

Political conjectures about Transition from Authoritarianism to Democracy and Tasks for Constructing Integrative Federalism in Contemporary Ethiopia¹

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Introduction

In order to understand the trajectory of transition from authoritarianism to democracy, we need to look at the roots of the two contradictory world views. The most noted right wing philosopher of authoritarianism is the English thinker, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) who unflinchingly promoted tyranny by contending in his seminal work, *Leviathan* that humans are by their very nature selfish and cannot live together in peace and harmony and that they need an authoritarian government for their own good. Hobbes castigated man without authoritarian government as a creature that is condemned to live a short 'solitary, poor, nasty and brutish, life.'² The solution for him is constructing a form of government powerful enough to hold a person's brutal yearnings in check. This, he argued calls for an absolute control where a ruler wields unlimited power over his subjects. Hobbes leaves no space for people to exercise special rights and freedoms because he was afraid it would lead to revolt which would be disastrous for everybody. He envisages the exchange of natural freedom for absolute rule as a social compact, requiring an abandonment of all claims on individual rights that humans possess by nature

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and voluntary capitulation to any decree enacted by the sovereign.³ It should not be surprising that Emperor Haile Selassie embraced this philosophy wholeheartedly though in later years he was forced by circumstances to cede some power but not enough which triggered a revolution of rising expectations and the fall of his modernizing autocracy in 1974.⁴

Right-wing authoritarianism is an ideological stand identified by three correlated attitudinal and behavioral attributes.

1. High degree of submissiveness to the authorities by citizens.
2. Boundless aggressiveness directed by rulers against dissidents.
3. Demands for a high degree of adherence to the traditions and social mores that are perceived to be endorsed by established authorities.

One can enumerate four axioms of the authoritarian regime. They are: Upholding: state power as the fundamental force that brings about social integration and appropriate application of authority. For this philosophy, the State is an institution that stands above all other forms of social organization. As such it is expected to exert control and expect obedience to it. Failing that violence may be used if need be. The general society is controlled by a minority group or philosopher kings that as long ago as the 3rd century BC Plato suggested. It also boldly proclaims that the rule of the majority is not real, that it is, in reality, an illusion. The philosophy claims further that Minority Rule is the Best and that the select minority are endowed with Wisdom: That wisdom is what Plato assigned to a small group of selected intellectual elites who through the investigation of nature and society have discovered the right laws governing historical processes. These processes are expected to be endowed with competence, experience in government and talent for leadership.

Left Wing Authoritarianism: crafted by Russia's Vladimir Lenin, and China's Mao Zedong are on the opposite pole. For Marxist-Leninists and adherents of Mao Zedong Thought, violence with which order is secured is ubiquitous. Politics without violence is so vacuous in their view that Mao boldly stated that power flows from the politically superior to the politically inferior; and that "political power comes out of the barrel of a gun."⁵

The two contrasting philosophies of the right and the left evoke continuous debate. What is more important, however, is their implementation in actual political life. It was Karl Marx himself who made an epigrammatic statement in his thesis on Feuerbach: “Philosophers have ...interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.”⁶ But we should not forget that philosophers always have their practitioners waiting in the wings! In this paper, I am more interested in practical implementation than in theoretical debate. Theoretical exposition serves only an analytical purpose: it creates a framework for a historic-sociological analysis of the transformation of a real authoritarian system into a democratic one. Authoritarian regimes have dramatically increased in the world in recent decades. Considered in terms of timeline, following the fall of Fascism and Nazism at the close of the 2nd World War, and later the implosion of Stalinism, authoritarianism did not dissipate. It only appeared in a new form in countries that gained independence from colonialism in the Global South. Meles Zenawi’s TPLF is one of them.

Hobbes nemesis is Jean Jacques Rousseau who, in the opening line of his famous book, *The Social Contract*, stresses “Man is born free, but is everywhere in chains.”⁷ In this, Rousseau contradicts the already established Christian doctrine of man as a villain because Christian theology asserts that humans are innately evil on account of inheriting Adam’s original sin. Rousseau clearly rejected Hobbes’ assertion that humankind at its core is ‘bad’ and instead suggested that humans are born ‘good’ though they are corrupted by society. In his book, *Emile*, he stated: “Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the author of nature, but everything degenerates in the hands of man.”⁸ He argued, that when they are born, humans are not only free; they are endowed with ‘innate goodness,’ and compassion. Contrary to Hobbes’ suggestion that the sovereign is divinely ordained and omnipotent, Rousseau claimed that “one who thinks himself the master of others, remains a greater slave than they.”^{9 10} Rousseau was egalitarian par excellence. He believed that because all humans are supposed to be free and equal by reason of their nature, they should remain free and equal under the state. As opposed to giving precedence to the sovereign and his hangers-on,

the aristocratic classes, Rousseau argued in his book, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (1755): "it is plainly contrary to the law of nature that the privileged few should gorge themselves with superfluities, while the starving multitude are in want of the bare necessities of life"¹¹. For Rousseau, each individual possesses the right to political participation in perfect equality with others such that the state that is established with his participation should enable him to partake in the common good. For him, the right to freedom is the *sine qua non* of the existing state. It should not be surprising that these bold ideas gave impetus to both the French and the American revolutions. As he might have hoped, both ultimately evolved into a contemporary liberal democracy.

In opposition to the authoritarian axioms, described earlier, the democratic axioms state that the state is socially created, that it represents the will of the society as a result of which the citizen's main attribute becomes the right to define social mores and to establish the type of governance it believes is just. For the democrat, the state should be created by a constitution. In such an arrangement the competence of state and its powers have to be clearly defined. The competence of the organs also needs delimitation. It should be made clear which aspects of social life are to be controlled by the state and what aspects remain residual and reside with the individual. In peoples' democracy, the state is linked to the society by intermediary bodies, such as civil societies, political parties, and associations, organized by various groups of citizens wishing to protect their cherished interests and to promote their ideals. Individual citizens must be equipped with inalienable rights belonging to them as persons, both as "human beings" and as "members of society." The most important among these are freedom of thought and freedom of speech. Citizens should also be allowed to form associations, hence the right to an unencumbered civil society.

The democratic ethos asserts that the self-sustaining propensity of society takes precedence over the organizing activity of the state, such that society is the ultimate source of power. The authoritarian philosophy gives precedence to the supremacy of the state over society and conceives of the

existence of a state as an essential variable of any organized social activity. It assumes that state power comes into existence either in the structure of power itself or in a strong commitment to power that can be amassed and when needed used by those in ruling position. It construes state power as a variable that is never a product of social contract but rather one that is imposed.

Transition from Authoritarianism to Democracy

An organic relationship between state and society is identified theoretically and philosophically in two ways: one is authoritarian, and the other is democratic.¹² These opposing philosophies advanced by medieval scholars provide answers that are poles apart regarding two questions: The first question is which of the dual entities that are globally ubiquitous: society or the state, that should have an upper hand in power relations; and two what is the source of state power?¹³ In a democratic construct, the self-organizing predisposition of society takes precedence over the power driven organizing pursuit of the state, such that society is the ultimate source of power. The authoritarian hypothesis insists on the supremacy of the state over society which it portrays as a requisite of structured social norms. For the latter philosophy, power is self-sustaining and flows from the configuration of power itself or emanates from the strong will to power which mounts up and manifests itself through the efforts of gifted personalities or well organized social classes and elites. For advocates of authoritarianism, state power is not an outcome of social contract. Rather it is an exclusive special variable that is enforced from above.

Jacques Rousseau greatly contributed to the ideas now enshrined in liberal democracy as long ago as the 1760s. For Rousseau, the general will, which is collectively held by citizens aiming at bringing about what he calls "the common good," should dictate what is to be done by the state. In his *Social Contract* (1762), he argued that freedom and authority are not contradictory, as long as laws are promulgated by the will of the citizens who will be obliged to obey it. For Rousseau, as a member of the political community, the individual citizen is only obeying himself.¹⁴ Democratic

philosophy was also persuasively advanced in the works of a Britain's academe John Stuart Mill. In his treatise *On Liberty* (1859) Mill contended on utilitarian grounds that a person's liberty cannot be legitimately denied by any authority including a government, an organized society, or a group of individuals barring a situation in which the person's action causes damage to others.¹⁵ Mill went on and proposed basic freedoms detrimental to democracy, chief among which are freedom of association freedom of thought and unencumbered exchange of ideas. Mill also vigorously argued against legal restrictions on the expression of individual opinion and the freedom of thought. It is important to note that Mill was the first European thinker to advance a powerful argument in support of gender equality.¹⁶

In their state-building process, most newly independent countries paid lip service to the establishment of democratic institutions; in fact, with the exception of a few, all ultimately succumbed to authoritarianism. They were, for the most part, surreptitious and despotic. The leaders of such regimes had good reasons to hide their nature. They could imagine the body of Hitler dead and burning in his Berlin bunker¹⁷ And Mussolini's mutilated body strung upside down on a gibbet boorishly jeered by anti-Fascist crowds.¹⁸ Considering the above events, the new despots had realized that dictatorship in its naked form and personality cult by totalitarian leaders, would no longer assure sustained authoritarian control. They thus tempered their authoritarian tendencies by coating cleverly crafted systems with a palliative of constitutionalism. They ascribe their rise to power to inexorable circumstances and promise to prepare the way for the eventual restoration of democracy which the former regimes had corrupted and destroyed. For many who took them for their words, it has become "waiting for godot!"

All neo-authoritarian rulers of the global south including Meles Zenawi dangled democracy as a bait and an umbrella to shelter the true nature of their authoritarian control.¹⁹ The developmental state model and the revolutionary democracy policy Meles pursued with the Leninist democratic centralism laid bare his hidden agenda.²⁰ Lucky enough for Meles, the Chinese came to his rescue by investing billions of dollars and building infrastructure that brought

about fast paced and staggering economic development in the decade and a half before his death so much so that he was bold enough to challenge the West in their capital's fora that development and democracy do not necessarily go together.²¹ All that development, however, could not hide the wide gap that had arisen between his corrupt officials and their hangers on who became millionaire overnight and the abject poverty that could be gleaned in from the thousands of jobless youth in the capital that had been reduced to abject poverty, pauperism, and victims of substance abuse.²²

In almost all the States which had become independent or emerged through renewal following the Second World War, party dictatorships with unrestricted powers emerged attiring themselves with a democratic facade. In many, parliamentary institutions were barred and the powers of the judiciary extensively curtailed. In all cases, opposition parties were ruthlessly and systematically suppressed.²³ The leaders' justification for turning their country to dictatorship is to guard against subversion by extremists and terrorist sympathizers and to maintain the independence and territorial integrity of the State they administer. They also claim they are attempting to accelerate economic growth and improve the standard of living of their populous.²⁴ In such countries, the spectrum of forms and styles of political organization and operation is very broad. Even though legislative assemblies pretend to perform normative functions, their activities are largely window-dressing.²⁵ The effective leadership in such countries are to exhibit democratic forms which they claim is aimed at evolving true democracy. To win international support, they add, the substance to the form and evolve what Edward Shils calls "tutelary democracy."²⁶ In all such regimes, one party emerges to be dominant while others are relatively tolerated in order to display an impression of serious effort at liberalization and widening the space for competition. The ploy of such regimes is sophisticated, and the dominant party is made to look less monolithic since it incorporates several divergent elements. But in all cases, top leaders of the dominant party always occupy the highest posts. And charismatic leadership is heavily relied upon. In some cases, the degree of control is so concentrated and so blatant that it is hard to

apply the term "tutelary democracy" to them. In actual fact, it is more accurate to refer to them simply as authoritarian.

In a system run by an authoritarian leadership, liberty is circumscribed, and parliamentary institutions are non-existent and where they exist are simply rubber stamps. Power is monopolized by a coterie of individuals constituting a small group, comprising mainly of military leaders, supported by bureaucrats. Totalitarianism is even worse in the level of its coercion and control. It is a form of government that permits no individual freedom and that seeks to subordinate all aspects of individual life to the authority of the state. A totalitarian regime controls the life of the citizen from the cradle to the grave. The Spartans of Greece in 800 B.C. and the Nazis of Germany in the 1940s for example used eugenics to determine what kind of children should be reared and when inmates died, in the case of the latter in concentration camps like Auschwitz, where they were gassed and cremated. Hitler did not even allow people with disabilities to live for fear; they might breed citizens with genetic defects.

