy in government structure, and post-enlightenment rationalism.

Asafa Jalata argues that Abyssinian¹⁶⁸ leaders worked the international political arena to bring legitimacy to the Ethiopian colonial state under Amharan rule. Asafa looks at Ethiopia’s long monarchical rule as well as more current regimes to draw on numerous examples. After the Italian occupation, for example, in 1941 Britain restored Haile Selassie to the throne along with his clientele government.¹⁶⁹ In 1944, Britain also made a commitment “to build the Ethiopian bureaucracy by providing a British military mission for raising, organizing, and training a strong central army that could defend the Ethiopian state”.¹⁷⁰

In the 1950’s, Selassie further relied on the influence of the United States to annex Eritrea. At the time, the United States regarded Ethiopia “as an investment toward the future realization of its wider interests in Africa”.¹⁷¹ In 1953, the two countries signed a mutual defense agreement in an effort to monitor Soviet activities on the continent. Up until the 1970’s the United States continued funding Ethiopian development projects as well as providing trained and skilled personnel. American influence created a strong divide between the Amhara community in power and other ethnic groups.

¹⁶⁸ Asafa explains that the Amhara ethno national group, along with Tigray, are collectively called Abyssinians. He points out that since the 13th century, remnants of the Christian Auxumite kingdom developed a separate identity, the Amhara. This identity is based on Orthodox Christianity, common traditions and customs, but different languages.

¹⁶⁹ Jalata Asafa, “The Ethiopian State: Authoritarianism, Violence and Clandestine Genocide”, in: *The Journal of Pam African Studies*, Volume 3 Number 6. March 2010. 163

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. 164

¹⁷¹ Ibid. 165

Due to its anti-imperialist agenda during the liberation movement, the subsequent Derg military regime moved towards a socialist approach to development. The nationalization of American owned industries and the killing of sixty top former officials¹⁷² soured US-Ethiopian relations. At this point, the Derg regime allied itself with the Soviet Union, which in turn supplied the regime with arms “to keep the crumbling empire intact”.¹⁷³ In 1991, under the optimism of “third wave democracy”, the United States intervened once more in Ethiopian politics by supporting Meles Zenawi and the TPLF to power in their challenge to the Derg as well as supporting the formation of the EPRDF.

Even though the EPRDF period has seen local and international organizations report on election fraud, human rights abuses, and the lack of a democratic commitment by the regime, Ethiopia remains the beneficiary of considerable aid support. Asafa argues that as far as the United States is concerned, political stability and economic reform take precedence over democracy. And indeed, considering that many ethnic groups in Ethiopia stretch across borders – for example, the Borana, and Garre are found in Ethiopia and Kenya, with the Garre also in Somalia,¹⁷⁴ and given the persistence of the Somalia fractionalization, regional stabilization remains fundamental to Western interests.

Although the EPRDF actively engages in a continuing centralization of power, this approach to governing has a long legacy in Ethiopia. Such centralization fuels mistrust towards governmental and ideological reform. To put this into perspective, over the past three regimes, for example, the process of political centralization undermined

¹⁷² Ibid. 165

¹⁷³ Ibid. 166

¹⁷⁴ Asnake Kefale, “Federal Restructuring in Ethiopia: Renegotiating Identity and Borders along the Oromo-Somali Ethnic Frontiers”, in: *Development and Change*, Volume 41 Number 4. 2010. 620

ethnic communities in Southern Ethiopia. Centralization effectively marginalized and excluded indigenous and local cultures. In this process, indigenous cultures continued to exist, but these communities were not active participants in decision making at any level of governance.¹⁷⁵ Aadland's research indicates that, "indigenous structures became nostalgic and rather mythological in the official polity".¹⁷⁶ Further, Harald Aspen, who has conducted field research in Northern Shäwa, also found that the distance between Ethiopian peasants and the central government, present and past, is characterized by deep power imbalances.¹⁷⁷ The Derg government, for example, reinforced by a reformist socialist agenda failed in mass mobilization and participation.¹⁷⁸

Marxism belonged to, and was associated with a powerful and dictatorial State. Marxist ideology and organization probably also contributed to making the State into a factor that was matched only by Nature and God in unpredictability and power – although such perception was not new to the Ethiopian peasants after centuries of "Divine Rule" by dictatorial Emperors.¹⁷⁹

In present day Ethiopia, the continuing centralization of power under the EPRDF also results in all ideological, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and regional demands being directed to Addis Ababa. Thus, the combination of strong ethnic identities where cultural traditions have priority over power sharing, with a state, both current and past, that competes against these identities and is perceived as illegitimate and domineering limits democratic breakthrough and consolidation. Furthermore, many Ethiopians project the impression that they are victims of a type of coercive democratization from the international community, while they are still trying to come to terms with political practices established by previous regimes that promote ethnic dominance and mistrust.

¹⁷⁵ Aadland. 29

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Harald Aspen, "Models of Democracy – Perceptions of Power", in: Bahru Zewde and Siegfried Pausewang (eds.) *Ethiopia: The Challenge of Democracy from Below*. 61

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. 63

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

Political Skepticism

The absence of a democratic commitment and the strength of ethnic revival in Ethiopia can be attributed in part to the ethnicization of rule from the centre over the regions. Under monarchical rule and the Derg regime, most Ethiopians faced and succumbed to an absolutist state with an agenda perceived as the Amharaization. Other ethnic communities were treated as occupied territories. For the 'ethnic others', they became subjects rather than citizens of an oppressive Ethiopian state. Under the EPRDF, a Tigrean minority is exerting powerful dominance over all other ethnic groups. The 'ethnic others' turn inward and try to sustain their cultural values and identities in an uncertain world.

