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# ETHNIC FEDERALISM AND AUTHORITARIAN SURVIVAL IN ETHIOPIA

By

YOHANNES GEDAMU

Under the Direction of Carrie Manning, PhD

## ABSTRACT

After the fall of the military regime (the *Dergue*) in Ethiopia, that had ruled for seventeen years, the EPRDF (Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front) coalition and some former liberation fronts took control of the state and the systemic political transformation of the country. The impact they made on the state stability, political and economic questions however, invite further investigation. Considering the historical preludes, understanding today's political landscape and lingering political and economic questions, this dissertation examines an institutional solution introduced by EPRDF led government in Ethiopia, i.e. Ethnic Federalism. The post-1991 politics and EPRDF's coalition however, are highly dominated by the Tigray People's Liberation Front

(TPLF) with a political base of roughly six percent of the total population. Nonetheless, the coalition, while challenged by fractured coalitions of political opposition and intra-party struggles, remains stable and in control. Hence, the dissertation provides a broader analysis on how the EPRDF coalition survives amid such challenges and remains in hold of political power while the overarching majority opposing its domination of the political landscape. As such, I focus on whether the federal arrangement, introduced as institutional solution to address grievances of diverse groups created mechanisms that enabled the regime's political survival. In doing so, through diverse methodologies such as the use of comparative historical analysis and process tracing, elite interviews, case studies and use of secondary sources, I argue that Ethiopia's ethnic federalism has effectively served the incumbent elites by providing the platform and mechanisms that ensured success of authoritarian survival. Overall, this dissertation in its first part discusses the continuity of culture of elite interaction that served as the foundation to survivalist politics in the country. Secondly, through careful investigation of the federal setting, the dissertation concludes that such federal arrangement is designed with the survivalist agenda in mind. As such, through patron-client relations, use of institutional arrangements that targeted group right promotion agenda in the political as well as economic schemes, the coalition navigated the political landscape quite skillfully thereby guaranteeing its survival for well over two decades and half.

INDEX WORDS: Ethnic Federalism, Authoritarian Survival, Political Culture, Neo-Patrimonialism, Clientelism, Democratization, Institutional Designs, Elite Strategies

ETHNIC FEDERALISM AND AUTHORITARIAN SURVIVAL IN ETHIOPIA

by

YOHANNES GEDAMU

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2017

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2017

ETHNIC FEDERALISM AND AUTHORITARIAN SURVIVAL IN ETHIOPIA

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**DEDICATION**

To my beautiful children, Yovel and Leah, and to my wife, Seble, I love you all and this is for you. To my parents, Yenehun Gedamu and Alemnesh Kidanie, thank you for your love and endless support that I am indebted forever.

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The journey was tough, trying and required the level of patience and perseverance of the highest proportions, all of which, I assumed that I never had. However, as it is always the case in my life, God was always with me and I am extremely grateful for the support and courage he bestowed in me and my family throughout our lives in general and in the last four years of my graduate studies in particular. What comes second is of course, my family. My wife, Seble Ademe was not only supportive of my academic endeavors, but also she was the backbone of our family. If it was not for her support from the beginning, I would not have achieved anything in my academic endeavors. Seibly, this is for you and for our lovely children, Yovel and Leah. My parents, Mr. Yenehun Gedamu and Alemnesh Zekarias, have also been my important sources of motivation. I have always felt their prayers and if it was not for their support and prayers, I would have had the hardest of times to succeed in anything I was trying to accomplish. My mother, Alemnesh (Tata), in particular paid sacrifices that could not be quantified in any way possible. Here, it is also extremely important for me to mention my mother-in-law, Tirugebeya Desta (Etalem). Etalem, along with my mom, was always there to help with my children thereby providing me breathing spaces here and there so that I can solely focus in my studies. I am indebted to her support. The same also goes to my supportive sister-in-law, Tigist Ademe, who has been there for our children and whenever we needed her.

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**PART ONE**

## 1 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Sub Saharan African countries share lots of commonalities. Among their shared attributes, majority of states in this region have suffered from yoke of colonialism, administrations that followed the colonial era mostly become authoritarian regimes, under-development and the ensuing poverty became a characterizing feature in most of these states, and most importantly the history of conflict and brutal civil wars became another common feature. In a positive note however, we find that abundance of diversity, cultural richness, more or less similar paths of history of state formation, and the people's societal norms also make these states very much comparable. However, there also some anomalous historical attributes that could define and explain a certain Sub-Saharan African state more than the other. When looking at the evolution of the modern state of Ethiopia for instance, we find a state that kept its independence from colonial rule after defeating and surviving imperial Italy's historically ambitious attempt of creating a larger colonial empire in Eastern part of Africa.

Regardless of peculiarities like the ones mentioned above however, the fact that the prospects and successes of democratization in Sub-Saharan Africa are limited and the presence of long serving dictatorships, regardless of how much is written and said about, remains a situation that still deserves the attention of scholars in comparative politics. Attempting to further explore why such states fail to democratize and or understanding how the political regimes in this part of Africa succeeded to survive the many challenges posed against their rule is therefore essential. Or simply put, understanding how could such regimes preserve their hold on political power albeit their ineffective governance and continuing increase in popular resentment of their rule is very

much a relevant course in research directions that we should sustain in our comparative political research pursuits.

Understanding the reasons behind the political survival of authoritarian regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa in comparative perspective, I believe therefore is very vital contribution. However, the fact that tackling such a task demands bigger resources and time means, I have limited this project to only studying a single case study of Ethiopia, with the goal of explaining authoritarian survival from varied lenses and approaches that are primarily used in the study of authoritarian survival as well as democratization. In this study therefore, I look at how a minority ethnic clique with a strong control of a political coalition, that holds more of the political, economic, military and security might of the Ethiopian state was able to survive and remain in hold of political power despite the country's two major ethnic groups (the Oromo and Amhara, who constitute about 65% of the Ethiopian population) as well as other ethnic groups' continuing grievances of political as well as economic exclusion remain ever present. Before delving deep into an effort to address the research question and studying the politics of contemporary Ethiopian state however, I argue that it is crucial to look at three important historical realities that help shape the debate on the question of assessing how authoritarian regimes (in the past or present) in the Ethiopian state survived the challenges against their political dominance in their particular periods of administration.