Not coincidentally the term 'totalitarian' was coined in the early 1920s by none other than the Italian Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini who talked of his regime as being *totalitario* further describing it as "all within the state, none outside the state, and none against the state". By the beginning of the Second World War, totalitarianism had become synonymous with unqualified, repressive single-party regimes. Hitler's Third Reich as well as Spain's, Japan's and Portugal's regimes soon joined Italian Fascism, as totalitarian regimes of the right. Parallel with them were also totalitarianisms of the left characterized by the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin. Totalitarianism of both the right and the left were nurtured in Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler, in Communist China under Mao Zedong, and in North Korea under Kim IL Sung. Both types wielded total control over society and attempted to regulate the behaviour of institutions, organizations and citizens subordinating all of them to the State. The regime is sustained by a single mass political party, a monopolized mass media and a servile judiciary.

Democracy

This brings us to the explanation of the nature of democracy as a political ideal. The etymological origin of the term *democracy* is Greek and denotes rule by citizens.²⁷ It is derived from *demokratos* a combination of *demos* ("people") and *kratos* ("rule") and denotes the political systems that started to exist in Athens and some other Greek city-states five hundred years before the Christian era.²⁸ Democracy has its own prerequisites. One is equality. A democratic concept is based on the principle that all people are equal and all individuals ought to have equal opportunities and rights and have equal status without any discrimination on the bases of class, gender, creed, sex, religion, ethnic affiliation, and language.²⁹ Second is, it is governed by the Rule of law.³⁰ In a democracy, no one, not even an absolute monarch, an enlightened despot, a tyrant, a tin-pot dictator, a Prime Minister or President is above the law it means that everyone must obey the law and be held accountable if he or she transgresses it. Anyone who contravenes this rule will be punished by law. Thus, democracy insists on parceling equally among people in governing and in being governed.

Accountability is another key obligation in Democracy. It requires not only accountability but also responsibility from all elected and appointed officials' for their actions.³¹ Respect for human rights is another requisite because it is hard to imagine of democracy without the prevalence of human rights.³² A democratic government has to ensure freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of assembly, the right to one's own religion, and the right to education.³³ Most democratic governments have a bill of rights in their constitutional frameworks. When a bill of rights is written into a country's constitution, the courts should have full powers to enforce the rights.³⁴ Democratic governments are also characterized by their commitment to political tolerance.

Though democracy is sometimes described as the "rule of the majority," the designation is not right. Democracy is not simply the rule of the majority. It is "the rule of the majority and the protection of the minority." In a democracy, majority tyranny is not tenable. The opposition in a democracy is

not treated as an enemy as in authoritarian societies. Meles had no qualms in putting opposition leaders who beat him in the polls in jail! In a democracy, the opposition is treated with respect because it is potentially the government of tomorrow.³⁵ Diversity is respected in democracy because disallowing diversity is tantamount to destroying democracy.³⁶ In a democracy, there is no room for abuse of power. Corruption should be checked, and government officials should not be allowed to take kickbacks or dip into state finances.³⁷ In a democracy, political power comes "through the ballot box" not "through the barrel of the gun!" So, fair elections are a must.³⁸ It is understood that in such arrangement, there are both winners and losers and both incumbents and the leaders of the opposition parties have to be ready to accept the results and abide by the law.

Democracy is meaningless without freedom.³⁹ Freedom should include economic freedom. Private ownership of property and business is protected by a democratic government.⁴⁰ Citizens are allowed to choose their own work, create or join an existing labour union.⁴¹ Where government is of the opinion that state enterprises are necessary because they are too crucial to the livelihood of the people and should not be left to the vagaries of profit (e.g., electricity and water) state intrusion could be made but minimally.⁴² Note that even mature democracies like Canada and Australia have crown corporations, in particular for water and electricity utilities. requires not a dictat, but citizen participation. The participation takes many forms and includes running for elections, voting in elections, debating issues, participating in a civic meeting, joining private voluntary associations, critiquing his/her own government⁴³ Since each citizen cannot be in a position to make major political decisions on a daily basis, party systems fulfill the requirement. But in elections, there should be more than one party present because otherwise, it is not a democracy but a sham. A one-party system is nothing but a dictatorship.⁴⁴ The Global South has, unfortunately, had its lion's share of this phenomenon until very recently.

Democratic systems require transparency. For a government to be accountable, the people must be aware of what it does at every stage.⁴⁵

Holding public meetings to explain what is aimed to be done and asking for feedback from the citizenry, are essential. A free press is needed, and information should be available at all times. Elections have to be conducted with a secret ballot to ensure citizens' individual discretion.⁴⁶ Democratic systems have to hold regular elections and should avoid intimidation and retaliation by those who lose the contest.⁴⁷ Theories on democratization⁴⁸ fall into two: macro-structural approach and micro individual approach. The macro-structural approach focuses on objective realities such as social and economic frameworks. Micro-individual approach focuses on political actors and their actions *Vis a Vis*, the citizen. Some scholars among whom is O'Donnell employ a structuralist approach. The latter in his seminal monograph *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism* focuses on economic development and class conflict as primary variables.⁴⁹ Other scholars disagree. They take the individual approach. In their analyses, they stress the behaviour of particular individual leaders. Though the latter group does not contend that structural constraints are of marginal importance, they tend to downplay structural variables as explanatory variables.

The structuralists also assert that even elites who occupy the reins of power in an authoritarian state may be motivated to dismantle the system they helped construct on account of feeling unease with future developments which may overtake them and leave them behind. According to them, this concern can be as powerful as the desire for immediate gratification.⁵⁰ Other scholars tend to agree with the micro approach because they reject the implicit assumption that social and economic conditions are more important in modernization.⁵¹ What all of them agree on is that domestic factors play a predominant role in the transition to democracy⁵². Some look for an urgent call of the study of domestic factors by analyzing the behavior of individual decision makers and by emphasizing the structural indeterminacy of the transition from authoritarian rule to democracy. Both approaches have a critical problem. A critical problem in the micro approach is that no one can precisely figure out if personality influences political outcomes or individual political actors are simply emerging phenomena.⁵³

Established orthodox economic theorists on political change have argued that there is sound correlation between the level of economic development and democratization.⁵⁴ They assume there is a unilinear relationship between socio-economic development and democratization. Nevertheless, economic factors might not be a sufficient cause for development and democratization.⁵⁵ At the beginning of reform, what matters most is the search for preferable alternatives. One can assume that an authoritarian regime will not be transformed unless it is presented with a preferable and feasible alternative. The first problem to be tackled in the transition to democracy is the tricky attempt to institutionalize uncertainty without threatening the interests of those who still have the capacity to reverse the ongoing process. The solution is settling on democratic compromise and evolving liberal institutions.⁵⁶

The role of civil society in transition to democracy has been analyzed by many scholars, who call the phenomenon corporatism. Corporatism is an arrangement of institutional nature linking the organized interests of civil society with the decision making structures of the state."⁵⁷ It allows diverse interests of civil society to indulge in politics without winning political office through elections. Scholars have identified two kinds of corporatism: state corporatism and societal corporatism.⁵⁸ In a situation in which the corporate status originates from independent societal institutions that are established *de jure*, some scholars refer to them as societal corporatism. If on the other hand corporate status flows downwards or is granted from above, the organizations themselves are created by the state, and are dependent on the will of the state. Hence, they indicate in this case a characteristic of state corporatism. At the initial stages, as they rise up to the occasion of governing, reformers are faced by increased social and political pressures. But the reforming regimes' primary concern should always be to prevent an erosion of the new administration's political and economic base.⁵⁹

What is federalism?

Federalism is a political system with a mode of organization that unites separate states within an overarching political system such as to allow each to maintain its own fundamental political authority. Federalism guarantees that basic policies be decided upon and implemented through negotiation, so that all the members joining the system can share in the making and executing of resolutions. Federal principles hold a combination of self-rule and shared rule.⁶⁰ In the broadest sense, federalism involves the bond between individuals, groups, and polities in an enduring but restricted union, in such a way as to provide for the vigorous pursuit of shared interests while maintaining the respective integrities of all groups. In other words, as a political principle, the concept has to do with the constitutional diffusion of power so that the constituting components in a federal arrangement share in the processes of collective policy-making and administration by right, while the activities of the common government are run in such a way as to maintain each group's authenticities. Federal systems constitutionally dispense power among general and constituent governing bodies in a move designed to protect the weak against the strong.

In federal systems, fundamental policy procedure is made and implemented through negotiation such that all constituent units can partake in the system's decision-making process and in the execution of powers. The political principles that define federal systems emphasize the primacy of bargaining, consultation, and coordination among several power centers; they embody the virtues of diffused power centers as a means for safeguarding individual and civil liberties.⁶¹ Federalism differs from confederalism, in a fundamental way.⁶² In a confederation, there is no periphery and centre. The arrangement refers to an organization which consists of a number of parties or groups united in an alliance or league keeping their sovereignties. Federation also differs from devolution because that kind of collaboration can take place only within a unitary state, in which the regional level is subordinate to the central.⁶³ Major examples of a federation are found in

Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, India, Mexico, Russia, Switzerland and the United States of America.

Federalism is best for integrating diverse nations, ethnicities or combatant parties, all of whom might entertain a fear of control by an exceedingly powerful center or by a hostile outside power. There are, however, skeptics of federal prescriptions for fear that increased regional autonomy may ultimately lead to secession or implosion of the nation as happened in the Soviet Union.⁶⁴ In some countries, federalization proposals have failed in part because of fear that the federal borders could end up being the same as the ones that the fighting parties have originally carved out. This was, in fact, the case with the secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia.⁶⁵ Furthermore, federations such as those of Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia led to disintegration as soon as it became possible to dissolve the union or to agitate for secession.

Political science research shows that there are at least four contending theoretical constructs that encourage the creation of federal systems. First are ideologically oriented theories, which hold that a greater degree of conceptual commitment is a key in federating. Second are cultural theories, which hold that federal institutions are more likely to be embraced in societies with racially or ethnically fragmented citizens. Third are social arrangement theories, which suggest that federalism is created as a means of a bargain between powers at the center and at a periphery, where the center is not strong enough to dwarf the periphery, and the periphery is not formidable enough to secede from the center. Fourth are infrastructural theories, which believe that federalism is likely to be born when the subunits of a potential federation have hitherto highly developed infrastructures. Such states have advanced institutions put in place and possess constitutional, parliamentary, and administrative capacities that are formidable.

In Canada, there is such a commitment to a working federal system that the Federal Government has established the "Forum of Federations" as an international linkage for exchange of top-level practices among federalizing nations. The Forum of Federations is headquartered in Ottawa and hosts

Australia, Brazil, Canada, Ethiopia, Germany, India, Mexico, Nigeria, and Switzerland. Out of this ten cluster of states, it is only Ethiopia that is federated by ethnicity and linguistic configurations and also the only one that provides "the right of self-determination up to and including secession". Owing to these eccentric characteristics, there are more chances to break up and disintegration in Ethiopia.⁶⁶

After carefully checking the known federalisms in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Germany, India, Mexico, Russia, Switzerland and the United States of America and attempting to figure out which federal system Ethiopia should emulate, the author found that only Canada and India fit the bill. Switzerland is interesting, but it is not exactly a federation but a confederation of Cantons. The U.S. cannot be an example. American federalism was voluntarily established by sovereign states that had a common interest of guarding against an encroachment of former colonial powers in North America: namely, the United Kingdom, France, and Spain. Two systems, Canadian and Indian federalisms are found to be best, and out of the two, India is preferable and will be analyzed in more detail below.