Political uncertainty is thus the key element in the political arena for many ethnic communities. This uncertainty inhibits any turn to democratization.¹⁸⁰ As eloquently described by Kapuściński, the overwhelming view in Ethiopia is that,

On the street market a bullet is often worth more than the gun. Bullets are the most valuable currency on that market, more in demand than dollars. After all, what is a dollar but paper? A bullet can save your life. Bullets make your weapons more significant, and that makes you more significant. A man's life – what is that worth? Another man exists only to the degree that he stands in your way. Life doesn't mean much, but is better to take it from the enemy before he has time to deliver the blow.¹⁸¹

Zero-Sum-Game Political Environment

Many elements of politics, especially the ones associated with authority, power and wealth, take on a different dimension in countries such as Ethiopia. 'A winner take all' political environment predominates. Throughout Ethiopia's history, this zero-sum form of politics has led to unequal achievements and gains from regime formation. Thus,

¹⁸⁰ Conteh-Morgan. 83

¹⁸¹ Kapuściński. 24

there is a prevailing fear underlying ‘winner-take-all’ political practices. In this political environment, first and foremost, efforts of democratization are quickly trumped by the politics of revenge in the form of inquiry commissions to punish the corruption and misrule of the previous regime”.¹⁸²

Second, “adversarial cooperation”,¹⁸³ developed during the anti-Derg liberation movement, quickly evaporated and was replaced by political uncertainty once one group successfully gained power. Cooperative arrangements quickly melt away with the entrenchment of a new ethnic elite in power eager to direct State resources to themselves. Thus, coalition partners experience fear of regime capture by one group and the vicious cycle of ethnic power consolidation.

Third, perceived political and economic power differentials may cause each group to experience political uncertainty. Different groups have different capabilities that they can convert into immediate opportunities and long-term economic and political growth and power. For example, it is estimated that medium sized groups, such as the Tigrean ethnic group in Ethiopia, have the most to lose. “A group with a relatively lower conversion than its competitors might wonder if democratization might accelerate what already was an existing gap in economic capabilities between itself and its competitors”.¹⁸⁴ This leads to the final point, namely that the political environment is plagued by “incumbent political uncertainty”¹⁸⁵ which leads to political distrust, fear, and resentment. “Incumbent groups may fear that they could lose a substantial margin of

¹⁸² Conteh-Morgan. 83

¹⁸³ Ibid. 78

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. 79

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. 80

their power and, perhaps, at the very extreme limit of the logic, their capacity to protect their security interest”.¹⁸⁶

Based on historical experiences, no group can be certain how it will fare after regime change and, under a democratic context after power alternations, “because they possess this defensive orientation, rational political groups are compelled to assess the magnitude of their gains from cooperation to democratize in terms of gains achieved by opponents”.¹⁸⁷ The political party in power has access to state resources, hard currency, higher education, and civil service appointments. Opposition parties on the other hand are subjected to harassment and resource exclusion. Furthermore, Ethiopia has been plagued by high unemployment, national debt, property and land seizures, instability in bordering countries, frequent influx of refugees, as well as natural disasters. The potential for economic deterioration and scarcity heightens ethnic paranoia and ethno-regional nationalism. Ethnic groups cling to power in order to secure and retain control over territory and resources in order to maintain their political, economic, and social opportunity base.

Maintaining power becomes vital not only for individuals in power, but also for the communities and ethnic groups that support the incumbent regime. For this reason, political rivals will cooperate if they achieve absolute gains, such as the removal of the Derg regime from power, but only if the distribution of political gains does not powerfully benefit their rivals. This “system of adversarial cooperation”¹⁸⁸ was evidenced by the rapid disintegration of the EPRDF coalition after 1991. As ethnic identities strived to apply the full aspects of ethnic and national self-determination guaranteed by the

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. 82

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. 79

constitution, the central government increasingly engaged in more restrictive authoritarian measures.

Power Elites, Neo-patrimonialism and the Ethnic Card

In the context of Western democracies the office endows the office holder with authority and power; in Africa, the office exists because the person has authority.¹⁸⁹ Some political leaders opt for “life presidency” because they inwardly believe that their authority is permanent and the office exists for them.¹⁹⁰ After all, in some tribal conceptions of African authority, chiefs tend to remain chiefs throughout their lives. What is more, the African chief is not constrained by the separation of executive, judicial and legislative powers; he encapsulates all three. Often as well, there is no separation between religion and politics. Healers, shamans and spiritualists can be perceived as personally powerful and responsible for the state of the community in terms of all of its qualities. His/her power is mystical, and tenure of office can be perceived to be for his/her lifetime.¹⁹¹ Hence, “While African elites engage in the rhetoric of Western democracy, they at the same time exercise their authority in a personal, pervasive, and permanent manner”.¹⁹² Moreover, power can be contested by different actors – the politician, the wealthy ‘big man’, the chief and the spiritualist.

In a zero-sum political environment, from a neo-patrimonial perspective, the politics of ethnicity becomes a matter of survival. Again, Kapuściński puts this notion into context for us:

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. 36

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. 36

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid. 37

Money in a poor country and money in a rich country are two different things. In a rich country, money is a piece of paper with which you buy goods on the market. You are only a customer. Even a millionaire is only a customer. He may purchase more, but he remains a customer, nothing more. And in a poor country? In a poor country, money is wonderful, thick hedge, dazzling and always blooming, which separates you from everything else. Through that hedge you do not see creeping poverty, you do not smell the stench of misery, and you do not hear the voices of the human dregs. But at the same time you know all of that exists, and you feel proud because of your hedge. You have money; that means you have wings. You are the bird of paradise everyone admires.¹⁹³

Thus, ethnic survival, identity renegotiations, and inter-clan relations are intertwined with calculated gains and losses in terms of resources, political clout, and territory. As an example, relations between ethnic groups such as the Borana, Garre, Gabbra, and Somali have been reconfigured, and renegotiated under each Ethiopian regimes' ethnic restructuring policies. More recently with the introduction of ethnic federalism under the EPRDF, due to regional restructuring, the Garre and Gabbra, who share ethno-linguistic similarities both with the Oromo and Somali ethnic groups, were required to identify themselves with either Oromia or the Somali region.¹⁹⁴ The alliance with one ethnic group and region over the other had political implications in terms of representation and access to resources.