Firstly, the political landscape in Ethiopia today is a result of the historical making and unmaking of the state in so many different ways by different regimes that had control of political power in dissimilar political eras. As explained earlier, this fact is regardless of the historic truth that the country is one of not many states in the developing world that had never been administered by a colonial power in its entire history, which I believe is a reality that helps or leads to avoid the

debate on the legacy of colonialism altogether at least when it comes to studying the case of Ethiopia in general and the survival of the current authoritarian rule of more than 25 years in particular. Hence, looking at other pervasive historical preludes of the state becomes very vital. The Haile Selassie I regime ruled the country for over four decades until it was overthrown by the *Dergue* regime in 1974. The *Dergue* regime itself was overthrown in 1991 after ruling the country with iron fist for seventeen years. Here, I argue that it is crucial how these regimes structured their governance, managed the center-periphery relations (relations between the regional states and the central government), and effected their political survival for the long haul. Because, researching and understanding the underlying reasons, by relying on cultural, institutional, economic as well as strategic approaches on identifying the causal explanations for the survival of such regimes for the long period will have a huge contribution to the field on its own.

Secondly, today's Ethiopia, in its current formal name, *The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia* (FDRE), is a state with an institutional design of ethnic federalism as a form of government structure, which is different in comparison to many others federal cases in Sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, this dissertation also looks into studying what guides the political and economic relationships between regional states and the central government in this type of federal setting. It is mostly perceived that the current regime in power since 1991, constituted the Ethiopian state through ethnic federal arrangement due to its goal of expanding rights to many groups with the goal of creating economic and political equality, which many argue never been the case under the previous political administrations. Despite the existence of other African states with federal structures (Nigeria, South Africa, to name a few), the Ethiopian example remains anomalous mainly because of the country's federal arrangement is devised based on clear ethnic and linguistic lines or classifications resulting in clear departure from the Pan-Ethiopian nationalist political regimes

that preceded the current incumbents. Hence, understanding the broader ramifications in terms of the consequences of having this type of federal arrangement on the political survival of the current political regime is significant not only to our knowledge of the current state of politics in the country, but also with regards to its contribution to the field of comparative politics in general. Moreover, its contribution in further adding to our broader understanding of the politics of federalism and devolution of powers in a Sub-Saharan African state like Ethiopia in particular is also enormous.

Thirdly, the Ethiopian protracted civil wars that preceded the formation of a transitional council in 1991 with the coming of the EPRDF coalition into the helm of political power remain crucial in how such a historical episode shaped the course of events that followed. Such wars that started during the 1960s and mostly ended in the early years of 1990s had involved many rebel organizations with many of them representing different ethnic grievances as their political agendas. For such rebel groups, exploiting such ethnocentric agendas happened to be extremely important towards their attempt to achieve some form of recognition for the political grievances they embraced upon raising arms. While some of these rebel organizations fought to realize their Pan-Ethiopian nationalist agendas along ideological lines, some others paid huge price for their unsuccessful secessionist bids, with the exception being the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (here after EPLF), that later succeeded in achieving independence and establishing the State of Eritrea. The commonality in most of these former rebel movements that waged armed struggle during this era was their ambition for the expansion of group rights by ending what they termed ‘the domination of one or two major ethnic groups’ in every sphere of political and economic life in the historic Ethiopian State. These rebel groups were also the ones that would later put their ethnic agenda ahead of the national political agenda when opportunities to take political power emerged. Such

groups and the individuals who inspired the formation of the various rebellion forces desired that all ethnic groups in the country enjoy equal political representation and economic opportunities. For them, addressing such issues would limit potential opposition to their rule and solves historic questions of inequality. Adding to the commonality of the very elites from the radical left wing era, the leaders of these groups were also once part of a very active students' movement in the 1960's that among others contributed to the downfall of the long serving political regime led by Emperor Haile Selassie I.

These groups of individuals constantly debated the issue of identity and competing ethnic nationalism and grievances that they thought were created as a result of the domination of all minorities in the country by what they referred as the mostly Amhara-Tigre dominated political culture<sup>1</sup>. In light of the broader comparative politics literature on the recurrence of civil wars, it is clearly stated that the probability of a return to civil war is highly likely given experiences of a history of conflict<sup>2</sup>. The literature also asserts that even though ethnic fractionalization could not be blamed for the outbreak or recurrence of civil wars, in a situation that a minority ethnic group

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<sup>1</sup> In a small paper written by a student movement leader named Walelign Mekonnen, (which can be accessed at: <http://walilegnfordemocracia.com/onationalqu.pdf>) we find an influential piece that instigated debates of political representation and inequality in the country in the sixties.

<sup>2</sup> For the recurrence of civil war in countries with history of conflict, look at: Sambanis, Nicholas. "Using case studies to expand economic models of civil war." *Perspectives on Politics* 2, no. 02 (2004): 259-279, and Call, Charles T. *Why peace fails: the causes and prevention of civil war recurrence*. Georgetown University Press, 2012.

dominates the political space, ethnic fractionalization could well serve as the cause of civil war.<sup>3</sup> This indeed is also confirmed by recent literature that put the issue of ‘creed’, among others, as part of the overall explanation for the emergence of conflicts as well as in the sustenance or duration of such wars (Zartman 2005). Here, it is important to note that the overall aim of the project is not centered around understanding causations of conflict or recurrence of it. However, given those who control political power came to achieve that through a violent civil war necessitates to bring issue at some point or another for its relevance for our understanding of authoritarian survival could not also be debated.

Hence, this fact explained above also begs the question in that how a political regime, which is supported by a minority group that effectively dominates the political, military, security establishments while controlling the command of economic spheres of influence in Ethiopian politics survives political opposition for well over two decades without facing a strong rebellion, opposition or various forms of popular movements against its rule. Because, even the presence of periodic political upheavals also failed to deter the regime from its survivalist bid and that I argue that must be explored with regards to what the literature says about the potential for recurrence of civil wars and popular movements. Nevertheless, this project mainly this project explores how ethnic federalist arrangements were critical to the political survival of the ruling elite on top of the ruling EPRDF coalition.