In Canada, the peripheral governments referred to as provinces share powers directly from the constitution. For historical and political reasons, Québec has been granted some unique powers even during the colonial period with regard to language, education, and law. This was necessitated by the fact that while the rest of Canada is steeped in the tradition of Britain, Québec is more oriented towards France, its founder that planted the French Canadians in North America as "*Habitants*" or "*Colons*". The Quebecois use the French civil law which obviously comes from France as against the English Common Law. Due to the dominance of Catholicism in Québec which is also a residue of France, Catholic controlled education is practiced as against Protestant denominational pedagogy as is the case in the rest of Canada. The Canadian federation also has territories that do not enjoy the same federal rights as the ten constituent provinces most of which are found in the North and are mostly inhabited by indigenous people.⁶⁷In Canada, the system of federalism is structured in such a way that division of powers is clearly stated as regards

the federal parliament and the provincial governments. The Constitution Act of Canada was promulgated under Pierre Elliot Trudeau's Prime Ministership in 1982. It replaced the British North America Act of 1867.⁶⁸ In this new arrangement, explicit powers are allotted to the legislatures. Section 91 of the constitution, for example, describes federal authority in detail whereas Section 92 defines provincial powers.⁶⁹ Residual powers are left to the federal government. Nevertheless, when conflict arises between the two levels, they settle the matter by discussion and consensus. Areas of disagreement include legislation regarding the economy, taxation, and natural resources. In the Canadian federal structure, the territories of Canada found in the North and mostly populated by First Nations or aboriginal people are subordinate to the federal government and can exercise only what is delegated to them by Ottawa.⁷⁰

The genesis of Indian Federalism

India is not only the largest working democracy; it is also the world's largest federation in terms of size. Federal India has 29 states and seven union territories: a total of 36 units. Each state of India has its own legislative assembly and ministerial structure. Each state is proud of its traditions and competes with its neighbours in economic development and social programmes. Similar to Canada, India entrusts residual powers to the central federal government equipping it with more puissance so that it can deal with dissident groups competently if a situation that threatens the integrity of the union arises. By law, the President of India upon advice from the Prime Minister, has the prerogative to dismiss an elected state government. State boundaries can also be altered by parliamentary vote.

As India moves steadily towards replacing China as the world's most populous country, its future prospects will drastically depend on its ability to resolve the tensions, however small, of federalism, to galvanize its resources to the full, and to create a road map through which all its regions will partake in the mainstream of development process that is currently moving the nation towards the status of a superpower. In power configurations, India is destined

to compete with the U.S.A, China, and Russia as a great power and regional hegemon within the next two decades.

India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, had stressed in his tract drafted while in British jail during the Second World War, that his country's unity should be unchallengeable. He claimed that this unity is firmly rooted in the cultural practices of diversity and tolerance with which the people of India had lived from time immemorial. Despite that though, there were always other tendencies within the broad nationalist movement that either emphasized ethnic affiliations and local identities or, conversely, those who saw India in more monolithic terms. This is starkly similar to Ethiopia today.⁷¹ In the meantime, since independence was achieved 72 years ago, the gradual emergence of Indian power in the world, together with the impact of nationally orientated pedagogical and cultural institutions have spawned a growing sense of Indian unity within the federation they have forged.

Historically, India had never been under unified political control before the advent of British colonialism although there had been epochs when strong dynasties swayed control over vast areas. This was particularly true during the times of the Mauryan emperors who dominated north and central India in the third and fourth centuries BC, and yet again in the 16th and 17th centuries AD when the Mughal emperors had done the same. Both had penetrated the southern and eastern parts of the subcontinent as well, but never brought the whole country under central control.⁷² This is again similar to Ethiopia from the Axumite kingdom to the present. With the exception of the five years Fascist Italy's occupation, Ethiopia was never colonized. Surely, there were times when northern, central and southern Ethiopia were under one banner as for example during the pre-Gragan and post-Gragan periods in the 15th century and the Menelik to the Haile Selassie rules down to the fall of the Derg regime in 1991⁷³. The Mauryan Ashoka and the Mughal Akbar periods in India fitted Nehru's paradigm of Indian rulers espousing diversity as the basis of their imperial control. On occasion, political order was provided on a regional basis, sometimes on a large scale but sometimes not. Routine and habitual social life was delimited by the multifaceted hierarchies of caste and creed.

All over India the imperatives of dharma, or the commitment to duty, set up a common framework.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, each region, district, even village, had its own interpretation of these concerns. An endless interaction between the different players of the system provided prospects for transformation. Caste was not as unassailable a category as people outside India envision. Language instead of being perceived as divisive has always been a vital element of unity in diversity. Whereas Sanskrit had been the language of the most important religious texts of Hinduism, by the Middle Ages, spoken languages in northern India, retaining their Sanskrit origins, had diverged distinctly. In south India, Tamil and other Dravidian tongues had always been separate from Sanskrit, even though there were myriads of cultural and religious correlations with other parts of India.

What is described above is starkly similar to Ethiopia.⁷⁵ Most of the people in the extreme North speak Tigrigna whereas those in the central area speak Amharic. The South has, of course, been a mosaic of local languages with Oromos forming a majority. But over time, owing to the centralization drive of Ethiopian emperors, Yohannes IV, Menelik II, and Haile Selassie I, Amharic has functioned as non-legislated *lingua franca* of the nation covering the entire country such that even the Tigray Emperor Yohannes IV used Amharic as his court language as well as the language of international diplomacy.⁷⁶ The U.K government took over direct control of India using the British East India Company. The company's officials doubled as military and security officials. Expatriate bureaucrats were mostly British. Britain's political strategy was driven by economic consideration of the sprawling empire on the Indian subcontinent. East India Company's CEO such as Lord Robert Clive, fulfilled administrative and security functions in addition to conducting trade.

Astonishingly, the British company even politically administered some areas of India. Following the abortive 1857-58 national insurrection aimed at stamping out foreign occupation, when Indians arose in rebellion, the United Kingdom government in London took over direct control from the company and started to govern it through a Viceroy known as the British Raj.⁷⁷

Nevertheless, the political structure headed by the British East India Company remained for the most part, as integral as it was before. The large administrative regions with cities such Mumbai, formerly known as Bombay, Tamil Nadu with its capital in Chennai (formerly known as Madras) and Bengal with its capital in Calcutta, (now Kolkata) had their own languages as well as other tongues. The major city of Mumbai, for example, had Gujarati and Marathi speakers. Here Gujarati and Marathi speakers constituted two of the largest areas even though their administrative zone also included Sindhi and Kannada speakers. Bombay (now Mumbai) and Maharashtra each hosted several distinct linguistic and cultural clusters.⁷⁸

Linguistic differences were reinforced by a variety of cultural configurations thus making it even more complex. Other than the administrations ruled by Maharajas which date back to the early days of British colonial administration there were specific administrative regions carved out in response to the British East India Company's peculiar needs. One example is Punjab which was set up as a defensive fortification in the North West. Punjab was construed as a fortification in a critical security area. Apart from the presidencies, which dated back to the early days of Company rule,⁷⁹ There were other provinces that were created in response to the specific needs of the company. States ruled by Maharajas or Princes were interspaced over nearly one-third of the Indian subcontinent. For administrative reasons, each state was further broken up into several compartments and then into counties or districts which constituted the basic units of local administration.

The reason why a British company had to be given such administrative authority and the colonial policy of London had to be shaped by that was understandable. How else could they have subjugated and ruled over a vast country of (at the time) over 300 million people? Britain was then 43 times smaller demographically. Security was the key concern for London. The U.K officials had to worry about rival imperialist powers, at first the French and then from the 1850s on Tsarist Russia. Whatever expenditure was allocated was to be for the most part low since India was expected to cover its own

administrative expenses as well as to provide an economic bonanza to British traders and industrial establishments.

The U.K's policy was to use a nucleus of British soldiers and bureaucrats who, in turn, commanded Indian troops and junior officers. All this was led by an imperial ideology that supplied a framework in which colonized people could be easily subjugated, while perfidious elements could be secluded and contained. It was guided by this policy that the British Raj was kept from 1858 to 1947. The Raj was characterized by, on the one hand, a policy of high degree of centralization and a willingness to leave local matters to the Indians themselves. The result was a unified country ready for federalism by 1947. It was this policy that prepared India for federation on the basis of regions rather than ethnicity, and by coincidence a mirror image of Ethiopia even though in the latter case the country was not foreign occupied but was kept together by the centralizing ideology of pan-Ethiopian nationalist monarchs starting from Emperor Tewodros (1855-1868) down to Emperor Haile Selassie (1930-1974).

The Birth of Indian Federalism

No sooner than India became independent of Britain that it started to prepare for a federation that is not divisive but uniting. It also wanted to ensure the integrity of the federation by keeping more powers in the centre. As soon as it became independent in 1947, by a policy popularly known as President's Rule, drawing on colonial legacy, the Government headquartered in Delhi appointed governors for each regional body. Even though the governors are expected to play a figurehead role, they could, if need be, used to rule regional areas directly for periods of six months at a time. The financial levers of power are kept firmly with the central government, and the allocation of revenue sources makes it incumbent that the regional bodies would dependent on recurrent grants from the Union officials. All these were de facto, but they became de jure after the federal constitution was promulgated in 1950. Defence and foreign affairs are left strictly in the hands of the officials at the Centre, while local administration and primary education as well as minor

matters of daily concern of citizens are allocated to the regional bodies. Key matters regarding the economy are left with the centre.

Both the regional governments and the centre could legislate on their own, but central legislation overrides the local. Senior judges and civil servants are appointed by the centre and are organized to function in all places the rationale being it would be a major force that will hold the country together and pre-empt centrifugal forces from challenging the federal structure. The Constitution provides that recruitment to the Army hold a broad base, and the officer corps reflects an all-India dimension. It is important to point out that initially, India had considered dividing the country based on ethnicity an idea which, when presented to parliament, was soundly rejected. The fathers of the Indian constitution, Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, his deputy, Vallabhbhai Patel, and the President of the Congress, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, concluded that, reorganization on an ethnic base would, in the long run, inspire narrow nationalist elements to grow into a formidable force which would lead to the disintegration of the country. Meles falsely claimed he was following the Indian example when he created ethnic federalism in Ethiopia. The fact is different. The Indian federation was constructed on the basis of regions and historical incident, not on the basis of ethnicity. If we just take 3 Indian states at random, we find that all of them have people who speak many different languages. For example: Uttar Pradesh, the largest Indian state (with 204 million people) has many languages other than Hindi and Urdu; Bihar also with a population of 99 million has many languages including Hindi. Urdu Maithili Ajika Bhojpuri, Angika and Magahi, Tamil Nadu (pop. 67 million) has people who speak Telugu Kannada, Urdu and Malayalam. All the remaining 26 states also have a plurality of languages.⁸⁰ The pan-India forces declared their commitment to the union of the federation. They resolved therefore that the centre should have a robust legal power while the regional bodies had to be limited to administrative concerns in order for India to achieve its national goal of avoiding disintegration at all costs and staying united. For twenty years after independence, there also appeared a phenomenon which helped further cement Indian unity in tandem with a

unifying federal arrangement. This period saw a growth of central power on account of fast-paced economic development policy that was inspired by Nehru's nationalist self-reliant policies. During this period, scarce resources needed to be raised and invested wisely on a long-range planning mode. As would be expected, economic progress necessitated the development of a modern industrial base, which was entrusted to the central government public sector.

According to Nehru and his Daughter Indira Gandhi, who followed her father to power, the all-India Government had to chaperon and guide such ambitious goals. Starting in 1950, therefore, the Federal Government of India established the Planning Commission, which at its most powerful had a massive influence on all significant outlays and investment decisions in both the urban and the rural areas of the country. The Nehru model of development planning was without a doubt inspired by the Soviet experience. Not surprisingly, initially, the Soviet Union had become India's leading technology supplier. Though the Indians used the Socialist planning methods, unlike the Stalinists, they retained their competitive democratic system intact. Without fail, they held regular elections both at central and regional body levels of the federation. The growth in economy galvanized resource allocation and gravitated the Indian Federal republic towards unity as against multifaceted separatism aired by a few narrow nationalists.