Despite the ethno-cultural similarities between the Garre and Gabbra, the inter-regional alliance differed between the two groups. The Garre chose a Somali alliance, while the Gabbra had a hard time making a decision. This had significant political implications. Initially in 1991, "the Garre ethnic entrepreneurs"¹⁹⁵ calculated that the OLF was one of the most important political forces in the country, only second to the TPLF. To counter this perceived political imbalance, the Garre and other Muslim Oromo clans re-branded the Somali Abbo Liberation Front (SALF) as the Oromo Abbo

¹⁹³ Kapuściński. 45

¹⁹⁴ Kefale. 620

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. 621

Liberation Front (OALF).¹⁹⁶ This made the Borana, an ethnic group that identifies itself with the Oromo, suspicious since they saw the OALF as a continuation of the SALF in symbols and clan constituency.¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, the new ethnic alliance was also perceived to serve the interests of Garre traditional leader Haji Mohammed Hassen Gebaba, who had ambitions to take the office of the OLF representative¹⁹⁸ in Moyale, a town between Somali and Oromo regions. The Borana were further angered by this, and saw the move as an attempt on the part of the Garre to make land claims and take advantage of the power vacuum in Addis Ababa, where the TGE was in the process of establishing the EPRDF.

Garre - Borana relations had a direct effect on the Gabbra. The Gabbra traditionally lived within Borana dominated territories. To them the choice between Oromo and Somali regions resulted both in internal and inter-ethnic conflicts. Some Gabbra had demands for the establishment of a special *woreda* within the Borana zone of the Oromo territories, at the same time, some Gabbra leaders made public statements that the town of Moyale and its surrounding area should be assigned to the Somali region.¹⁹⁹ At the end of 1991 the political tensions in the region led to conflict. Hundreds of lives were lost and thousands were displaced.²⁰⁰

At this point, it is important to ask why the town of Moyale is so important to both the Garre and the Borana. By becoming allied with the Somali, the Garre were able to legitimize and claim territory from the Borana as their own. Furthermore, they also claimed territories – nine Borana permanent water wells, and the town of Moyale – that

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. 622

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

were used both by the Garre and the Borana, but were considered traditional Borana areas.²⁰¹ In 1994, the federal government assigned some of these resources to the Garre on the grounds that there are more Garre than Borana in the area.²⁰² The Borana felt that this was an unfair decision, and Moyale is still being contested. The town houses two conflicting administrative bodies as the Oromo and Somali have their own body of police, judicial system, and education system.²⁰³

The federal government has attempted to solve the ethnic animosity through ‘reconciliation’ conferences, and through a scheduled referendum to be held in October 2004.²⁰⁴ In the end, the referendum could not be carried out due to disagreements between the two administrations on the election of public observers and voter registrations.²⁰⁵ Oromo officials claimed that since the Garre ethnic group is transnational, people were brought in from Kenya and Somalia to secure a majority vote for the Somali.²⁰⁶ Somali officials in turn argued that the referendum was cancelled due to Oromo influence at the regional level.²⁰⁷

Two conclusions emerge. First, unity and sensitivity of primordial ethnic sentiments for one’s ethnic political candidate at the cost of hostility and insecurity towards the other ethnic group and its candidate are correlative.²⁰⁸ Second, democratization is associated with the politics of ethnic competition creating political instability. These conclusions are further supported by the experience of the Gabbra ethnic group. Due to the Gabbra – Borana conflict in 1991, the displaced Gabbra fled to

²⁰¹ Ibid. 624

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid. 625

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Conteh-Morgan. 100

northern Oromia. The group was given refuge by the Guji, an Oromo clan, traditionally in conflict with the Borana.²⁰⁹ However, the Gabbra were once again displaced in 2005 when the Guji became suspicious that the Gabbra were going to remain in the north, and demand their own administration and territory.²¹⁰

As far as Ethiopian politics is concerned, ethnicity, ethnic alliances, and ethnic competition permeate politics at every level. “I am because we are”²¹¹ is a very much-valued concept. However, the “we” does not refer to the nation state, instead it is applied to one’s ethnic group. Loyalty to the ethnic group’s wellbeing and advancement is a political strategy exploited by the elite, and very much endorsed at a grass-root level. As demonstrated in the examples, this type of political environment can pose a challenge to democratization and democratic consolidation. Ethnic-based competitive elections can easily lead to violence.

Nation building and State Disintegration

Ottaway’s arguments in her essay *Introduction: The Crisis on the Ethiopian State and Economy* contradict her later work on semi-authoritarianism. Ottaway accentuates that,

The ideal type of the twentieth-century state is a nation-state, with a democratic government capable of controlling the territory effectively and of satisfying at least minimally the needs of its citizens. Moreover, this state is supposed to come about through a process of self-determination, thus to be accepted by its citizens rather than imposed from above.²¹²

It is clear that today, 20 years after 1991, Ethiopia still does not meet the requirements set out by Ottaway. The government is not able to control the territory effectively, citizens’

²⁰⁹ Kefale. 622

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Conteh-Morgan. 94

²¹² Ottaway. “Introduction: The Crisis of the Ethiopian State and Economy”. 4

needs are not satisfied, democratization is a top down imposition, and most importantly there is no such thing as an accepted Ethiopian state by many ethnic groups encompassing significant levels of population living in the country.

As discussed in Chapter II, democracy has become the preferred form of governance due to international pressure as well as a counterrevolution to the dictatorial rule experienced in association with former socialist experiments. Accordingly, both domestic and foreign actors lose sight of the dilemma of states such as Ethiopia which are faced with ethnic disintegration. First and foremost, Ethiopia is an imperial state rather than a nation state. And second, the state is not legitimate because it is not democratic. The state is based on power arbitrarily exercised from the top, rather than popular consensus, while at the same time the incapacity to control the territory and satisfy the needs of the population result in semi-authoritarian rather than democratic governance.