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<sup>3</sup> For more on the literature, look at: Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. "Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war." *American political science review* 97, no. 01 (2003): 75-90.

Such realities of recent past history (briefly mentioned above) and many others that this project attempts to address make the question of democratic transition and authoritarian survival in the Ethiopian state a very complex one. In fact, following the collapse of a military socialist regime in 1991, many had hoped that the new transition could usher in a much better hope and prospect for democratic governance in the country. Unfortunately, the historic political and economic solutions put forth to pave the road for the emergence of democratic Ethiopia did not materialize. Instead, it created winners and losers. Important to note however, such solutions of power sharing, in the form of ethnic federalism, led to considerable stability. The solutions that were introduced in terms of institutional designs with expectations of answering historical grievances of the various groups (that were formerly represented by various ethnic rebel factions) that went through the protracted civil wars are among others the issues that this project assesses in more detail going forward. However, given list of failures of such institutional solutions, which I will extensively present in the dissertation, it necessitates an effort to disentangle the prospects as well as the challenges of an arrangement such as ethnic federalism. In that respect, given that the democratization process is not a success and we as researchers, I believe are left to deal with our efforts to understand the survival mechanisms of such a political regime in the case of Ethiopia. Therefore, it also now becomes very important to look closely at the current Ethiopian regime's mechanisms for political survival in more detailed fashion.

As it is clear from the many instances, especially from the notoriously failed examples in the case of Eastern European states, institutional solutions such as constituting a state in the form of ethnic federalism is mainly introduced as a way to control the state and create a sense of stability while attempting to address questions of political representation and other questions of grievances

that arise from diverse groups within such states. Because, for such regimes devising the institutional solutions of this kind, the elites are convinced that doing so is the most critical step for the purpose of gaining the level of political legitimacy that they seek. Understanding whether this form of institutional solution was designed with such similar goals in mind when it comes to the Ethiopian case therefore becomes an essential question.

### **1.1 Purpose of the Research**

Given what has been mentioned thus far, this dissertation project serves two important purposes. First, it involves the assessment of the Ethiopian case alone. In that regard, the purpose of the research is structured in a way that helps us understand the overarching dynamics of varying authoritarian regimes in the Ethiopian state's modern political history. Hence, by marrying the historical narrative that the project develops with the current of assessment of the state of politics in the country i.e. the model of ethnic federalism in the country and its evolution, I believe that we will be served better in studying the topic in hand. Hence, firstly, it is important to look at the historical evolution of the modern Ethiopian state in general and the mechanisms utilized for political survival that by each of the regimes in their efforts to keep hold of political power in their respective eras. I argue that despite the fact that the two political regimes (the Imperial Regime under Haile Selassie I and the Socialist Military Regime, the *Dergue*) are mostly different from each other across many important issues, the political culture under which their political rule were manifested through remained similar in systematic ways. Such a political culture, as we could later see from different perspectives, will be brought back to the political fold with the coming of the EPRDF led regime and remain embraced and further cultivated in unique ways to benefit the survival ambitions of those at the top of the political regime in power since 1991. The dissertation

therefore, in its Part One explains the ramifications of the political culture as well as institutional designs of the prior political regimes and today's incumbents. In doing so, it puts greater emphasis on how such combined factors served the survival interests of the elites at the center of political power in their respective political eras. Here, it is important to note that the dissertation's invoking of political culture is not primarily to frame it as the main causal explanation for the question of authoritarian survival. However, I argue that the persistence of political culture throughout the modern political period is clearly evident and therefore should not be ignored. Moreover, I also argue that although the continuity of political culture is an essential feature, the regimes in power in different eras had also engaged in the remaking of the state in one way or another, which necessitates the study of political culture as the foundation to our understanding of the institutional and strategic mechanisms that I argue are more appealing to explain authoritarian survival in the case of Ethiopia.

The second and most substantive part of the project involves understanding the consequences of the institutional design of ethnic federalism in terms of its contribution to the survival of the current political regime in the country as well as the challenges that needs a further explanation in understanding the case of Ethiopia in particular. Thus, simply put, my dissertation project attempts to identify the mechanisms within which ethnic federalism served the survival interest of the political elite at the top of current political regime in the country, i.e. the EPRDF coalition. Moreover, besides looking at the ethnic federal arrangement extensively, this part of the dissertation also presents important junctures of historical magnitude that shaped the current state of politics in the last two decades, while also indicating what to expect moving forward to the next period awaiting the Ethiopian state in its chapter on conclusion and policy implication. The research

therefore touches upon three important approaches in the study of democratization that I am relying to help us understand the mechanisms of authoritarian survival in the country from the old times to the very our time. Besides political culture, I therefore assess both institutional solutions and the strategic interests of the rational political elite in the making of the causal analysis in the study of authoritarian survival in Ethiopia. While the first part of the dissertation mainly presents the political culture in the political history of modern Ethiopia and the assessment of its ramifications towards today's realities, the second part of the project mainly focuses on the institutional design of ethnic federalism and the role of the political elite in cultivating and implementing creative political and economic mechanisms for their survivalist agenda.

## **1.2 The Research Plan and Methodology**

The methodology employed in this dissertation is qualitative in nature. Hence, comparative historical analysis across various regimes in contemporary political history of Ethiopia are discussed in detail. In doing so, I have identified crucial points in history that have influenced the nature of authoritarian survival in the country by mostly discussing patterns of interaction among the political elite through out the periods investigated. Such patterns of interaction are what I also dubbed as the political culture which persistently defined the course of politics in the country. Moreover, consistent with such analysis used, substantive chapters also include the discussion of further critical junctures that I found useful in our understanding of authoritarian survival in Ethiopia. In addition, in both part one as well as part two of the dissertation, I have utilized great deal of information that I collected through my extensive field research. Throughout my field work that occurred from January 2017 to July 2017, I have interviewed more than fifty individuals. The interviews were conducted mostly in person, some through telephone conversations and few via

email exchanges. The field work has taken me to diverse sets of places in the United States, Europe and some of the interviews were also conducted with individuals who reside in Ethiopia via telephone interviews. Due to the need to protect the identity of the interview subjects, in part per my commitment with the individuals who participated in the interviews and with Georgia State University's institutional review board, and importantly because of the understanding that some of the information could adversely impact the safety of my interview subjects, I have not included names, and detailed personal information of the participants. Instead, I have included information about when and where most of the interviews were conducted. Next, I discuss the research plan while also explaining what methodological avenues were employed in each chapter included in the project.