It is known that during the historical evolution of Indian federation, there has been a gradual movement of power from the component regional bodies to the centre, as the federal government acquired additional powers, sometimes to deal with unforeseen circumstances, which was aided by its wise decision to reserve residual powers to the federal centre. The accumulation of new powers by the federal government occurred through formal constitutional amendments and in some cases through a broadening of the interpretation of a government's existing constitutional powers as interpreted by the courts. It is this historical backdrop that gives us an opportunity to learn from Indian federalism after independence. Starting from 1947 for two years, the Indian Constituent Assembly deliberated on the form

of the constitution it has to adapt and reached a consensus that India should be a federal state. The constitutional document was drafted after an exhaustive debate and came into effect on 26 January 1950. Even though the British had handed over a single political unit, the preamble stated that 'India...shall be a Union of States'.⁸¹The fathers of the Indian Constitution had great worry that units brought together by British colonialism might agitate for separation. As a result, many safeguards were built into it to maintain the integrity and the unity of India.

Self Determination & Secession in Indian Federalism

The fathers of the Indian federation were hell-bent on preventing secession and that quite understandably so. If secession were the norm the world would have produced thousands of mini Bantustans, not just the 203 sovereign nations that exist today. As things stand now, legally, the parliament of the Federal Republic of India headquartered in Delhi can redraw the map of India as it deems fit since it is the supreme authority. Agitating for the secession of a constituent part of the Federation of India is treated as treason inviting severe punishment. In the Indian federal constitution, any person who engages in criminal disloyalty to the state including participation in a war against India, attempting to overthrow its government, spying on its military, its diplomats, or its passing over secret services to hostile foreign powers, or attempting to assassinate the head of state is considered a traitor. In the Federal Republic of India, capital punishment is given out for waging war against the government, and abetting mutiny by a member of the armed forces. Death is also meted out in active terrorism cases. The death sentence is imposed only when the court comes to the conclusion that life imprisonment is inadequate based on the facts and circumstances of the case harming Indian federal unity and territorial integrity.⁸²

With regard to attempting to carry out or advocating secession and abetting secession, what comes to mind is the UN charter provision dealing

with self-determination. The UN Charter does mention the principle of self-determination of peoples but does not assert that principle as one its members have to follow. The reference is actually an indirect one. When it was inscribed in the Charter, it was meant to apply only to colonial situations. Furthermore, since the founding of the United Nations as a world body, the norm has been invoked by its organs only in a colonial context. The UN has categorically refrained from applying the principle of self-determination as one that includes the right of secession of part of the metropolitan territory of its member from the rest of the member's territory. That was why the UN was politically and militarily involved in ending the secession of Katanga from the Congo in 1960. In addition to that, UN Secretary-General U Thant, had strenuously opposed the attempted secession of Biafra from Nigeria in 1967. The Security Council had also categorically rejected the right of Biafra to secede. Today, Somaliland stands alone claiming to be a sovereign nation, but no country recognizes it as such. Indeed, the situation could hardly be anything else. If it did not act in that manner, the UN would have let itself into an intractable political quagmire since its action would infringe on the principle of each nations' national sovereignty which is untenable.

The concept of the right of secession was Leninist. It was originally enshrined in the Soviet Constitution at the time the Bolsheviks took power from the liberal-oriented Kerensky government in 1917. Even then, it was adopted by Lenin during the period of struggle to incite rebellion in imperial Russia not to allow secession. It was incorporated into the constitution to pay lip service to secession to satisfy narrow nationalists at a time when the Bolsheviks had to fight off the White Russians who were aided by the West. Those who took it as a legitimate right were to be disappointed in no time. Georgian nationalists tried to secede invoking the right of secession clause in the Soviet constitution, but their rebellion was nipped in the bud by none other than a protégé of Lenin, another Georgian, and Joseph Stalin who sent the Red Army to crush the separatists brutally. When they appealed to Lenin, he told them that they were wrong. No one raised the issue again until the Soviet Union imploded in 1991.

The right of secession is, of course, a far cry for liberal democratic constitutions including those of Britain, France, the USA, and others. One should not forget the American civil war fought in opposition to the secession of its southern states. The vicious war was waged from 1861 to 1865, and the conflict ultimately consumed the lives of 620,000 Americans. Canada toyed with the idea of self-determination and the right of secession but soundly rejected it at the Constitutional Conference in Victoria which was conducted during June 14 to 16, 1971. In the case of the USSR, the right of secession culminated with the dissolution of the Soviet Union on 26 December 1991. We are the only one of the odd twin remaining. This author argued in opposition to the clause vigorously in his VOA interview in 1995 when the constitution was promulgated. Should we allow what happened to the Soviet Union, to happen to us? To keep quiet is to enable the evil doers to get away with their treacherous conspiracy; and that by itself is egregious treason.⁸³

With regard to EPRDF officials who engineered the secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia and openly gloated over it, one can imagine what kind of verdict could have been meted out to Meles Zenawi and them. Had Ethiopia been India they would have faced trial. Treason is one of the crimes that is not legally barred by the statute of limitations or by retroactivity. So, theoretically, they can still be prosecuted. If they receive a life sentence, the Ethiopian people are magnanimous enough to spare their lives as long as the turn coats come before the Truth and Reconciliation committee which has just been struck by the Abiy team, confess and apologize for their treasonous acts.

Quo Vadis Ethiopia

Ethiopia had experienced two types of dictatorships within a span of 44 years. The Derg regime that ruled Ethiopia under Mengistu Haile Mariam from 1974 to 1991 was totalitarian whereas the pre-reform EPRDF regime that was led by Meles Zenawi and his surrogates until 2018 was authoritarian.⁸⁴ Now, there is a clarion call for democracy. Freedom of the press, secret ballot, regular elections and non-intimidation of competitors have to be guaranteed in the new Ethiopia if the reform project launched has to live up to the promises made by Abiy. Ethiopia has now ushered in the age of Abiy and the Abiy Miracle: looks like a Mirage. But the question is, is it sustainable? My humble opinion is that it is sustainable but only as we say in political economy with one proviso: *ceteris paribus*, i.e. 'all other things being equal'.

At 42, Abiy Ahmed is the youngest leader on the continent of Africa, but his impact is proving to be far greater than his age.⁸⁵ His election by the ruling (EPRDF) coalition to be prime minister of Ethiopia in April 2018 has become almost like the Pentecost. He changed the destiny of 110 million Ethiopians because following his leadership, the country shifted away decisively from a long period of autocracy and started to chart a way for democracy. He freed the media and appointed women to half the cabinet posts. The new Parliament over which he wields huge influence accepted his female nominees for president and head of the Supreme Court and minister of Defence and director of the previously corrupt electoral board.

Abiy asked dissident party heads which the previous leadership castigated as terrorists and in some cases sentenced to death in absentia, to return from exile and peacefully campaign to be elected. Groups listed as terrorist organizations, such as Ginbot 7, have been invited to participate in Ethiopia's political process. Abiy has promised a free press; he has lifted Internet blockages and wants to open up the mobile network to foreign providers to introduce efficiency. Last but not least, he wants to change the constitution to limit the Prime Minister's term of office. I bet that even if the Nobel Peace Prize appears a long shot, for now, Abiy will win the Mo Ibrahim leadership Prize once his term of office is over and he vacates the executive prime ministership. Political reform in Ethiopia since Abiy took the mantle of leadership has been beyond any body's imagination. Its dramatic unfolding has stunned us all by its speed and range. It took only a few months to change from one-party dominant authoritarian regime to a party that reformed itself to work towards a multi-party parliamentary system.

The TPLF, the party from Tigray, which only represents six percent of the population, has largely been controlling the political, economic and military interests of the country since the overthrow of the military regime led by Mengistu Haile Mariam in 1991. Although the EPRDF was formally composed of parties from all four major regions, a greater degree of participation by the other political parties was inconceivable because the TPLF was treated as *primus inter pares*, that it pointed to the historical fact that it commanded the greatest military might during the liberation struggle, won the contest against the Derg for all Ethiopians and was led by a charismatic though crafty, unprincipled and eccentric leader, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, until his death in 2012. In the reform process, the domineering *primus inter pares* TPLF faction was sidelined, subsequently seeking refuge in its Tigray enclave and plotting strategies to reinstate its domineering status or if that becomes impossible to work for the disintegration of the Ethiopian state.

The Abiy reform is now at a twilight. It is at the stage of liberalization not at the stage of democratization which can come only after the 2020 national elections. It is legitimate to ask then what the difference is. The answer is that

whereas liberalization refers to the relationship between the state and civil society, democratization, in essence, refers to the relationship between the state and political elites such that there is a relaxation of control on the body politic. Democratization is a basic political concept and can come only after free elections, the result of which determines for example who controls the reins of power, the civilian authorities or those bearing firearms.⁸⁶ In this context, the future not being written, democracy goes into the realm of the indeterminate. By contrast, in a liberalized system like that of the Abiy reform leadership, the power apparatus remains intact, and the dominant party continues to control outcomes *ex post facto*.⁸⁷ That is why it is not so easy to visualize the process of moving from liberalization to democratization by Abiy⁸⁸. The liberalizing and democratizing group wield power, and they may not want to lose it easily.

At the moment, Dr. Abiy is trying to hold down a Pandora's Box. Ethnic revolts rooted in TPLF policy of *divide et impera* have pitted one group against another leading to the dislocation of millions of citizens. We should recognize that the majority of Ethiopians grew up under the EPRDF regime and are below 40 years of age. In some regions such as Oromia, Amharic was not used as a language of instruction in schools as a result of which millions of youth cannot even communicate with their kin who grew outside their kilil. So this further complicates the problem.

I understand that Dr. Abiy is trying to contain the internal and external party altercation based on the pan-Ethiopian and narrow nationalist stance of some youth. There are agitators who incite people to take extra-legal measures, and he needs to be firm to stop them. Law enforcement bodies need to take necessary actions. But one would not counsel for the harsh response Meles, and his cohorts took, but the law has to be respected. If there are agitators who carry dual passports, they should be deported before they wreak havoc and destroy the peace he has fought for diligently. Not taking such measure leaves no choice for him but to walk a tight rope slowly but surely. However, I am convinced he will ultimately overcome the problem because history is on his side.

One nasty policy and evil plan of the TPLF is still in place. Confounding international law, they have recognized even if not *de jure de facto* that they can offer or take away citizenship rights through their embassies abroad. The Ethiopian embassy in Canada, for example, does not automatically renew Ethiopian passports held by legitimate citizens if they have stayed abroad for four years unless they are members of the Tigray Development Agency (meaning unless they are Tigrayans) They refused to renew Hirut Abebe Jira's passport because she does not hail from Tigray. She was a sympathizer of the EPRP during her youth and for it almost lost her life. She immigrated to Canada after serving a long jail term. When she asked for passport renewal, her request was rejected. But the embassy was renewing passports for those hailing from Tigray even though they have stayed in Canada for more than ten years and were carrying Canadian passports. This author asked the former councilor Wahide Belay if that was true and he admitted it was true. He said there was an order from Addis to do it that way. Even going to a smaller level, owing to the 1995 constitutional provisions, the ethnic-based state boundaries sometimes lead to a situation where residency rights are given or denied on the basis of one's *kilil*. Both of the above practices are against international law, the charter of the UN and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Dr. Abiy should correct this right away.

Instead of rocking the boat, reformists like Abiy can have a better chance of evolving democratization by playing it safe. Playing it safe means rather than bringing radical changes in rapid succession as Dr. Abiy has done, it is better to convey moderate images and listen to demands of dissidents, opting for gradualism if need be and cooperating with moderate reform advocates to strengthen their team. There are clear advantages if the moderates in the ruling group are lured to the extent that they feel they are taking the initiative in some of the first moves that are popular with the public. It is also equally important that the intransigent former leaders have at least the feeling that they have some tangible influence on the ongoing change in the democratization game.

Questions regarding a correct policy for land ownership have not been answered since its nationalization by the Derg in 1975. At that time Ethiopian intellectuals particularly students agitated for nationalization of land with the Leninist motto “Land to the Tiller” because of the abhorable servitude of the landless peasantry who had to pay up to 75% of their produce to their landlords. The nationalization measure was undoubtedly very popular with the rural masses who comprised more than 85% of the population of the country. What the peasants had to learn the hard way was that even though nationalization was done in their name they did not know that they simply traded one landlord for another. The state became that new landlord.