At this point, it is important to talk about the Oromo ethnic group in a larger context. The Oromo are central in the Ethiopian political context because they are the largest of the conquered ethno-national groups. Today, the Oromos make up 34.49 percent of the Ethiopian population while the Amhara, the ethnic group in power during monarchical rule and during the Derg regime, make up 26.89 percent, the Somali 6.2 percent, and the Tigray, the ethnic group with a clear dominance over the EPRDF, constitute 6.07 percent of the current population.²¹³ It is also noteworthy that the Tigray, live in the impoverished northern region of Ethiopia, while the Oromo live in the fertile highlands.²¹⁴

²¹³ John Ishiyama, "Ethnic Partisanship in Ethiopia", in: *National and Ethnic Politics*, Volume 11 Issue ¾, July 2010. 295

²¹⁴ Ibid.

The Oromo have a distinct culture, language, religion, political as well as social structure, and value system. The Oromo believe in *Waqaa*, a concept of god from a monotheistic religious perspective.²¹⁵ The Oromo believe that *Waqaa* created the universe along with all life forms with a sense of balance and harmony, for example male and female, young and old, spiritual and physical.²¹⁶ Oromo people traditionally believe that this balance is necessary to prevent social collapse, and they abide by a set of moral and ethical laws called *safuu*.²¹⁷ Resulting from a unique understanding of universal connectedness, the Oromo have a concept of collective property rights. They oppose the exploitation of nature and other human beings on the grounds that it “disrupts the peace and order of the cosmos”,²¹⁸ and have a traditional democratic form of government called the *gadaa*. Within the *gadaa* structure, there is an eight-year power rotation, a system of checks and balances, and election by universal male suffrage.²¹⁹ Although women are excluded from the *gadaa*, they are able to exercise and protect their rights through a parallel institution called the *siquee*.²²⁰

Over the past three regimes the Oromo have suffered significant destruction and erosion of their cultural values and traditions. Colonization along with varied foreign ideological concepts and political restructuring means a loss of *safuu* to the Oromo. Furthermore, current conflicts over land resources with neighboring ethnic groups such as the Tigray, Amhara, Somali, and Afar also lead to a weakened concept of *gadaa*.²²¹ Through their oral traditions, the Oromo give testimony to the injustice of land loss,

²¹⁵ Asafa. 169

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid. 170

genocide, slavery, rape, depopulation, and other atrocities suffered by generations of Oromo.²²² Indeed, historic records indicate that during conquest, as much as five million Oromo, half of the population at the time, were killed.²²³

Since *Waqaa* is intolerant of injustice, exploitation and domination, the suppression of their people to internal ethno-colonial rule is illegitimate. It disrupts the order of the cosmos. Furthermore, the maintenance of *safuu* prompts the Oromo “to protect the weak and calls for the congruence of individual and societal interests”.²²⁴ It is also worth pointing out that the highly centralized, top-down approach adopted by the past three Ethiopian regimes is in contradiction to the Oromo traditional governance. The Oromo choose religious tolerance not only for the traditional religion, but also Ethiopian Orthodox Christian, Islamic, Catholic, and Protestant faiths in order to focus on cultural unity, and prevent Oromo fragmentation along religious lines. The group’s objective is ethno-linguistic unity under the banner of shared language, customs, and traditions for communal harmony and ethnic protection. Many ethnic groups within the Ethiopian border view a strong unified large Oromo population, with access to resource rich fertile land, a common language, and established social and political traditions, as a threat,²²⁵ or at least a serious challenge to the existing power structures within the Ethiopian state.

In Ethiopia there is a deep-rooted continuity between old and new politics, governments of past and present share the same core values and ideas. As Tekle argues, these “core values and fundamental beliefs that unite the old and new politics pertain to,

²²² Ibid. 174

²²³ Mohammed Hassen, “Is Genocide Against the Oromo in Ethiopia Possible”. Paper presented at the Fourth International Biennial Conference of the Association of Genocide Scholars. Radisson Hotel. Minneapolis. Minnesota. June 10, 2001

²²⁴ Asafa. 169

²²⁵ Alexander Bulatovich, “Ethiopia Through Russian Eyes: Country in Transition 1896-1898. Translated by: Richard Seltzer, Lawrenceville, NJ. The Red Sea Press Inc. 2000. 65

and affect, not secondary and temporary issues but basic and enduring questions like the nature and purpose of the state, society, and government.”²²⁶ With no similarity between the Ethiopian polity and the modern concept of the nation-state, Ethiopia is experiencing negative nationalism which at best can be described as a “transitional stage between, on the one hand, a feudal polity in which sovereignty is fractionalized and power is personalized and, on the other, the modern state, which is ‘national’ in character and in which sovereignty is based on the expressed will of the people”.²²⁷ At worst however, Ethiopia can be perceived as a state with high potential of disintegration accelerated by the democratic process. Once more, as Ottaway points out in *Nation Building and State Disintegration*,

The rise of ethnic nationalism, with its destructive potential, has been triggered, in many cases, by promising development, namely, the opening up of authoritarian political systems and the beginning of democratic transition. Under pressure from their citizens and from aid donors, a majority of African governments are at least formally moving towards greater democracy. The two developments are linked: ethnic nationalism is increasing, at least in part, because of the greater openness of the political systems.²²⁸

Clearly, state building and nation building, which in the early postcolonial period were seen as synonymous, are turning into conflicting forces.²²⁹ Multiethnic nations have too weak a common identity on which to build the democratic political community.²³⁰ Therefore, ethnic nationalities that claim to predate the state are challenging its legitimacy. In simple terms, African countries like Ethiopia are failing at nation building because ethnic identities are strong, highly politicized, and ethnic groups and communities harbor resentment not only towards the present political elite, but for past

²²⁶ Tekle. 31

²²⁷ Ibid. 32

²²⁸ Ottaway. “Nation Building and State Disintegration”, in: Kidane Mengisteab and Cyril Daddieh (eds.) *State Building and Democratization in Africa: Faith, Hope, and Realities*. Praeger Publishers. 1999. 83

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid. 88

injustices as well. Furthermore, the elites at the top also have a lack of will, know how, and resources to foster a common identity through universal, homogenous education and a well-developed administrative system that could make the state a legitimate, and not an oppressive, presence.²³¹ This concept challenges the superiority of democracy in states such as Ethiopia and challenges Ottaway's concept of semi-authoritarianism by design by suggesting that various factors have created the preconditions for semi-authoritarianism by default.