With the goals of understanding the research question explained from the outset, the dissertation chapters are outlined as follows. The literature review (chapter two) builds on the debates on authoritarian survival in contemporary comparative politics literature while keeping in mind how that relates with regards to the Sub-Saharan African context. The chapter also reviews the federalism literature with a large emphasis on ethnic federal arrangement by drawing on the experiences of numbers of countries with a federal setting that have put ethnic identity at the center of their political discourse.

The theory (chapter three) also focuses on theoretical explanations that the political elite relied on in adopting the institutional design in the first place while further develops and analyzes the strategic interest of rational political elites and how they attempt to make sure the delivery of popular political and economic demands ensures their effective control of the state. Moreover, in the theory section, I also further attempt to show how the elite used the debate on individual versus

group rights in devising different forms of policy directions as well as their implementations, which again serve instrumental to the political survival goals of the very elite who devised the institutional frameworks that enabled the ruling elite's effective control of the Ethiopian state for well over two decades. In this section, I also focus on how such ill conceived solutions that were considered in alleviating the problems of political representation and economic equality among diverse groups in the country further decapitated the growth of democracy in the country but instead ensured the regime's political survival. Thirdly, I will also attempt to show how elite's maneuver of economic reform plans focus on nothing but the political goals of the elites themselves by providing an in-depth explanation drawing practical examples that add to the theoretical claims.

Chapter Four of the dissertation, which is entitled 'The Making and Unmaking of the Ethiopian Modern State: Political Culture and a Historical Overview of Authoritarian Regimes' Methods of Survival in Contemporary Ethiopia' pays a close attention to three very important historical periods in Ethiopia, which represent three different political regimes. Such regimes are the Imperial regime led by Emperor Haile Selassie I (1930 -1974), the Socialist Military Regime, known as the *Dergue* under the leadership of Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam (1974 – 1991) and the current political regime that the EPRDF coalition controls in post-1991 political period. While I also provide brief overview of the political regimes even before the imperial regime of Haile Selassie I, more focus is given to the first two historical periods that indicated above given the third one remains in hold of political power today. Therefore, as explained in the purpose of the research earlier, the dissertation focuses on how the many attributes of the Ethiopian political culture remained persistent across such historical periods and remain a significant factor in shaping the political fortunes of the Ethiopian state in our time. As I argued earlier, all the three regimes lack much resemblance to each other in terms of the way their political systems were devised. While

the imperial regime under the leadership of Haile Sellassie I relied on more of semi-capitalist but mostly feudalistic rule, the *Dergue* leadership led by Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam focused on socialist party machine in imposing its authoritarian rule. Both of these regimes, however, had used Pan-Ethiopian nationalist tone to subvert the opposition that could be armed or unarmed. Besides the nationalist approach however, again, the level of political participation and representation of citizens as well the economic policies in service of their national agenda also varied greatly among these regimes. The current regime under the leadership of the EPRDF coalition is very much different and emerged with the anti-thesis to what had transpired in the few historical decades of rule of the two political regimes.

However, the political culture at the heart of each political regime speaks louder in terms of how each regime's clientelistic political networks and strategies helped the survival of the governance systems. Therefore, by studying how the regimes' political practices, economic policies and institutions served their political goals of survival, the broader influence of the country's political culture in its modern institutional characters (for instance from the old patrimonialism and clientelistic neo-patrimonialism to political party ideologies) and assessment of state institutional designs, this dissertation's contribution in its focus on the assessment of the historical episodes are extensive. Therefore, by relying on the comparative historical analysis of these political regimes across time and describing the peculiar regime characteristics and by interviewing the political elite that served across these different political eras, I attempt to draw causal explanations in how the regimes' political practices, economic policies and institutional designs served their political goals of survival. Moreover, understanding the political explanations behind the downfall of the first two regimes that I presented in detail, I believe that much could be learned since that serves as clear indicator of the continuing cycle of political culture in the country, which the chapter

explains in much more detail. In general, this chapter identifies and analyzes important events or trajectories of historical significance, which reiterate the important roles of the political elite as well as the institutional frameworks that they devised while showing the continuing recurrence of the similar problems in contemporary Ethiopian politics at large.

Chapter Five of the project entitled, ‘The Making and Unmaking of the Ethiopian Modern State Under the Military regime and the Emergence of TPLF Led EPRDF political Coalition’ also continues the discussion and analysis that chapter four focused on and directly addresses the relevant historical questions that are presented in the dissertation while again showing the cycle of politics in contemporary Ethiopian politics in recent decades. Chapter five concludes part one of the dissertation, which is mainly designed to provide the literature reviews, the theoretical explanations and the historical foundations in which the overarching argument are primarily based.

The first chapter in part two of the dissertation, Chapter Six, entitled, ‘Emergence of Ethiopia’s Ethnic Federalism: Structural Frameworks as Mechanisms for Authoritarian Survival’ sets the tone for most of the discussion in this part of the dissertation. Earlier, I have indicated that in a post-1991 power sharing in Ethiopia, the previous rebel factions and their leadership constituted most of the new leadership in the emerging political elite in the country and chose to restructure and shake the political system by devising a new federal structure along mostly ethnic and linguistic lines. In doing so, the new institutional structure created new autonomous regional states and bestowed the right to self-government to many ethnic groups, prioritized promotion of group rights over individual ones, promised fair representation at the federal government level, and so on. However, not only many argue that such promises are never fulfilled, but remain intrigued on whether such reforms were designed to serve the interest of the political elite to extend their hold of political power. Therefore, this chapter investigates such failed promises very broadly. While the crucial

contribution of the chapter is adding important knowledge to the tenets of federalism and decentralization in a sub-Saharan state, like Ethiopia, the following variables are further explored and assessed in more detail in chapter seven and eight of this part of the dissertation. The level of freedom the newly created regional states enjoyed in the last two decades and half in administrative autonomy (vis-à-vis their relations with the central government), electoral politics in regional states vis-à-vis the center (the federal government) and candidate selection mechanisms, and the assessment of the independence of bureaucratic system more broadly. The emergence of new challenges and their impact in the regime's policies and ethnic federalism at large are also discussed.