In 1991, the TPLF and the radical group such as the OLF who were themselves former student radicals or their sympathizers agreed to keep the land in the hands of the state for fear, as they claimed, that southern people such as the Oromo's would again be the losers since the *nouveau riche* were for the most part of other ethnicities. They muttered without any proof that those who had the money to buy land were Amharas, Gurages, Tigres, etc., who had accumulated large amounts of money during the Derg era. Even the World Bank's threat that it would withhold aid if land were not privatized fell on deaf ear. This debate was of course regarding rural land. One may also ask what about urban land?

The employment of the Latin or the Ethiopic alphabets, need to be addressed too. That Amharic that uses the Ethiopic alphabet should be employed at the federal level is an unassailable proposal. But because a whole generation of Oromo's was raised using *Qubé* which is of Latin derivation, it would not be practical to ban their use at the local level. As for a *Lingua Franca* of the nation, the position of Amharic is watertight, if not for any other reason than that the language is understood in every corner of Ethiopia. Even in Eritrea, young people who were born after secession are said to be fluent in Amharic. Amharic is, therefore, becoming a uniting force not only in Ethiopia proper but also regionally which would help in the re-federation of both countries in the future.

However, following the example of Canada recognizing *Afan Oromo* also as an official language is a smart move. In Canada, it was Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau's policy of bilingualism and biculturalism that sounded a death knell for the separatist *Front de libération du Québec* [FLQ] and led to the defeat of the secessionists twice in province-wide referendums. Trudeau had taken away the weapon the narrow nationalists wielded to galvanize support for their separatist's cause. The same could happen with OLF once *Afan Oromo* attains official status. One thing that should be clear is that in Canada, French and English are used simultaneously but not in such a way as for example English Canadians being compelled to use French unless they want to for their own personal reasons. The same is true with the French in Québec and other provinces such as New Brunswick. It is a practice that can be adapted in Ethiopia for the sake of ensuring unity. All these major issues should ultimately be solved by a referendum, once a new constitution or the amendment of the existing one is promulgated.

The Reform Group in Ethiopia was well aware that radical economic measures could result in major disruptions that could further damage their already tense and fragile hold on power. As of late, the regime had therefore decided to proceed with great caution, informing the public regarding needs for economic measures. The goal of the Abiy leadership seemed to make the people accept the unavoidable sacrifice to absorb economic setbacks and lower their normative material expectations. Primary among the causes of economic discontent was the deterioration in the economic well-being of the population, marked by steadily growing inflation, the rising cost of goods of both local and foreign origin, a general downturn in consumer satisfaction in the 2010s.

What was more worrying was that the inequities in social consumption were becoming ever more visible during this time, contributing to a widening gap between a privileged elite most of them young under forties who were enriched through graft, money laundering and “*ayer-bayer*”, a left over system from the Derg period in which foreign trade was conducted with the cover of officials and with no taxes paid to the state. Such individuals dubbed “*Gwehlawis*” spent thousands of birr on vintage drinks like Chivas Regal and

Double Black Johnny Walkers.⁸⁹ In recent days smoking “*shisha*” (pipe tobacco sweetened with fruit or molasses sugar) has become commonplace in the trendy night clubs of the capital.

On the other side, there is abject poverty with the number of slum dwellers and homeless individuals increasing by leaps and bounds such that the hungry poor were forced to create their dwellings on the side of garbage mountains of Addis Ababa that at one time the make shift rubbish dump mountain crumbled in a major landslide killing 65 of those poor souls.⁹⁰ That registered a sad day for Ethiopia in the world news.

Qérros Come: Haile Mariam Goes.

The Qérro happen to be the trail blazers for the Abiy reform but who are they? They are Oromo youth wing known as “the National Youth Movement for Freedom and Democracy (NYMFD)” otherwise referred to as “Qérro. The group claims to fight for democracy and justice. The movement was inspired by the Arab Spring of 2011. In the beginning, very few people paid serious attention to it. But a series of Oromo student protests broke out in several universities and colleges and arrests by state police and mysterious abductions followed, which seemed to mark the genesis of the Qérro movement.

The Qérros continued to engage in organized strikes; they occupied factories, offered the workers who supported them greater protection from counteractions by the government. During the occupation of factories and industrial farms, the Qérros were able to engage in discussion of the issues, and were in the process exposed to new ideas. The net result of this activism was that not only workers hitherto helpless became more cognizant of having sympathizers and the need for their unity and strength. As time passed, the situation became increasingly politicized.

In the face of these Qérro activisms, the regime negotiated with the affected citizens and Qérro leaders. One of their grievances was that the TPLF party from Tigray held disproportionate power and the majority Oromo’s have been marginalized. As the Qérro revolt intensified, the EPRDF under the tutelage of the TPLF declared a state of emergency to reverse the upshot of the

protesters' momentum. However, this did not quell the uprising. The state also ordered a crackdown to crush the movement but to no avail. In the meantime, the Qérro movement went on to attract broad popular support. Similar youth movements also rose up in ethnic regions created by the EPRDF and particularly in the second largest region, the Amhara region. Initially, police had announced plans to investigate and crack down on the Qérro, labeling them as extremists bent on destabilizing the country and seizing control of local government offices. Party sympathizers also accused Qérro members of being saboteurs.

The Qérro led mass protests against the 2015 election results which they believed the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) had blatantly rigged. On 12 February 2015, almost everyone in most major cities across Oromia, went on strike calling for the release of opposition leaders detained and asked the government to put an end to authoritarianism. The Qérros claimed to be the vanguard of the Oromo revolution. The Qérro organized boycotts, lasted three days and in the end brought much of central Ethiopia to a standstill. In the town of Adama, which happened to be a seat of the OPDO government, it was a total shutdown. As reported in the *Guardian* and recounted by one eye witness: "almost everybody took part, including government officers. You wouldn't have even been able to find a shoeshine boy". The insurrection culminated by 13 February 2015 with the release of Bekele Gerba, a prominent Oromo politician and deputy leader of the Oromo People's Congress led by professor Merera Gudina who was jailed several times. One incident which sharpened Qérro defiance took place in Bishoftu where police triggered a riot with teargas to disperse Qérro protesters during the Oromo festival of *Irrécha*, near a well-known Bishoftu lake. Starting in October 2016, Qérro networks were extended far and wide.

At the start of the movement, before venturing into *WhatsApp* and *Facebook*, they distributed paper flyers on university campuses. But that was a slow process. It would take those two weeks to cover several campuses since it was work door to door. Now they turned to *WhatsApp*, *Facebook*, and other popular blogs. With social media, the Qérros discovered they could

disseminate messages and information about upcoming strikes in seconds. With the hope of smothering their communication, the government clamped down with a total shutdown of mobile internet in all areas beyond the capital. But it did not succeed. Colleagues in the Diaspora shed light on their activities so that the international community would know they were still in action. Social media activists abroad, particularly in the U.S., provided their colleagues at home with political clout. The Minnesota-based Oromia Media Network (quickly banned in Ethiopia as a terrorist organ), amplified the voice of the Qérro even when the internet was down. One particular worry of the mature leaders of this youth movement was that some neophyte members might take action against other ethnic groups, but it did not take place on a wide scale, and where it was attempted it was nipped in the bud. In fact, as time passed the Qérro started to communicate with and coordinate their actions with the *Fanno*, their Amhara counterpart.

Then came another common cause with the government buying up suburban land located within the Oromo speaking zone to expand the capital city of Addis Ababa. Since the end of 2015, tens of thousands have been protesting against the compulsory purchase of land set aside for expanding the capital, Addis Ababa. More than 700 people were killed in the subsequent crackdown and 23,000 arrested. The state of emergency imposed at the time shattered the relationship between the government and the Qérro.

The Qérro were protesting against a controversial proposal, known as "the master plan," to expand Addis Ababa into the surrounding Oromia state starting in 2014. The farmers were said to have been paid much below the going price for their prime farmland which was leased to real estate agencies many of the owners being of foreign origin. This caused mass evictions. The government confiscated land with very little compensation and made it available for industrial plants, posh condominiums for the well to do ignoring the fate of the poor farmers who have lost their farms and their livelihood owing to land seizures.

The city's rapid growth has resulted in increasing pressure to convert rural holdings. Soon, the Qérro went to the areas and barricaded the roads

leading to the properties. The government sent security forces that used excessive force and live ammunition to disperse the crowds. Many demonstrators died, but the confrontation continued. The Qérro argued that the Oromos had been systematically marginalized and persecuted since the TPLF came to power in 1991. By some estimates, there were as many as 20,000 Oromo political prisoners in Ethiopia as of March 2014 such that Siyé Abraha who was jailed by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi following the 2001 putsch commented that the language of the prison had become Afan-Oromo. The dissenting protesters were detained without charge or trial. Many were, killed by security services during protests and arrests and detentions were intensified.

Since 2000, Metropolitan Addis Ababa with the support of the federal government, has passed five different pieces of legislation to legalize informal settlements, enabling them to be sold to private property developers. Sometimes the informal settlements which were nothing more than shanty towns were given only a few days' notice before bulldozers arrived on the scene and razed them to the ground. The confiscated property was transferred to investors mostly government officials who in turn sold them to developers at exorbitant prices. In response to the violence that ensued, Amnesty International issued a report on harsh government repression. The report noted that "between 2011 and 2014, at least 5,000 [Qérros] were arrested based on their actual or suspected peaceful opposition to the government. "This evoked ethnic sentiment which has been brewing since the TPLF carved out ethnic regions at the time of their ascent to power. The Qérro were not limiting their grievances to land grab. They were hell-bent on exposing the EPRDF government's hideous human rights record.

The local authorities as well as the central government headed by Haile Mariam Desalegn could not deploy enough security officers in response to the protests and tried to reassure people by consulting selected opposition parties as to how to diffuse the uprising.. When this had little effect, and the protests were rekindled even more widely and more forcefully, Prime Minister Haile Mariam Desalegn ordered the release of a number of political prisoners. He also announced his intention to make 'room for political change'. Within 48

hours, Ethiopia's beleaguered prime minister, tendered his resignation. The federal government, shaken by the strike and the sudden resignation declared a nationwide state-of-emergency again. But it was too little too late. The Qéro intensified their struggle all over the Oromo speaking areas of Ethiopia. They created road blocks and stopped trucks from passing making it difficult to run inter *kilil* trade.

The reformers face myriads of existential challenges that need to be addressed sooner than later. The attempt at maintenance of equilibrium may affect the successes and effectiveness of the mobilization process and can lead to apathy. No doubt, a balance should be kept between commitment to peace and stability, the democratization drive, the upholding of human rights and the rigorous application of the rule of law. Abiy's Achilles heel would remain to be adapting a stance to smother the burning issue of ethnicity introduced by the TPLF to divide and rule while at the same time he should protect Ethiopia's unity and territorial integrity. He should always move with wisdom. The reform group should embark on a complete re-wring of the constitution that stamps out once and for all the ethnically divisive document put in place by the TPLF and its collaborators in 1995. The new constitution they should adapt for the new federalism to be created should put in place a set of fixed norms or principles that are construed as the fundamental law of the polity which effectively defines the way in which political power will be exercised. The essence of the Ethiopian constitution for the proposed federation should be the delimitation of the exercise of power by the central government and a constellation of regionally based state organs in such a manner that they are each subjected to reciprocal managements and forced to cooperate in upholding the will of the people. The new Ethiopia based on a uniting federalism should have a constitution that is forged with the participation of the public unifying federal structure with the commitment to entrenching democratic norms.