Conclusion

In the African context, democratic governance and democratization pose unforeseen challenges. From this perspective, stable political systems based on dominant one party systems guarantee the capacity of the state to reach quick and decisive decisions under both normal and crisis conditions.²³² "Political competition (democratization) is anathema to many authoritarian regimes, and it also operates like an 'invisible hand,' but is capable of exposing economic inefficiencies, political ineptitude, and other systemic defects of a non-competitive politico-economic system".²³³ Some scholars question the relationship between democratization and systemic factors such as political skepticism, neo-patrimonialism, nation building challenges, and the probability of ethnic violence. They argue that while mature democracies with well-established institutional structures are not prone to conflict, the case with transitional democracies is different. 'Incomplete democratizing states' are unstable because, as in the case of Ethiopia, "political elites can easily mobilize nationalist support for violent conflict in

²³¹ Ibid. 86

²³² Ibid. 64

²³³ Ibid. 74

electoral competition”.²³⁴ In this context, compared to democratization, authoritarianism is equated with relative stability. Ethiopia as a state is engaging in semi-authoritarianism. However, there is convincing evidence that in order to reconcile complex historic legacies, ethnic nationalism, unequal access to resources, development policies favoring one ethnic group over another leads to semi-authoritarianism by default. This of course does not rule out semi-authoritarianism by design, it merely proves the point that the claim is too simplistic to provide a holistic political description of the current political deficit in the Ethiopian system.

²³⁴ Kidane Mengisteab and Cyril Daddieh, “Why State Building Is Still Relevant in Africa and How It Relates to Democratization”, in: *State Building and Democratization in Africa: Faith, Hope, and Realities*.
6

CHAPTER V

SEMI-AUTHORITARIANISM BY DESIGN OR DEFAULT: TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

The organization of democracy, the form in which people are enabled in any society to express their freedom, has to be in accordance with the people's culture, history and development. You can't have democracy like Coca-Cola. It's given, it's in a bottle and we all drink the same kind of Coca-Cola. What kind of democracy is that?

~ Julius Nyerere ~

Introduction

In his brilliant book, *Developing Democracy: Towards Consolidation*, Larry Diamond points out that, democratization in general, and in the third world in particular, is a little understood and complex concept. Academic observers cannot agree on the exact meaning of democracy, nor the number of current democracies, not to mention the conditions needed for democratic consolidation. He further argues that in their review, David Collier and Steven Levitky identify more than 550 subtypes to democracy accumulated in 150 different studies.²³⁵ The ambiguity with the democratic concept is associated with the introduction of democratic institutions into the political environment of countries such as Ethiopia, yet these institutions are subject to severe, authoritarian tendencies. To many academics, including Diamond, it is clear that the “third wave” of democratization was not going to be as smooth a process as initially projected. On the contrary, he points out that the 21st century “could bring a third reverse wave”.²³⁶

²³⁵ Diamond, *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*. 7

²³⁶ Ibid. 2

Semi-authoritarianism as a theory is also a reaction to the fallacy of the democratic 'transition paradigm'. Ottaway builds on Thomas Carothers criticism of the paradigm by coining the term semi-authoritarianism and distinguishing between design and default within the framework. Ottaway de-masks three core assumptions of the transition paradigm. First, she argues that the assumption that any country moving away from dictatorial rule is in transition towards democracy is flawed. The rejection of full dictatorial rule does not automatically mean that a country is on track to democratization. Second, she also rejects the argument that democracy unfolds in three stages – democratic opening, breakthrough and consolidation. Instead, she argues that it is quite possible for a country to stay in a limbo state between democratic opening and breakthrough never reaching democratic consolidation. Third, Ottaway effectively demonstrates that while regular, relatively free and fair elections are important; relying on elections alone to determine democratic commitment can be misleading.

Although Ottaway is on the right track, in her theory of semi-authoritarianism, she ignores two further core criticisms of the transition paradigm. When formulating her argument, and looking at country cases, Ottaway places the considerable weight on the leadership in power. At the same time she neglects to attribute full weight to underlying factors such as political history, institutional legacies, ethnic make-up, socio-cultural traditions, development patterns and other structural features. Ottaway also ignores the limitations facing effective state building. When looking at the theory of semi-authoritarianism it is clear that a political leadership can exploit some of the above mentioned elements. Indeed in the case of Ethiopia, the EPRDF has done so, but at the

same time, when it comes to democracy these same elements can be limiting and overwhelming for any governing authority.

Elements such as the ethnic balancing game, for example, can be highly unpredictable, have and can lead to violence, and there is always a threat of ‘national’ disintegration. Ethiopia is faced with serious state building, and state legitimacy challenges. These challenges take central stage in the country’s political discourse from the local all the way to the national level. The theory of semi-authoritarianism ignores the relationship between the nature of regime changes, and the political patterns that shape and reshape the local political culture. Semi-authoritarianism by design is adept at analyzing the current leadership’s commitment to the democratic process. However, it ignores the underlying structural and political factors that facilitate a significant propensity for authoritarianism.

A Brief Overview

To assess semi-authoritarianism by design in the case of Ethiopia, Ottaway’s guidelines were applied to the literature. Focus was directed at the EPRDF’s approach to the challenges of competitive politics and the limitations on power transfer and power sharing. Although the claim that the current EPRDF government is semi-authoritarian by design is very convincing, a lot of questions remain about how Ethiopia’s past political history and structure have contributed to the current political condition. Just to reiterate some previous observations, by looking at the country’s historic, political, and ethnic legacies, there were strong indications that such elements as political understanding at the ethnic level, dependency theory, Big Man politics, the zero-sum form of politics, as well

as the fragile relationship between instability and nation-building, can overwhelm any government.