At the heart of such variables, understanding the co-optation mechanisms of the ruling elite at the central government take center stage. Simply put, the dissertation broadly examines federal-regional state relations from the perspective of ranges of issues. In that regard, the main goal remains to understand how all such variables play out in reinforcing the current political regime's rule and ensure the elites' survival. The Methodological choice in use will focus on processes tracing to identify important trajectories with huge potential to explain the question at hand. However, the elite interviews that I conducted played a very important role in providing detailed insights across the issues I attempted to investigate in the chapter.

Chapter Nine of the dissertation, entitled 'Ethiopia's Ethnic Federalism and State-Centered Economic Paradigms: A Further Analysis on the Anatomy of Survivalist Party-State', further continues the essentials of what are presented in part two of the dissertation. The chapter hence, focuses on how the ethnic federal setting helped the political elite maneuver the economic programs they envisioned and implemented to their goals of survival. More broadly, this chapter assesses post-1991 economic paradigms and policies in Ethiopia. The political elite in Ethiopian government at first believed such policies and economic plans serve in both the development as well as

promotion of diverse groups' rights towards economic equality. Nonetheless, despite the registration of reasonable level of economic progress, the people still suffer from historic levels of economic inequality and the very institutional design of ethnic federalism that aids the success of such economic programs that the political elites thought would address economic inequality of the various formerly oppressed groups on the basis of the promotion of group rights did nothing but served as a ploy for authoritarian survival. The chapter at large therefore investigates how such economic policies failed to deliver the economic opportunities that the people deserved as well as attempts to identify and explain what has led to such failures as the policies were implemented in the newly arranged federal state. The issue of property rights in the last couple of decades, the impact of interventionist state-centered economy on individual and group rights, the state controlled economic enterprises and party owned endowments will be assessed more broadly and the impact in their contribution to the regime's political survival will be explored. Moreover, the growing role of the Ethiopian military in the economic sector the ruling elite's dependence on the military will be examined in light of the newly emerging challenges that are yet to be researched given they are evolving. The chapter of course, gives a bigger emphasis on how such state centered economic policies transpired in Ethiopia's ethnic federal arrangement and again ties that to how they contributed to the political regime's effective control of the state resulting in the survival of political coalition that has led the country for over two decades and half. This chapter also shows how such economic policies and the growing in strength of the regional political elites is shaking the political power at the center and how that could impact the political fortunes of the state moving forward again in light of the new challenges. The elite interviews I conducted significantly contributed to interesting insight this chapter. Moreover, the limited cases I studied, by which some archives are

investigated for mostly primary and secondary sources also made significant contribution in shaping the chapter.

Finally, in the ‘Conclusion and Policy Implications’ chapters, I assessed the goals of the research and what the dissertation achieves in terms of the contribution to the literature in authoritarian survival in general while also giving a due attention for my work’s limitations. Moreover, I also explained how this project contributes to the general understanding of politicians, policy makers, consultants and the general academic and non-academic reader. I will make a case about the broader implications of my research and attempted to point out what ‘corrections’ could be considered to turn the nation’s recent journey into a formidable effort towards democratic governance and the break-up of authoritarian survival strategies.

## **2 CHAPTER TWO: THE LITERATURE IN AUTHORITARIAN SURVIVAL AND ETHNIC FEDERALISM: LITERATURE REVIEW**

Why authoritarian regimes elect to design some seemingly democratic institutions or adopt to attributes that make them look a democratizing state while their authoritarian tendencies and characters remain intact is a question that is highly entertained by considerable number of scholars in comparative politics. However, further attempts towards full fledging explanations need to be encouraged. Beyond this assertion however, there is already substantial but not yet complete account of comparative politics literature that explains what leads to the survival of political power of authoritarian regimes’. In the first section of this literature review, I therefore look at several contemporary and popular works that contributed to the understanding of the politics of authoritarian survival by employing various methodological avenues. From most of these works, we learn

that two crucial things stand out in the most part. While the idea of institutional solutions as mechanisms employed by governing elites or political parties come first, the elite centered politics and the mechanisms utilized in different form of power sharing mechanisms among the ruling elite is the other. In lieu of such observation, I discuss the literature on authoritarian survival with the notion that this work adds to further our understanding of how the political elite's maneuver of ethnic federal institutional setting might have contributed to decades old survival of today's incumbents in Ethiopian politics.

Among the many I discuss here after, Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way's (2010) recent work in particular assesses such 'competitive but authoritarian' states with substantial theoretical detail. The authors' attempts put forth the rationale for political survival by utilizing both domestic as well as international variables. Their main argument is that states with close relations with the developed and democratic world (the Western countries) tend to democratize while states with strong and oppressive structures tend to remain authoritarian. In fact, relating such an assertion with that of Ethiopian history, we find that the notion that the *Dergue* dictatorial regime that ruled the state from 1974 until 1991 and its relations with the soviet empire might have reinforced its authoritarian characters could be more amenable. The fact that a scholarly work such as Levitsky and Way's work could explain the survival of that certain regime given the political and military support from the Soviets until late 1980's does not however, mean that it captures the whole story. The fact that that certain regime had not had competitive electoral setting, among others, is one issue that we have to consider. Moreover, looking at the many historical attributes of the regime in a broader sense is another important factor that brings about the whole story. The current political regime led by EPRDF indeed showcases electoral politics albeit not fairly contested either. In

fairness to Levitsky and Way's argument, today's EPRDF led political coalition with the dominance of the TPLF elites also enjoy wider level of western support although it remains authoritarian and devoid of conducive playing field for electoral competition and other needed democratic attributes. Although the author's argument on the use of coercive powers of the state in helping authoritarian survival could also explain the case of Ethiopia, its contribution however, will be limited since the factors helping EPRDF are in fact much more than its domination of the country's security apparatus. Regardless of what such seminal works contributions for our understanding of authoritarian survival therefore, it remains imperative that we learn more of those different cases that do not fit into Levistky and Way's explanation while also attempting explanations designed upon different methodological avenues that I hereby attempt to explore.