Dr. Abiy should be commended for courageously breaking the ice between Ethiopia and Eritrea, inhabited with the same people "Habashas" that were forced to live precariously with the policies of Meles Zenawi and Isayas

Afeworki of “no war no peace” for two decades.⁹¹ The mode of the relation should, however, be transparent. It should be cemented by an iron clad agreement which every Ethiopian and every Eritrean has to know. Though both countries have withdrawn their armies from the border, from areas such as Badme and Zalambesa where over 100,000 lives were lost, there needs to be a clear understanding across the board, and legal compacts should be signed to keep the peace in the north. The issue of currency, the Ethiopian *Birr* and the Eritrean *Nakfa* and how they should be used in both countries needs clarification. On the whole, however, the two nations ought to pursue the same foreign policy if only to guard against hostile great powers and neighboring countries with hidden agenda. In the long run, all good Habashas wish that Eritrea and Ethiopia should be tied at a minimum by confederation which would have to be approved by a plebiscite in both countries. The plebiscite should be freely conducted and scrutinized by international observers. The two countries should be run by compatible political, economic and constitutional norms governing their citizens. The appalling situation in Eritrea even after the thaw has to stop before it infects the Ethiopian democratic reform. Our Eritrean brothers and sisters deserve a respite from the post-1993 police state: repression and compulsory military draft that is forcing its youth to flee and drawn in the Mediterranean and the Red sea or become victims of extortion, torture, and beheadings in the hands of kidnappers and bandits in the Sinai and Libyan deserts.⁹² While our Habasha brothers and sisters are not free we, Ethiopian Habashas are not free either. The role of the intelligentsia in both countries to achieve this aim is a vital component of bringing success to the relationship. As Mwalimu Nyerere of Tanzania once remarked, the intellectuals should be cognizant of the fact that in an important sense, they are leaders too!⁹³

Individual leaders and Democratization

The character and strategies of some EPRDF leaders were one of the major factors that hastened the attempt to bring about a transition to democracy in Ethiopia. Foremost among the pioneers are Lemma Megersa, Abiy Ahmed,

Gedu Andargachew and Demeke Mekonnen. Before the demise of the TPLF led coalition, very few people in Ethiopia knew anything about leaders like Lemma Megersa. The young politician, Lemma Megersa was indeed a phenomenal character. Starting in 2017, the actions he was taking within the party as well as his relationship to the other ethnic leaders especially the hitherto maligned Amharas had turned the 47-year-old leader of the OPDO (now renamed Oromo Democratic Party with the acronym, ODP) into a household name until he became the most popular Ethiopian politician since the governing Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) came to power 26 years earlier. "When in October 2016 the central government declared a state of emergency in response to mass protests by Qérrros, the then little-known chair of the Oromia State Assembly was elected chairman of the regional ruling party. He soon rose to the rank of president of the Oromia Regional State. For the OPDO also, the period was momentous. It was the first time in its history that it was able to choose its own leadership without TPLF interference.

When Hailemariam Desalegn resigned as prime minister on 15 February 2018, many bet on Lemma as the successor making him Ethiopia's first Oromo Prime Minister since the fall of the Derg. Lemma was then not only young; he was articulate and self-assured. He had emerged on the national political landscape by distancing himself from his TPLF led coalition partners and openly greeted the Qérrro with open arms and by doing so placated the radical protesters. Lemma and his team then set to reform the OPDO and its administration. He confronted foreign investors who evicted local farmers to create business ventures such as huge horticulture plantations which the Qérrro had targeted, purged 8,000 corrupt regional bureaucrats and political hangers-on and launched a vigorous campaign to root out money launderers, black marketers smugglers and "rent seekers." A prominent pro-Qérrro website based in North America, argued that "Lemma is uncontestably Ethiopia's new leader. He has the charisma. He has the eloquence. He has the base." His base stretched beyond narrow nationalism. At a time when Ethiopianness was being treated like a detestable chauvinist concept, his commitment to Ethiopia was

unshakable. In place of the polarising language of Oromo nationalism Lemma chose an inclusive pan-Ethiopian world view. He stated that Ethiopia hitherto maligned as an imperialist state is for him like an "addictive drug." To Oromos and non-Oromos, Lemma had made starkly plain that what the country needs is not only a firm commitment to Ethiopianness but democratization which would bring all nations and nationalities under one umbrella.

Since Lemma did not have a seat as the constitution stipulates in the House of People's Representatives, his colleague in the OPDO who had a seat in parliament Dr. Abiy Ahmed also of Oromo parentage with roots in Amhara ethnicity, in Islam, in Orthodox and Evangelical Christianity emerged to take over the executive duties of Ethiopia's Prime Minister. Abiy who also happened to be a strong Ethiopian nationalist, as well as an advocate of democratization to replace the stale authoritarian rule that had been in place since 1991, promised to fulfill Lemma's dreams He dismissed long-serving and powerful EPRDF officials, and with that act triggered a political tremor. Barely three months into his election, almost all influential actors in the 'deep-state', the intelligence service, the military, and the TPLF-associated economic complexes have been purged. With such bold action Abiy succeeded to win over skeptical militants not only at home but also in the diaspora.

Within a few months of taking over power, Prime Minister Abiy has stressed that he is a leader for all Ethiopians. By a single stroke, he transformed Ethiopian politics, diplomacy, and economics. He introduced sweeping reforms and stamped out political repression. He released tens of thousands of political prisoners and closed down prisons.⁹⁴ He relaxed the tight state control on the economy⁹⁵ and has ended the war in the north.⁹⁶ He opposes narrow nationalism and pledges unity in diversity, and most importantly dedicated to bringing about democratization. He advances political discourse in place of authoritarian dictat. Unlike the TPLF, he does not consider the opposition as an enemy but rather as colleagues in the game of politics that can be the government of tomorrow.

Abiy has committed himself to forge free and open competition in national elections due to take place in 2020. He has dissolved the close-knit

EPRDF leadership created by the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. In the few weeks since Abiy was elected as Prime Minister, nearly all the established norms that underpin Ethiopian politics have begun to unravel. But his challenge is enormous. Abiy was able to replace the old vocabulary of “revolutionary democracy” with a new narrative of awakening and participation.⁹⁷

The International Monetary Fund had issued a debt warning for Ethiopia in 2018 so he needs to fix that in real time. Re-writing the new constitution is his other Achilles heel because he has to stamp out the ethnic federalism scheme put in place by Meles Zenawi dividing the people into ethnic enclaves. As suggested below in the section on federalism, he will have to struggle to handle the tinder box of ethnic discontent with utmost care and foster the idea of a united Ethiopia which will demand considerable political acumen and legal steadiness not liable to stumble or to fall. Furthermore, the Qérro, the youth who traced the blaze and engineered him into power expect rapid reform and jobs. Abiy’s challenge of trying to unite a deliberately divided country without upsetting the political class is indeed a Herculean task.

Abiy needs to make the Chinese supported state-driven development that has delivered high growth to Ethiopia in less than a decade and a half sustainable while at the same time allowing an open and vibrant private sector. Though liberal economists are elated by the measure, many progressive economists are wary of the possibility of neo liberalism bringing back the frozen economy situation under Haile Selassie from 1941 to 1974 when Americans were advisers. They also fear an exploitative atmosphere might crop up and tarnish the integrity of the financial sector and the aviation industry both of which are hitherto healthy by any standard. Progressive economists also fear that the introduction of a neo-liberal economy and the arresting of the Chinese driven expeditious development agenda which has made Ethiopia the fastest growing economy in the world in the late 2010s come to an end. They also add that though foreign investment originating from the West may answer the foreign currency shortfall plaguing the country at the moment, the solution is short term and may, in the long run, generate corruption. With Ethiopia

holding a pivotal position in East Africa, Abiy is in fact at the control of a kinetic energy in reconstructing new power relations in the Horn where competing Gulf powers try to use neighbouring Eritrea a proxy in the war in Yemen, while China and the US are quietly to hold an upper hand in Djibouti a gateway to the strategic Strait of Bab el Mandeb. The United Arab Emirates has just granted a loan of 3 billion US dollars including a direct injection in the central bank of one billion US dollars, a win for Abiy. The fresh, dynamic move boldly launched by Abiy has influenced Eritrea to solve its own conflict with neighbouring Djibouti. With the Abiy commitment to a non-violent regional relations policy, the South Sudan peace process has received a positive push. Egypt and Sudan are suddenly on board. In short order, the possibilities of a fully integrated and dynamic North East Africa has loomed on the horizon. Democratization is still a long shot in North-East-Africa, but the process needs peace before everything else. The challenge in Ethiopia is, however, the most serious. Abiy has to walk a tight rope in applying his bold democratization programmes. A society that has lived under authoritarianism for almost half a century can provoke implosion and disintegration as did the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in the 1990s. What is worrying is that the similarities are starkly similar. Just like Gorbachev who dropped his policies of glasnost and perestroika like a thunderbolt, Abiy has telescoped decades into months and announced major changes in rapid succession. It is not hard to see that just like Ethiopia under the Derg and TPLF hegemony; the Soviet Union had kept its peripheries precariously together under iron-clad Stalinist control for more than 70 years. Yugoslavia was kept together by a police state established by Marshal Broz Tito starting after the end of the Second World War. Both imploded as soon as authoritarianism was lifted and democratization was introduced.

To make matters worse, the TPLF had right from the beginning divided the country into Bantustan style ethnic enclaves and adopted a Soviet-style constitution that enshrined the right of secession. With a slight push as some suspect, Ethiopia might fall. This is because the isolated TPLF leadership that has grudgingly retreated to Mekele with huge armaments of weapons and

billions of Birr accumulated through graft, black market trade, and money laundering, is currently inciting rebellions that are flaring up all over the country. On 23 June 2018, an assassination attempt was made against Abiy during a major event held for the Prime Minister in Addis Ababa. Whereas Abiy had survived two people died and 150 were severely injured. This shows that not everyone is in favour of a peaceful change in Ethiopia. It is still unclear who was behind the attack. At another time, a group of commandos boldly entered the palace in order to assassinate the Prime Minister but failed to succeed.

In the meantime, what is clear is that the Abiy reform is unfolding against a backdrop of deepening ethnic conflicts across the country. Conflict in the Oromia and Somali regions has already led to the death of thousands of people, the destruction of property and the forced dislocation of almost a million people. For someone who has witnessed what had expired in Yugoslavia in the 1990', it is a *déjà vu*. For now, Abiy is undaunted. He is pushing his democratization programme with gusto. But he is seeking to heal the wounds first. He has admitted to the excesses of the EPRDF government of which he was a part and has exposed torture chambers throughout the capital and arrested some of the rights abusers. He has openly asked forgiveness from families of individuals who were imprisoned, tortured, killed and disappeared actions perpetrated by state security forces. He has established a Mandela style truth and reconciliation commission to heal the wounds and wash away hatred and vendetta.

To give the devil his due, the economic development Abiy inherited from the TPLF led authoritarian leadership was phenomenal. Following the Chinese example and being helped by them, astounding economic development has been achieved. When the industrial parks, where companies such as H&M, Primark, Tchibo, and KiK produce their goods, were attacked during the protests, the anger was largely aimed at the country's confiscation of property and giving them to foreign investors. The affected regions have little say in major agricultural projects or urban expansion. The construction of the GERD dam to electrify the region beyond Ethiopia, the railway line from the Red Sea

to the economic zone near the capital, industrialization and the establishment of textile companies are generating average economic growth of ten percent a year. Thus within a span of a little more than a decade, Ethiopia has become an economic juggernaut. By 2017, Ethiopia had overtaken Kenya as East Africa's largest economy. Ethiopia's development trajectory in such a short time is almost unimaginable. Even if some suspect there is an exaggeration, and there could be, a three percentage points taken off it is still an astounding feat. Pessimists will still have to look at the modern highways, electrified railways, and condominiums that are mushrooming all over the country and try to find other explanation for the phenomenal growth. Ethiopia's economic growth according to the World Bank and the IMF rose tenfold in less than 15 years. Its gross domestic product of \$8bn in 2003 rose to \$80bn in 2015. If all goes well, in 2020, Ethiopia is slated to show a \$100bn economy. ⁹⁸

However, it should be stressed that despite such astounding growth, the relative gap has increased by leaps and bounds. For very few *nouveau riche* spending thousands of Birr a night at the posh night clubs in the capital and other major cities, one sees a vast number of unemployed youth. There are tens of thousands of jobless persons on the streets begging and passing the nights in makeshift shelters or in open spaces around the sprawling high rises. No doubt, Abiy has the energy that flows from his youth. He has the passion and the determination that any pioneer in his position ought to have. But through all these, Abiy has to walk warily. When he has so many lumpen proletariats dotting the streets, he is aware that he is traversing a ticking bomb. The immediate challenge for him is to stem an escalation of conflicts, ethnic or otherwise, to safeguard security without resorting to the repressive and violent methods of the Meles era, and maintaining his reformist agenda till the national elections that will take place in 2020.