Ottaway's theory of semi-authoritarianism is one of many classifications of political systems. Most countries that made democratization commitments in the 1990s are faced with several complex and overlapping challenges. To some extent, both by design and default, these issues prevent democratization as well as obscure the possibilities of accurate democratic progress assessments. In the case of Ethiopia, for example, if current political trends are analyzed, the conclusion can be reached that the current government is semi-authoritarian by design. However, if one dedicates more research to an in depth historical analysis from a political perspective, it becomes clear that Ethiopia is semi-authoritarian by default.

This does not mean that Ottaway's theory is without relevance. However, the theory is broad enough that most current country examples in the third world can be projected on to it, and given the illusion that they fit the pattern. In reality, only analyzing current political trends in any country is like attempting to determine the shape of an iceberg by examining the one-tenth of its volume visible at the surface. Although an in-depth analysis of any country's social, cultural, political, ethnic and developmental past and present can be confusing and overwhelming, it is vitally necessary. For, as the tip of the iceberg cannot exist independently from the rest of its mass, current political trends are a result and reaction to the legacy of past ones.

Theoretical frameworks such as semi-authoritarianism are a step in the right direction at identifying some crucial elements of democratic deficits. Yet an oversimplified identification of a problem warrants a simple solution, which in turn leads

to more complications. Accordingly as the Ethiopian case study demonstrates, Ottaway's theory suffers from ambiguity. Once the concept of semi-authoritarianism by design is refuted by the possibility of default, the term loses a measure of its prescience. Whether one argues in favor of a half empty or half full glass, the main challenge of democratization remains. In the Ethiopian case, this challenge manifests in the clash of state building ideologies, ethnic aspirations, radically diverging views of democracy and democratization among different social structures and the challenges of underdevelopment and exclusion of key ethnic communities.

Conclusion

Clearly, democratization although not altogether unimportant, is not a priority in Ethiopia. It is secondary to the ethnic issue, to regional inequalities and poverty, to limited support and to common understanding of democratization. To come to terms, or at least superficially manage these issues, the constitution drafted by the EPRDF, along with fundamental subsequent policies, were rushed, untested, unclear and full of ambiguity. The new regime created the experiment in 'ethnic federalism', which simply cultivated and heightened ethno-national awareness, grievances and resentments. Ethnic competition became institutionalized to the point that ethnic groups assess political and economic developments from a safety and group preservation perspective. Human rights and ethnic empowerment are determined by the incumbent regime.²³⁷ Those ethnic groups out of power and often targeted for repression quickly fear for their survival while ethnic power-holders may seek to use the state to eliminate the 'ethnic other' or severely impair it. In other words, "ethno political conflicts within states, which can range from

²³⁷ Conteh-Morgan. 97

sporadic incidents of interethnic violence to genocidal massacres, reveal the extent to which ethnic communities are capable of fiercely competing for power and political control because of the benefits and security political victory confers”.²³⁸ Thus, Ethiopia’s spiral into the current form of semi-authoritarian governance, cloaked by democratic language and the existence of some democratic institutions with limited power, can be linked to an absent sense of belonging and a nonexistent moral bond within the community at the national level.

The May 2010 national elections for The House of People’s Representatives as well as Regional State Councils resulted in an overwhelming parliamentary majority for the EPRDF further re-enforcing the semi-authoritarian character of the government. Although the government claims, “the election was peaceful, credible, fair, free and democratic”,²³⁹ the opposition has rejected the results, but the Supreme Court refused a re-run.²⁴⁰ At the same time, Human Rights Watch claims that the election was “undetermined” by voter turnout leading to election,²⁴¹ and point out that opposition leader Birtukan Mideksa has been incarcerated since December 29, 2008.²⁴² The European Union Observation Mission to Ethiopia acknowledged that the elections were “peaceful, calm, with high voter turnout”²⁴³ but was critical of the uneven playing field pointing out that 50 per cent of campaign coverage was given to the ruling party in the

²³⁸ Ibid. 98

²³⁹ 2010 Election Results: The National Board of Ethiopia (NEBE). June 21, 2010. Addis Ababa

²⁴⁰ Tobias Hangmann, *Ethiopia: Elections 2010*. Chatham House.

²⁴¹ Heather Murdock, *Ethiopian Ruling Party Sweeps Preliminary Election Results*. Addis Ababa. May 24, 2010. VOANews.com

²⁴² The International Republican Institute (IRI). <http://www.iri.org>

²⁴³ European Union. Election Observation Mission 2010. www.eueom-ethiopia.org

state-owned media and voiced concern over “weakened voters’ ability to make an informed choice”.²⁴⁴

The 2010 elections certainly saw an even further diminished and repressed opposition virtually disappear from the contest, and the EPRDF triumph suggests that semi-authoritarianism will continue to dominate in the Ethiopian framework. Thus, the main question is whether the Ethiopian state can prevent disintegration. As one Ethiopian put it,

The problems that threaten our country are the cumulative result of years of terror, resentment, neglect, misplaced priorities, and bad leadership. The present leaders lack the wisdom, the credibility, and the legitimacy to bring the nation together. The crisis that Ethiopia faces calls for an understanding of the terrible consequences of the continual military confrontation between the regime and the opposition movements.²⁴⁵

Hence, future research attention should be dedicated to the following questions:

Is there a perpetual ambiguity between the concepts of nation building and legitimate governance?

Can complex ethnic issues in Ethiopia ever yield a government that is viewed as legitimate by most ethnic groups?

Are Ethiopian political challenges overwhelming enough to corrupt any government utilizing any governing ideology?

Can damage done by short and long term restructuring policies adopted by the past three Ethiopian governing regimes be ameliorated or corrected?

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Wolde Dawit Giorgis, “The Power of Decision Making in Post-Revolutionary Ethiopia”, in: *The Political Economy of Ethiopia*. 71

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APPENDIX I.