In continuing the discussion of the contemporary scholarship, in their work, Levitsky and Way define Competitive authoritarian regimes as "civilian regimes in which formal democratic institutions exist and are widely viewed as the primary means of gaining power, but in which incumbents' abuse of the state places them at a significant advantage vis-à-vis their opponents. Such regimes are competitive in that opposition parties use democratic institutions to seriously contest for political power, but they are not democratic because the playing field is heavily skewed in favor of incumbents. Competition is thus real but unfair."<sup>4</sup> Their definition is a comprehensive attempt on the topic and still concurs with the notion of lack of democratic competition or as they

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<sup>4</sup> The definition can be found on page 5 of: Levitsky, Steven, and A. Lucan. "Way, Competitive Authoritarianism." *Hybrid Regimes after the Cold War* 3 (2010).

said the presence of ‘skewed competition in favor of the ruling political parties’. However, I reiterate that despite their comprehensive theoretical contributions, the work still fails short on addressing various political regimes that have closed the level playing field for political competition in more broad ways. The case of Ethiopia, I argue can be one of these examples. In the six periodic elections since 1992 in the country for instance, both the processes leading up to the voting and then counting of the election results were challenging to the prospect of the participation of the political opposition given their big doubts of the electoral process that they consider lack any attributes of what an equal playing field should be. Here, it is crucial to keep in mind that Levitsky and Way’s explanations are still centered on the idea of democratic institutions and the elite’s maneuver of such seemingly democratic institutions for their goals of political survival, which is also an argument that I use by reminding that elites’ strategic interests as well as the institutions matter in equal measure’.

In another seminal work entitled, ‘Voting for Autocracy’, we also see that Beatriz Magaloni’s (2006) work that mostly focused on Mexico’s Mexican Institutional Revolutionary Party’s (PRI) successful and prolonged hold of political power in the country, whereby the author argues that the importance of electoral fraud as an explanation for authoritarian survival comes with serious doubts. Instead, Magaloni states that the PRI was effective in making sure no one at the top stratum of political power in the party dominates clientelistic rents, which became effective in creating ‘opportunities’ to all members of the top party brass due to the decentralized distribution of rents across many individual party members who hold political power across the country. Moreover, the author also mentions Barbara Geddes’ (1999) work that explains authoritarian survival based on the elites’ propensity to stay together given the higher costs of defection, and argues that autocratic parties’ domination of popular support, which then could be reinforced by effectively

deceiving voters through the cover up of the political party's dictatorial attributes and by using the seemingly democratic institutions and simple electoral maneuvers.

Assessing Magaloni's work in light of the Ethiopian case, and deriving similarities out of it seems quite possible given the nature of the current coalition led regime in the country and its clientelistic networks at the top level party brass. But we find that in the case of Ethiopia, the rents that the elite collect remain within mostly the political elites' top brass. And that is mostly possible because the institutional maneuvers that the ethnic federal arrangement made possible did not also create any possible checks on party leaders. I argue that that is mainly due to the lower level EPRDF officials strictly follow what is referred as the ruling coalition's party discipline, as we would see in the discussions in part-two of the dissertation. It also has kept the lower party officials out of the riches that come with being part of the party on top of a ruling regime. The catch in the Ethiopian case is that however, the middle and lower level party members receive their rents in the form of administrative corruption at the lower levels of local governments that they are in charge of administrative duties, of which the party elites at the top looks at with blind eyes and deafen ears. Regardless of the departure of the author's explanations compared with the Ethiopian case, Magaloni's effort is indeed exemplary in its attempt to study history in the evaluation of the PRI and the theoretical richness it possesses. However, firstly, I still believe that when applied to broader sets of cases, it comes short of explaining authoritarian survival in multi-ethnic states that are mostly the cases within Sub-Saharan Africa, an area where variables from history, political culture, conflict, the role of the state, structural factors, and institutional issues have a lot to explain about. Secondly, the fact that Magaloni's work, despite its richness in its summary of the literature and theoretical considerations, its main argument is formulated based on a single case study, that is not quite a multi-ethnic state, contrary to most Sub-Saharan African states that are

quite heterogeneous. Therefore, although it remains a significant piece that shows how incumbent political parties could effectively use the institutional systems they design and establish to prolong their political power by delving deep in assessing the PRI, Magaloni's attempt remain inadequate to travel further in helping our understanding of authoritarian survival in a broader sense. Here, I would like to reiterate that Magaloni's work, like Levitsky and Way's also looks at the institutional patterns of interaction within the PRI, which the authors asserted contributes immensely in reinforcing the importance of institutions for the purpose of understanding authoritarian survival.

When we also look at another contemporary work that focused on the Middle Eastern authoritarian regimes, which possess not just limited similarities to some African states, Michael Herb's (1999) work shows us that the gulf monarchies in the region that have centralized political power among the royal family and close relatives of the ruling elite were successful in ensuring their survival for a long haul while other authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and North Africa struggled to maintain their rule given their experiences of periodic (although prolonged) revolutions and regime changes at different times. From the perspective of this project, since the Ethiopian regime in particular is also blamed for concentrating political power along ethnic lines, and given the Tigrayan elites' successful maneuver of the institutions in the Ethiopian state leading to the concentration of Tigrayan elites in many of the most important ministerial portfolios and important institutions, Herb's work creates another important parallel to further understanding the puzzle of authoritarian survival in broader sets of cases.

Here, while Gulf monarchies concentrate power along family and to some extent clan lines, we see that the ruling political regime in Ethiopia, which is highly dominated by the TPLF hierarchy, garnered most political powers by effectively dominating the military and security institutions

as well as command of the economy while also making sure most important cabinet posts remain in the hands of a single ethnic group as I stated above. This definitely begs the question that in a multi ethnic state like Ethiopia, how is it possible for a political regime to stay in power for over two decades despite the fact that its wide support comes out of just a single minority ethnic group in the country, which of course is a question that this project aims to provide answers for. More broadly however, Herb's work clearly identifies the patterns in power succession mechanisms in Middle Eastern monarchies and beyond, which again provides a perspective for my discussion of political succession mechanisms in Ethiopia in the last couple of decades, which we find deeply entrenched along family and ethnic lines that are hugely influenced by just one political party (TPLF) that has asserted its absolute dominance within the governing political coalition, EPRDF in present times and while same goes in describing the old patrimonial regimes in the Ethiopian state.