As the struggle for the Prime Minister's position was raging in the closed chamber of the EPRDF a soul searching of sorts was going on the side. Gedu and his colleagues Demeke Mekonnen had decided to confront the Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF), propaganda that the root cause of oppression and injustice in Ethiopia lies in "Amhara chauvinism," and with that making a

consorted effort to attempt to isolate and marginalize the Amharas. It should be remembered that the original manifesto of the party manifestly describes the TPLF struggle as being impelled by "anti-Amhara national oppression."⁹⁹, Their pamphlets unambiguously labeled the Amhara as the principal enemy of the Tigray people along with Western imperialism, Soviet Social Imperialism, and Bureaucratic capitalism.

With the ascent to power of the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) which was created as an umbrella organization of the TPLF, this narrative became the hegemonic stand of the new order the political discourse of EPRDF hangers-on. The restructuring of Ethiopia as an ethnic federalist state with this hegemonic thought consequently received an institutional expression. In fact, they claimed that by this new design, of brand new federal arrangement they aimed to liberate the 80 odd ethnicities of Ethiopia in order to enable self-determination while simultaneously suppressing the Amhara so that non-Amharas can exercise their self-rule unencumbered. They had a bounty of pejoratives in their vocabulary to refer to the Amhara: 'Oppressor' 'Chauvinist,' 'Nefteгна (Gunman),' 'Yekedmo sre'at nafaqi' (reactionary), among others which they used in order to inhibit any independent political participation by intellectuals of Amhara origin.

The second weapon employed at the instigation of the power that be was to marginalize the Amharas living outside their *kilil* was to popularize the narrative that they are intruders, settlers, and occupiers of land and property belonging to others. This led to repeated ethnic-based attacks and ethnic cleansing similar to that in the former Yugoslavia. Thus, the Amhara living in large numbers in different parts of the country became victims of indiscriminate killings mass displacements, dispossessions of property, and denial of normal human livelihood. During the immediate period that followed the collapse of the Derg and the ascent of the TPLF saw repetitive sporadic violence on ethnic Amharas in various parts of Ethiopia, leading to the extrajudicial death and mass displacement of the community.

In other cases, Amharas were compounded with other victims. For example, the most recent violence near Jijiga was on both the Oromos and the

Amharas. There are reports that high-level TPLF officers who were working in cahoots with counterparts of the Abdi Ile gang who enriched themselves through black market trade orchestrated the pogrom and the dislocation of more than one million people making them internally displaced persons.

Only lately did ANDM (recently renamed Amhara Democratic Party or ADP) produce leaders who air their community's aspirations and are ready to courageously fight injustice. The region's president who resigned only a few days ago, Gedu Andargachew, ADP representative in parliament Demeke Mekonnen and Government Communications Affairs Office Director, Nigusu Tilahun are among these courageous new activists. Together with their cadres these individuals are openly airing the frustration of their community and are determined to change the *status quo ante*. Recently the Welqait and Raya issues have become critical points of departure for their advocacy. They are openly arguing that these regions which should have remained within the Amhara kilil were unfairly incorporated into the Tigray State.

Even though Amhara leaders are forced by the *fait accompli* that emerged with ethnic federalism, to fight for Amhara interests, there is no such thing as Amhara nationalism. Professor Mesfin Wolde Mariam has even gone to the extent of arguing that there is no such thing as Amhara ethnicity. At one time, in Washington DC, this author argued with Professor Mesfin who used to be his former Director at the Ethio-American Mapping and Geography Institute regarding his stand, but the good professor remained firm in his conviction. Whether one accepts this hypothesis, or not one thing is clear. Amhara nationalism even the one advanced by Mela Amhara party of old does not aspire for independent statehood. A few that arose such as the Bete-Amhara – an early online Amhara nationalist group that is now for the most part defunct did not gain a following because most Amharas reject independent statehood for the Amhara nation as unrealizable but also objectionable. Actually, the fundamental aim of Amhara activism is expressing the community's normative aspirations in relation to pan-Ethiopianism. No wonder this is the case; it is only Pan-Ethiopianism that has potential aficionados among the Amhara

community; one reason why Meles Zenawi used “Ethiopian nationalism” in the same vain as “Amhara Chauvinism” as if they are one and the same.

The two leaders of the two populous regions Oromia and Amhara now started to work together behind the scenes. Gedu Andargachew of the Amara region and Abiy Ahmed of Oromia had realized that if they pooled their forces together, the Southern leader might be coaxed to their side and the TPLF would be left alone. Lema Megersa and Abiy Ahmed had already severed their ties to the executive of the TPLF when Gedu Andargachew and Demeke Mekonnen, keenly aware of the TPLF cabal's brazen propaganda followed suit and the two groups struck a deal to pool their forces together in ensuing votes. In the strategy, they prevailed. With the representative of the South refraining from joining the TPLF the die was cast.

As a consequence of the Qérro Revolution, and the close cooperation between the two populous regions the TPLF, which was hitherto *primus inter pares* among the four factions was completely isolated. Probably out of a sense of superiority, the TPLF cabal did not propose to see present any of their own candidates for the position of Prime Minister. They did not doubt that their minion and preferred former parliamentary speaker, Abadula Gameda of Oromia, would have the support of both the Oromo and the majority of Amhara and Tigray.

It was in fact so ruptured that it had to hold an unusually long conference lasting over thirty-five days in October-November 2017 to avert disaster. Shiferaw Shigute opted in and went on the bandwagon as a result of which three parties had in the meantime met separately and had agreed on launching a deep reform to meet the challenge confronting the ruling group. In December, the entire 36-member Executive Committee of EPRDF attended a relatively long conference of lasting seventeen days at the close of which they came out more fractured than ever. The TPLF retreated into its ethnic shelter in Mekele. But more ominously for the Northern warlords, an alliance was struck between the OPDO and ANDM bringing Amharas and Oromos together a possibility the TPLF wanted to keep at bay for as long as possible so that its control of the politics and economics of Ethiopia would not be jeopardized. In the meantime,

the combined result of the inter-party maneuvering was also the emergence of a moderate faction of the OPDO soon nick named 'Team Lemma.' The event morphed into the increasing isolation of TPLF within the coalition. In this arduous struggle to wrench power from the TPLF three leaders Lemma Megerssa of OPDO, Demeke Mekonnen of ANDM, Hailemariam Desalegn of SEPDM had a tug of war with, Debretsion Gebremicheal of TPLF which they ultimately won.

'Team Lemma' spared no time to try to win the hearts and minds of the radical Oromo youth subsumed under the umbrella name of Qérro by promising a massive employment opportunities in a mini economic revolution of sorts within Oromia. The Lemma team adopted the demands of the youth and started to present them as its own desire to implement 'deep reform' not only in Oromia but throughout the length and breadth of Ethiopia. Team Lemma employed the language of the rebellious youth all over Ethiopia, a call for freedom from oppression, human rights, the rule of law, constitutionalism, respect for federalist principles, autonomy, self-rule, and shared power, more equitable distribution of wealth, and more importantly commitment to democratization. All these were aired openly as going against the hegemonic control of the TPLF and were music to the ears of people in central and southern Ethiopia who felt marginalized for 28 years. Not surprisingly tensions surfaced between the OPDO and ANDM on the one hand and the TPLF on the other. The TPLF leadership were crying foul that they were unfairly targeted as the culprits for all the ills that had transpired even though they argued all decisions were made collegially. The tension brought the entire federal government to a standstill. Cognizant of the fact that the OPDO and ANDM have a numerical advantage in Parliament, the TPLF started to evade or bypass formal democratic principles. It ignored to respect the supremacy of the Federal Parliament constituting the House of Peoples' Representatives and acted on their own.¹⁰⁰ In this fissure, the general Ethiopian public outside Tigray, considered Team Lemma as its representative. The team also reciprocated. Its leaders, Lemma Megerssa, Abiy Ahmed, Shimelis Abdissa and Addisu Arega started speaking for the people. The Amhara settlers in the

Benishangul and Oromia states have reported of being victims of ethnic cleansing. With what many believe is TPLF-orchestrated "border wars" are raging, between Oromia and Benishangul zones, between Oromia and Somali regions such that close to one million Oromos have to leave the Somali region and the adjacent border areas are yet to be resettled in proper homes.

The Lemma team is bent on ending TPLF's hegemony in order to forge a party out of the EPRDF and act on behalf of the whole country as it also seeks to sustain its alliance with ANDM, incorporating other political factions on board, and slowly but surely steering the country towards democratic transformation the people of Ethiopia have wanted for a long time. With this act, they envision a renaissance of sorts the birth of a new Ethiopia. The Abiy reform has targeted important issues to tackle. It has tried to open up political space by freeing all political prisoners. It has tried to create an inclusive, transparent more open and democratic political system. It has employed parliamentary powers to repeal all repressive laws passed under Meles Zenawi and his surrogates. It has removed political parties from its list of 'terrorist' organizations. It has abrogated the Charities and Societies Law;¹⁰¹ the Counter-Terrorism Law,¹⁰² the Law Regarding Freedom of Assembly¹⁰³, the Media Law¹⁰⁴ and Political Party Registration Law¹⁰⁵. Starting from its takeover of power in 1991, the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) has gone through only two leaders, and neither were elected by their peers. So it was a novelty that Dr. Abiy Ahmed was elected as leader of the party and by extension Prime Minister of Ethiopia on March 27, 2018. Abiy won the backing of 108 party kingpins, while 59 voting for Shiferaw Shigute of the South, and Debre Tsion of the TPLF got only two votes.

Moving from authoritarianism to democracy or achieving democratization is not an easy task. According to Rustow, it would take at least a generation to be attained. One of the first challenges facing Abiy and company is how to create or recreate civil society, which was heavily retarded under Meles' Revolutionary Democracy. Civil Society is a free network of groups and communities that are allowed to function between the individual and the state. A major feature of civil society involves equality of people, rights

to organize civil and social groupings, conscious acceptance of the plurality of interests, and publicity, in the sense of openness, and transparency in its operational mode. While the achievement of an independent civil society is a necessary precondition for a healthy democracy, its relative absence or decline is a cause and an effect of various contemporary sociopolitical malaise. Another major problem of achieving democratization is found in the lack of political professionalism, which has been suppressed almost for almost half a century of Marxist oriented military dictatorship and revolutionary democracy which is an off shoot of Marxism-Leninism. The legacy of authoritarian rule from 1974 to 2018 has implanted a strong orientation toward personalities rather than institutions. Being governed by the rule of law and gaining popular trust for political institutions were completely absent during this long period. It is a Herculean task for Abiy to change course in this regard because without it there will be no democratization.

. The TPLF made Ethiopia the only country to follow the Soviet example and enshrined the right of secession into its constitution which still dangles over the head of our nation like Damocles' sword. The hope of all nationalist Ethiopians is that the Abiy reform will lead to the ultimate abrogation of Article 39 once and for all and deal a mortal blow to this abominable clause.