Five Core Assumptions of the Transition Paradigm as Described by Thomas Carothers:

1. Any country moving away from dictatorial rule can be considered in transition.
2. Democracy unfolds in the following set stages:
 - Democratic opening
 - Democratic breakthrough
 - Democratic consolidation
3. Elections receive determinative importance. In other words, regularly held elections are equated with democracy.
4. Underlying factors such as, economic development, political history, institutional legacies, ethnic make-up, socio-cultural traditions, and other “structural” features will not be a major factor either at the onset or at the outcome of the transition process.
5. Democratic transitions making up the ‘third wave’ are being built on coherent functioning states.

APPENDIX II.

Ethiopia Facts (Information retrieved from BBC – Ethiopia Country Profile
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1072164.stm Retrieved on: April 13, 2011

- **Full name:** Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
- **Population:** 84.9 million (UN, 2010)
- **Capital:** Addis Ababa
- **Area:** 1.13 million sq km (437,794 sq miles)
- **Major languages:** Amharic, Oromo, Tigrinya, Somali
- **Major religions:** Christianity, Islam
- **Life expectancy:** 56 years (men), 59 years (women) (UN)
- **Monetary unit:** 1 Birr = 100 cents
- **Main exports:** Coffee, hides, oilseeds, beeswax, sugarcane
- **GNI per capita:** US \$330 (World Bank, 2009)

APPENDIX III.

Ethiopian Political System and Election Results (Data procured from the African Elections Database <http://africanelections.tripod.com>)

- **Current President of Ethiopia:** Girma Wolde-Giorgis (Since 08 October 2001; elected 2001, re-elected 2007). The President is elected by the House of People's Representatives for a 6-year term.
- **Prime Minister:** Meles Zenawi (TPLF) (EPRDF) (Since 22 August 1995; designated interim president in 1991 following ouster of previous regime, elected 1995, re-elected 2000 and 2005) The Prime minister is designated by the party in power following legislative elections.
- **Federal Parliamentary Assembly** is bicameral
 - House of Federation is composed of 108 seats. Members are chosen by regional state councils to serve 5-year terms.
 - House of People's Representatives is composed of 547 seats. Members are elected by direct popular vote in single-member constituencies using the first-past-the-post (simple majority) system; members serve 5-year terms.
- **Political Situation since 1889**
 - 1889-1931 Absolute Monarchy
 - 1931-1936 Traditional Monarchy (In practice, still an absolute monarchy)
 - 1936-1941 Italian Occupation
 - 1941-1955 Traditional Monarchy (In practice, still an absolute monarchy)
 - 1955-1974 Traditional Monarchy
 - 1974-1984 Military Regime
 - 1984-1987 Military Regime and De-Facto One Party State under the WPE
 - 1987-1991 One Party State under the WPE
 - 1991-1995 Transitional Government/Multiparty Transition
 - 1995- Present, Theoretically an Emerging Democracy under the EPRDF
- **Next Scheduled Presidential Election:** 2013
- **Next Scheduled House of Federation Election:** 2010
- **Next Scheduled House of People's Representatives Election:** 2010
- **Political Parties:**
 - AAPO - All Amhara People's Organization
 - AEUP - All Ethiopia Unity Party
 - ANDM - Amhara National Democratic Movement
 - ANDO - Argoba National Democratic Organization
 - ANDP - Afar National Democratic Party
 - BGPDUF - Benishangul-Gumuz People's Democratic Unity Front
 - EDL - Ethiopian Democratic League
 - EDUP - Ethiopian Democratic Unity Party
 - ESFDP - Ethiopian Social Democratic Federal Party
 - GPDM - Gambela People's Democratic Movement
 - HNL - Harari National League

- OFDM - Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement
- ONC - Oromo National Congress
- OPDO - Oromo People's Democratic Organization
- RE: MDSJ - Rainbow Ethiopia: Movement for Democracy and Social Justice
- SEPDC - Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Coalition
- SEPDM - South Ethiopia People's Democratic Movement
- SMPDUO - Sheko and Mezenger People's Democratic Unity Organization
- SPDP - Somali People's Democratic Party
- TPLF - Tigray People's Liberation Front
- UEDP-Medhin - United Ethiopia Democratic Party-Medhin
- WPE - Worker's Party of Ethiopia

➤ **Coalitions:**

- Coalition for Unity and Democracy Contested the 2005 House of People's Representatives Election. Member parties include the All Ethiopia Unity Party (AEUP), Ethiopian Democratic League (EDL), Rainbow Ethiopia: Movement for Democracy and Social Justice (RE: MDSJ), and the United Ethiopia Democratic Party-Medhin (UEDP-Medhin).
- Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) Contested the 1994 Constituent Assembly Election and House of People's Representatives Elections held in 1995, 2000, and 2005. Member parties include the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), South Ethiopia People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM), and the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO).
- United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF) Contested the 2005 House of People's Representatives Election. Member parties include the All Amhara People's Organization (AAPPO), Ethiopian Democratic Unity Party (EDUP), Ethiopian Social Democratic Federal Party (ESDFP), Oromo National Congress (ONC), and the Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Coalition (SEPDC).

05 June 1994 Constituent Assembly Elections (Election was boycotted by several opposition political parties)

- Registered Voters: Data unavailable
- Voter Turnout: Data unavailable

Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)	484 Seats
Others	63 Seats
Total	547 Seats

07 May, 18 and 28 June 1995 House of People's Representatives Elections (Election was boycotted by many opposition groups, including the Oromo Liberation Front)

- Registered Voters: 21,337,379
- Voter Turnout: 20,068,508 (94.1%)

Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)	483 Seats
Independents	8 Seats
Others	46 Seats
Unconfirmed	11 Seats
Total	548 Seats

14 May/31 August 2000 House of People's Representatives Elections (In the Somali Region, elections were held on 31 August 2000)

- Registered Voters: 21,834,806
- Voter Turnout: 19,607,841 (89.8%)

Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)	481 Seats
Oromo Peoples' Democratic Organization (OPDO) → 183	
Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) → 146	
Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM) → 112	
Tigray People's Liberation Front → 40	
EPRDF – Affiliated Parties	37 Seats
Others	16 Seats
Independents	13 Seats
Total	547 Seats

15 May/21 August 2005 House of People's Representatives Election

- Registered Voters: 25,605,851 (Registered voter figures exclude the Somali Region. Voter registration in that region took place in July 2005, but figures are not available. Elections were conducted in the Somali Region on 21 August 2005.)
- Voter Turnout: Data Unavailable

Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)	327 Seats
Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD)	109 Seats
United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF)	52 Seats
Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement (OFDM)	11 Seats
Benishangul-Gumuz People's Democratic Unity Front (BGPDUF)	8 Seats
Gambella People's Democratic Movement (GPDM)	3 Seats
Sheko and Mezenger People's Democratic Unity Organization (SMPDUO)	1 Seat
Somali People's Democratic Party (SPDP)	23 Seats
Argoba National Democratic Organization (ANDO)	1 Seat
Independent	1 Seat
Vacant	2 Seats
Total	547 Seats

APPENDIX IV.