As I attempted to explain thus far in light of few of the contemporary works in comparative politics, institutions and strategic interests of the elite remain the most compelling explanations to our understanding of authoritarian survival while political culture entrenched within the cases discussed still playing important role of providing foundational causal arguments. Nonetheless, to add to the most important works reviewed briefly above, Milan Svoblik (2012) presents us a further fascinating explanation to the politics of authoritarianism and survival mechanisms in this type of rule. Svoblik argues that the explanation on the topic is primarily centered on two items, i.e. the politics of the ruling elite as it pertains to the ruled 'masses' and the politics of the elite vis-à-vis each other.

The author's overall argument in his seminal work and contributions to the literature when looked at from the perspective of studying African politics is even more significant. Svoblik argues that, "whether and how dictators resolve the problems of power-sharing and control is shaped by two distinctly dismal features of authoritarian politics. First, dictatorships inherently lack an independent authority with the power to enforce agreements among key political actors, especially the dictator, his allies, and their repressive agents. Second, violence is an ever-present and ultimate arbiter of conflicts in authoritarian politics. These two intrinsic features uniquely shape the conduct of politics in dictatorships. They limit the role that political institutions can plausibly play in resolving the problems of power-sharing and control, and they explain the gruesome manner in which so many dictators and dictatorships fall."<sup>5</sup> As I explained earlier about the violent history of the Ethiopian state in terms of decades old civil war, ruling political elites are highly concerned first addressing the challenges they have among themselves given politics of power sharing being an ever-present dilemma to each other's survival. I argue that once such an issue is addressed via mechanisms such as inter party agreements and coalition politics, the elites will turn towards addressing the popular demand for political and economic equality, which is the case as to the explanations towards the Ethiopian state. Regardless of the weaknesses due to some parsimonious explanations in his work, the overall contributions however, help provide a different lens to look at sub-Saharan states like Ethiopia by analyzing the political elite and how they are able to design ways of mitigating dangers that challenge their political dominance.

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<sup>5</sup> For more look at page 2-3 of: Svoblik, Milan W. *The politics of authoritarian rule*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Despite the presence of overarching explanations for authoritarian survival in the sea of literature in comparative politics thus far, I opted to focus on select cases above not because they are in line with the arguments I henceforth provide in this project, because most simply don't while some have a lot to learn from and help shape my arguments. Instead, the select texts I analyzed above not only present compelling account of theoretical foundations, but they happened to also have much greater influence in my training when it comes to understanding authoritarian survival in the broader sense. However, given the goals set for this project, in part two of the dissertation, I assess the institutional solution of ethnic model of federalism in Ethiopia and how that exactly aided the political elites' quest for political survival. In that regard, I hereby present the literature in ethnic federalism below. Moreover, it is important to note that after the discussion of the political elites' maneuver of the institutions they designed for political survival (in light of ethnic federalism) and the discussion of the debate on individual rights and group rights that I present in the theory chapter, the chapters that follow focus on the historical analyses of the making and remaking of the Ethiopian state and show the persistence of political culture in the country, which is very important to our understanding of how one regime type's legacy somehow shapes one that follows.

## **2.1 Ethnic Federalism: Literature Review**

So far, I have presented select contemporary explanations to our understanding of authoritarian survival out of the many and showed that institutions as well as the strategic and rational choices of the political elite matter in equal measure. Here after, I will closely look at the literature that primarily explains the topic at hand with regards to studying the Ethiopian state. However, I also argue that before delving deep into exploring the role of the ruling political elites in how they orchestrated a method for political survival in the country by designing an institutional framework

i.e. ethnic federal arrangement, it is essential that we explore how the regime was able to satisfy (if any) of the diverse interests of many ethnic groups to ensure its goal of creating stability and effective control of the state as well as the power sharing mechanisms among each other. As we could see as this project unfolds, for the political elite, ethnic federalism, firstly addresses the problems in the past with regards to the question of inequality. And secondly, it successfully leads to an emergence of political mechanism that ensures the survival of a minority elite. To that end, this project extensively focuses on the Ethiopian ethnic federal arrangement and its merits as well as challenges in light of the research question. I believe that ethnic federalism is a central explanation under which the political survival of a political coalition that is heavily dominated by a minority ethnic clique could be understood. Given such an assertion, it is important to broadly discuss what the literature has to say about ethnic federal arrangement across spectrum of topics in ethnic studies and ethnic nationalism in some respect. Before detailing the comparative politics literature in ethnic federalism, it is also essential to explain the concept of federalism in general as well as the definition of ethnic federalism in particular.

Federalism implies the distribution of power across the levels of government with sets of principles that range from checks and balances to separation of power; with some guarantee of such autonomy of each level of government in its own sphere (Riker 1964; Clarck 2001; Verney 1995; Filipov et al 2004; Bulman-Pozen, 2012). Federalism could take different shapes and forms. In fact, many forms of federalism have been mentioned and one certainly is ethnic federalism. Spiro (2007) defines ethnic federalism as ‘an attempt to create a territorial solution to ethnic conflict by acknowledging the need to grant some degree of autonomy to ethnic groups within a state but attempts to do so without complete secession (Spiro 2007: 329).