Federalism and Democratization: A Lesson for Ethiopia Ethiopian Provinces with Eritrean Federation (Haile Selassie-Derg Period)



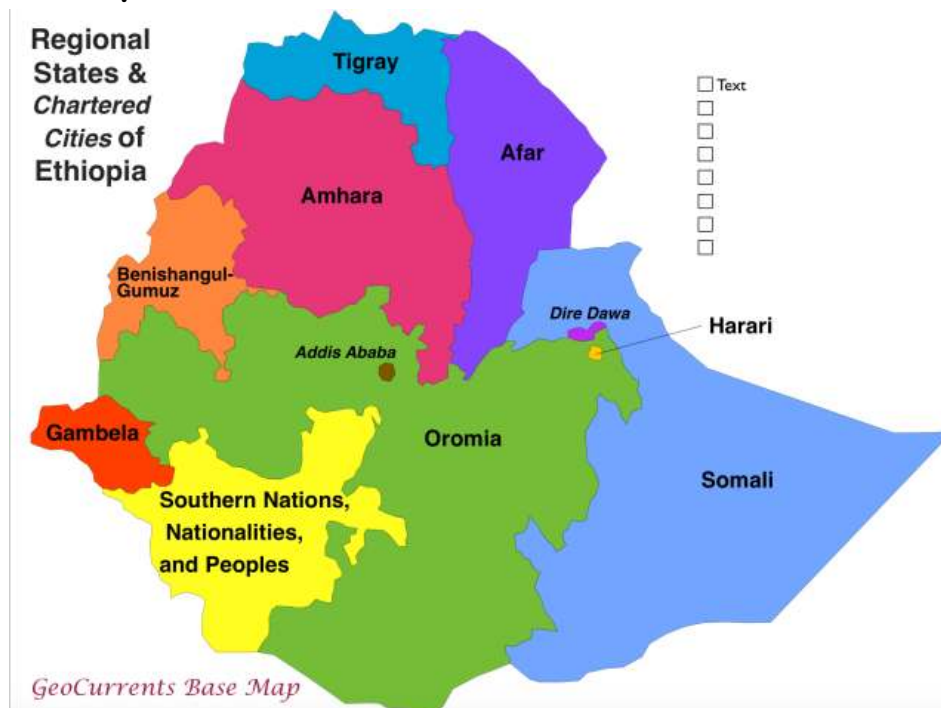
At the end of the cold war, there has taken place a seismic shift that gravitated nations towards democratization. The idea that democracy and democratic federalism are good has been accepted globally for a variety of reasons major among which is structuring a political system to prevent violence among different cultural groups within countries because it allows them to legislate what would protect their core interests at the subnational level and endow them with democratic rights.

Ethiopia: With 13 Provinces – Post-EPRDF-immediate



Some scholars have opined that federalism tends to divide countries and propel them towards collapse because it establishes proto-states ready for going their own separate ways. This can happen if it is constructed to be used as a political instrument by the powers that be as was the case under the EPRDF from 1991 to the announcement of the reform by Abiy in 2018. But if federalism is created genuinely and democratically it can bestow numerous benefits. Others have suggested that federalism becomes divisive only when it lacks mechanisms that encourage political parties to compete across regional boundaries, which is again the case in Ethiopia where many political parties are created in the name of specific ethnic groups (TPLF, ODP, ADP, etc.).

Ethiopia: Post-EPRDF - Ethnic Federalism

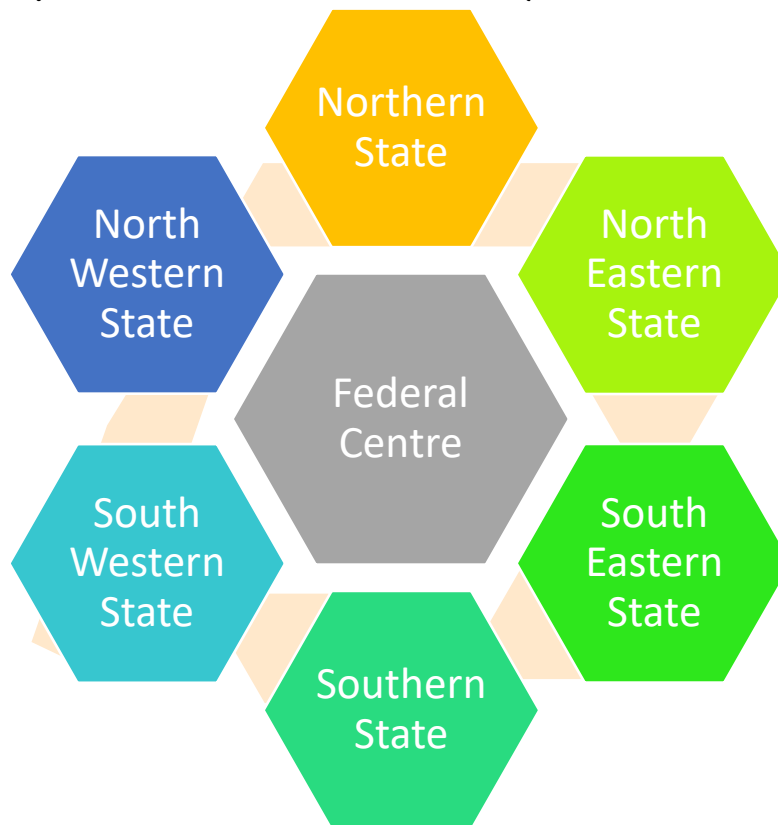


One of the critical problems faced in several newly reconstituted federations is an urgent call for autonomy particularly of ethnic character and fostering appropriate links across the board. In these cases, the only solution that seems feasible is a federal structure. However, there is a caveat. Federating to satisfy ethnic or regional demands can solve a problem in the short run, but it can backfire when the time is right. This was true in the case of the former USSR most of whose units were linked confederally through what was called the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in order to accommodate the yearning for autonomy by some of its subunits. But no sooner than glasnost and perestroika unfurled by Gorbachev, the different non-Russian nationalities, ethnicities, and groups set their sights on sovereign independence. Not long after, even the Russians began to assert greater expression of their narrow nationalism and a few that remained due to their geographic locations such as the Chechnya started to agitate for independence; and the fighting is still going on.

Yugoslavia, ruled by the Leagues of Communists, and the iron fist of an enlightened despot Joseph Broz Tito, erupted into civil war once the dictator who kept the autonomy-seeking nationalities together with repression had

died. Two of its republics, Slovenia and Croatia, took the lead in secession. Slovenia's secession was for all practical purposes successful. Croatia precariously established its independence but has lost approximately a third of its territory to Serbia which invaded it to liberate what it claimed were hostage local Serbs. Macedonia also seceded, while Bosnia was soon wracked by a three-way civil war waged between Bosnian Muslims, Serbian Orthodox Christians, and Croats, destined to be partitioned in the same manner. Montenegro, and territories captured by the Serbian army, in the end, decided to maintain at least some semblance of Yugoslavian federalism.

Proposed Federal Structure (to be amended)



Important Points to Consider in Creating the Regional Federation

1. The Abiy Team has to forge a Constituent Assembly to decide on the type of federalism Ethiopia needs to stay united. It may take the committee up to three years to come up with a decision.
2. Once the decision is reached a Referendum should be held to give legality to the framework of the Ethiopian federalism.

3. The right of secession in Article 39 should be abrogated. In reality, trying to dismember Ethiopia militarily or otherwise should be construed as treason punishable by death or by a life sentence.
4. There should be a bicameral parliament where in one regions (federal units) have proportional representation and in the other delegates represent citizens directly.
5. The federal level, as well as the regional level, will have their parliaments
6. The federal parliament that represents citizens directly (akin to the House of Commons in parliamentary democracy and House of People's Representative in the US Presidential system) will have to have authority to appoint governors for the regional bodies, can dissolve their parliament if it reaches an impasse, can take over administrative duties for up to six months at a time.
7. The judiciary should be totally independent, and judges must serve for an unlimited time given good behaviour or physical or mental capacity.
8. Foreign Affairs, commanding the military, controlling financial levers of power, taxation, customs duties, inter regional commerce, allocation of revenue sources, national banking, currency, regulation welfare are kept firmly with the central government.
9. When there is a dispute between the central and the regional governments, they solve the problem through negotiations. If negotiations fail the decision of the central parliament holds.
10. Local administration and, primary education should be left to the regions.
11. Both the regional governments and the centre could legislate on their own but central legislation overrides the local.
12. Senior judges and civil servants should be appointed by the centre.
13. As for lingua franca, both Amharic and Afan Oromo have to be recognized but with the proviso that local language overrides where one group forms a majority in a region or city.
14. Amharic should be the working language all over the country, but Afan Oromo would be an official language where Oromo speakers command a majority.
15. Local languages could be used in elementary schools in all the states, but Amharic should be taught in tandem
16. The two-tier system for Ethiopians, Ethiopians and Ethiopian born nationals should be abolished and considering the millions of Ethiopians living abroad; dual nationality should be granted following the example of 42

countries in the world including major nations such as Australia, Canada, United States, Britain, France, and Germany.

Recruitment to the Army and the officer corps should be broad-based, covering all regional states.

All the above proves that federalism which is by its very nature too intimately linked with democratic republicanism cannot be viable if it is imposed by a central authority on ethnic lines as in Ethiopia or protected by force and ruled from above as in the USSR and Yugoslavia. This is so because such an arrangement is neither true federalism nor is it destined to be efficacious. In Western Europe, Spain adopted what it called the regime of the autonomies. This is a form of a federal structure designed to accommodate the festering internal nationality problems, particularly in the Catalan region. In fifteen years of its adoption of a democratic constitution and the regime of the autonomies in place, the introduction of those federal principles coupled with democratic norms has had remarkable success in diffusing internal conflict and restoring peace. In the Americas, the reinforcement of federalism coupled with keeping out juntas from monopolizing political power as they had done for decades earlier has led to a remarkable success. Brazil's new constitution increases the legal powers of the states as against the federal level, and that was done in the name of democracy.

The transition from authoritarianism to democracy in Brazil has been successful though problems of leadership and corruption of officials has tainted the workings of the political system. No matter what, federalism cannot take root if there is no democracy. Of late, there has been some promise that regional confederal pacts have been put in place in Central America and this will definitely play a significant role in the restoration of democracy in Panama and Nicaragua and other countries of central and southern America.

It is to be recognized that since the end of the Second World War, federalism has taken root in all major continents such that at the moment there are 50 out of the 203 politically sovereign states that are either federations or include within them forms of self-government which represents extensions of federal principles.

The Constitution that came into effect in Ethiopia in 1995 established a federation made up of nine ethno-linguistically divided regional states and two chartered federal cities Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. The nine regional states are Afar, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, Harari, Oromia, Somali, Tigray, and the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region. However, the Constitution also grants self-government to all ethnolinguistic communities, including, if they so desire, the right to form a regional state or even to secede and form an independent country. The Constitution explicitly states that "all sovereign power resides in the Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples of Ethiopia." They have the right to secede if they so wish following some processes. It defines ethnolinguistic communities as "Nation, Nationality or People" a group of people who have or share a large measure of a common culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identity, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory." Meles Zenawi kept his ethnic federalism by force or the threat of force for example in the Somali region. But one cannot do that forever. A time comes when leaders believe in peace not in the use of force as happened in 2019 Ethiopia. Repression will work only in the short term.

If we look around the world, we observe that the rapid spread of federalism has been to a large extent a response to the effort on the part of a number of sovereign states attempting to force the peoples on their respective territories into a prison of institutions that force citizens to conform. Tyrannical governments or totalitarian systems like that of Meles Zenawi tend to create federations that are organically the same as single central governments that would enable tin pot dictators to oppress people and keep them in subjugation. This goal has been linked to revolutionary radicalism as well as to the forces of reaction. Ethnic federalism was held in check with Meles' revolutionary democracy for 28 years but it cannot go on, and it was to be so when it was created. It was to work for as long as the TPLF would rule and then? Break up into Bantustans. These nihilists should not succeed whatever the form. Federal arrangements coupled with democratization are lifesavers, sentinels of

sovereignty and unity promoters. Ethiopia needs this more than ever. Let us help it succeed. We should not leave everything to Abiy. We should give robust support to him and his team. That is a responsibility that we cannot shirk! In the final analysis, one thing is sure. Ethiopia will never be a failed nation! She has survived the Ottoman's who used Ismael El Gazi as a proxy and tried to subjugate her but failed miserably; she has survived the Egyptians by slaughtering them twice in battle in the 19th century; she crushed the Mahdiist Sudanese at Gallabat in the 19th century; she has humiliated the Italians twice in the 19th and 20th centuries; and now she has survived the TPLF who planned to disintegrate her through ethnic compartmentalization. Ethiopia is like an India rubber boll; the harder you dash her to the ground, the higher she rises!

¹ This is a written version of a keynote speech delivered at a conference, "Ethiopia Forum: Challenges and Prospects for Constitutional Democracy in Ethiopia," held at Michigan State University, March 22, 2019

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