Official Results of the 23rd May 2010 General Election Results based on the data released by the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NRBE). Data was released on June 21, 2010.

The House of People's Representatives (HPR)

The Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)	499 Seats
The Somali Peoples' Democratic Party (SPDP)	24 Seats
The Benishangul Gumuz Peoples Democratic Party (BGPDP)	9 Seats
The Afar National Democratic Party (ANDP)	8 Seats
The Gambela People's Unity Democratic Movement (GPUDM)	3 Seats
The Harari National League (HNL)	1 Seat
The Argoba People Democratic Organization (APDO)	1 Seat
The Ethiopian Federal Democratic Organization (APDO)	1 Seat
The Ethiopian Federal Democratic Unity Forum (Medrek)	1 Seat
Independent	1 Seat
<i>Total Number of seats in the House of People's Representatives</i>	<i>547 Seats</i>

The Regional State Councils (RSC)

Tigray	The Tigray's Liberation Front (TPLF-EPRDF)	152 Seats
Afar	The Afar National Democratic Party (ANDP)	93 Seats
	The Argoba People's Democratic Organization (APDO)	3 Seats
Amhara	The Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM-EPRDF)	294 Seats
Oromia	The Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO-EPRDF)	537 Seats
Somali	The Somali People's Democratic Party (SPDP)	186 Seats
Benishangul Gumuz	The Benishangul Gumuz Peoples Democratic Party (BGPDP)	98 Seats
	The All Ethiopian Unity Organization (AEUO)	1 Seat
SNNP Seats	The Southern Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Movement (GPUDM)	156
Gambella Seats	The Gambella People's Unity Democratic Movement (GPUDM)	156
Hareri	The Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO-EPRDF)	18 Seats
	The Harari National League (HNL)	18 Seats
<i>Total number of seats in 9 Regional Stats</i>		<i>1,904 Seats</i>

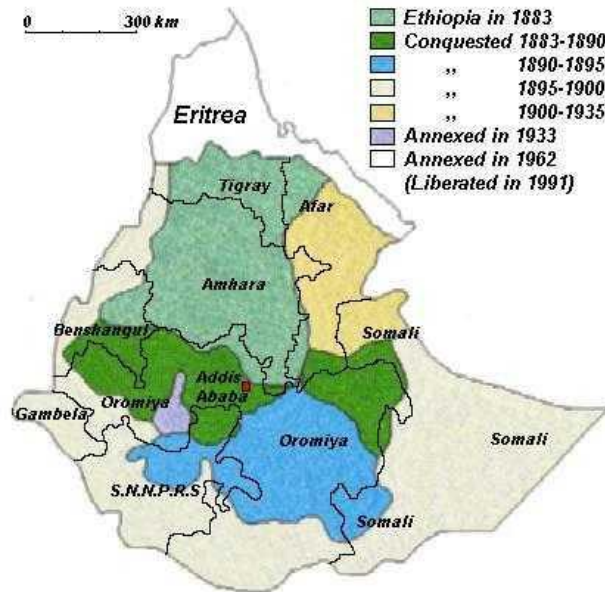
APPENDIX V.

Ethiopia Freedom House Rating (data retrieved from Freedom House Organization
<http://www.freedomhouse.org>)

Ethiopia's 2010 Freedom Status: Partly Free

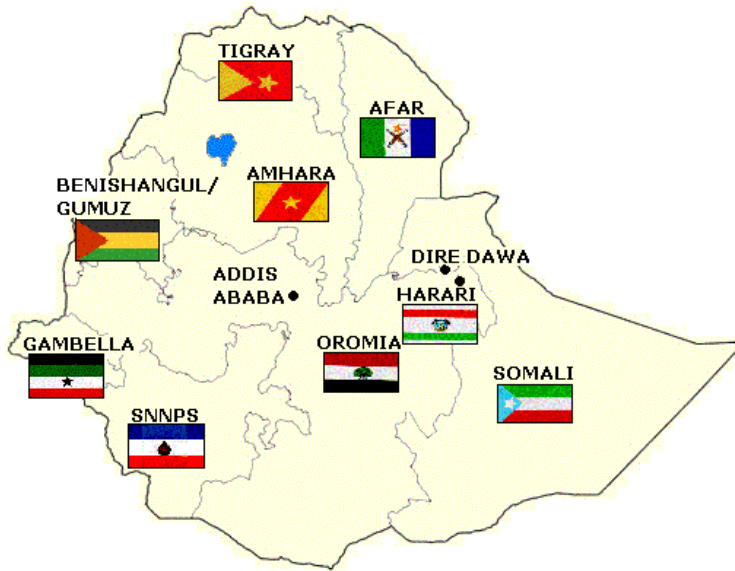
APENDIX VI.

Map of Ethiopian Expansionism



APENDIX VII.

Map of Ethiopian Federalism (map retrieved from Abbay Media – ‘The Ethiopian Information Bank’ <http://abbaymedia.com>)



APENDIX VIII.

Organizational Structure of the Five Levels of Government of The Federal Democratic of Ethiopia (Flow Chart recreated based on Azeze, Fecade's model in *Ethiopia: The Challenge of Democracy from Bellow*)