Therefore, first I explain the literature on the pros and cons of the institutional design of ethnic federalism in the following part of the literature review given it is what the ruling elite starting from early 1990's considered as the only institutional design with solutions for the overarching questions in their relationship with the ruled as well as the political elite who took upon themselves the title of legitimate representatives of their constituencies. Second, I will then explain how the elites maneuver such an institutional design to lead them to an effective monopoly of political and economic power in the country at large by ensuring their survival thus far, in the theory chapter of the dissertation. My explanations of the literature on ethnic federalism therefore focuses on the earlier points that I mentioned, it most importantly also indicates the rationale behind the regime's adoption of such a federal model in the first place. My review of the ethnic federalism literature focuses among others on few topics such as the issue of national unity, solutions to ethnic conflicts, political representation, and economic equality, with a focus on the diverse explanations of why ethnic federalism is applauded or criticized. In the last section of this review, I also assess few cases of similar federal designs that we find in other states for the sake of sharing instances of broader understanding on the topic

Firstly, the regime in Ethiopia considers ethnic federalism as a corner-stone towards establishing a political unity. Those who argue ethnic federalism is good for constructing or reconstructing national unity argue that ethnic federal arrangement indeed serves as a solution to put an end to "the suppression" of ethnic diversity in multiethnic states while it also leads to the culmination of major ethnic group dominations over minorities. Hence, for such scholars, in such a line of thought, ethnic federalism discourages ordered or 'hierarchical' relationships among various ethnic groups. Therefore, they argue that as it addresses ethnic oppression by providing solutions in

the form of self governance, it also paves a way to build strong national unity and national integration (Fisseha, 2010; Agbodike, 1998; Aalen, 2006; and Jinadu 2002). In their assessments of multiethnic federal states such as Ethiopia and Nigeria, Fisseha and Agbodike in particular, argue that for most ethnic groups, ethnic federalism also offers a credible way to maintain national unity in the face of ethnic division. Additionally, a further emphasis is reinforced in that ethnic form of federal system contributes to ethnic groups' way of preserving their own identity while creating political legitimacy as well as strengthening their commitment to national unity (Fisseha, 2010; Gagnon, 1993). The problems in the Ethiopian case as presented broadly in the chapters in part two of the dissertation, we find that not only the ethnic groups with their allotment of self governing rights are not able to exercise their administrative rights, but also we find that the administrative units created in the ethnic federal setting are serving the interests the political elite at the center as platform for their survivalist agenda.

However, Rotimi Suberu (2001) offers support to to the notion that ethnic federalism does not support the process of building political unity as he argues that it is almost impossible to give every minority ethnic group the right to self-administer their own state or region just for the purpose of ending one's perceived ethnic dominance over another. He contends that an ethnic minority might still face suppression by a majority ethnic group in the same regional state in cases of states with multi-ethnic societies. Furthermore, Suberu also stresses that the continuation of ethnic suppression endangers efforts to strengthen national unity and he believes that to form a federal structure that is instrumental in building a unified nation, the creation of geographically organized sub-national states as opposed to ethnic based federalism is important. Furthermore, he also argues that in a nation with ethnic federalism as a form of government, political elites in federal states disrupt principles of national unity by placing bigger emphasis on ethnic and religious differences in order

to get the support and trust of ethnic groups they represent and receive the most support for their rule. Such trends by political elite affects the level of tolerance between ethnic groups as well as challenges the 'equilibrium' between unity and democracy that is necessary for the federal structure's survival (Stevens, 1977; Ibrahim, 2003). Moreover, Valerie Bunce (2004) also argues that ethnically arranged models of federalism in fact could enhance nationalist or secessionist movements in the long term that could in turn negatively impact efforts to support the growth and revival of some level of national unity.

Secondly, the current regime in Ethiopia also considers such a federal model as a way to decrease economic inequality across ethnic groups given the assumption that the one or few groups that had political dominance and which had been perceived to control most of the wealth in the country. In that regard, I also attempt to examine the literature to see what explanations are available with regards to ethnic federalism and questions of economic equality. As multiethnic states attempt to address issues of economic inequality and wealth distribution among different ethnic groups, their newly constituted governments consider among others ethnic form of federalism. Such ethnically organized states consider ethnic federalism as a solution to narrow the already existing gap in development and economic growth that exist among various ethnic groups and localities that these groups occupy. Hence, by planning symmetric and fair development strategies for ethnically formed regional states, they believe reducing economic inequality could be achieved. Here, it is vital to note that those who plan such economic reforms are mainly not the newly minted regional states, say in the Ethiopian case, but the federal government at the center that remains the most powerful political entity. Scholars in this line of thought, however, argue that ethnic federalism is also a way to assist and encourage the different levels of government in multiethnic states to develop their regions and have their own initiatives for economic development and growth.

Besides, according to them, ethnic federalism will also increase central and regional governments' capacities to carry out their responsibilities more effectively than what a more centralized form of government structure could achieve (Keller, 2002; Kelly and Witko, 2012).

Moreover, by taking Nigeria as an instance, G.D. Olowononi (1998) ties the growing inequality between different ethnic groups to rising inter-group tensions and among main causes of ethnic conflict. They believe that ethnic federalism helps ensure equitable wealth distribution and provides minorities to receive a fair share of revenue allocation from the nation's breadbasket that will in turn assist in decreasing inter-ethnic tensions. Fisman and Gatti (2002), who studied a Large-N study of federal states also argue that federalism encourages decentralization in government outflows and development programs. This economic decentralization, however, according to them, is significantly associated with lower levels of corruption and higher economic growth and equality among different groups.

However, bringing the issue of political ideology in developed federal systems into fold, Kelly and Witko (2012), by mentioning United States' effort to reduce inequality state that ideological divides make it difficult for central governments (with federal systems) to fight inequality. Because, in established democracies with federal structure (like United States), political parties possess ideological divides and present why the central government or state governments should have stronger political powers. However, according to them regional governments will benefit from the devolution of power to put efforts in reducing inequality. Here, looking at the arguments above in favor of federalism as it pertains to decreasing economic inequality is not immune from criticism. Rotimi Suberu (2001) for instance, suggests that given most regional states do not have the capacity to undertake development or governance efforts on their own, their dependence on

the central government will remain substantial to some level. For him, ethnic federalism therefore will not spark economic growth nor creativity.

Rotimi Suberu (2006) also further explains that ethnic federalism does not necessarily lead to economic equality due to administrative ineffectiveness, corruption and political patronage at regional state levels. By taking Nigeria as an example, he argues that higher levels of differences that exist among different states in terms of capacity building, bureaucratic inefficiency and levels of corruption of different forms could influence the central government to centralize the country's economy even further and taking away the ethnically arranged administrative units' capacity in having a say in developing and implementing economic programs. Hence, he stresses that the probability and reality of relying on a sub-nationally led economic planning that will correct discrepancies which federalism creates is very important. In addition to administrative challenges at local levels, Daniel Treisman (2000) also notes that ethnic form of federalism could indeed be more corrupt and it creates a huge challenge in terms of the central government' efforts to control rent seeking problems that are tied to political patronage. Merera Gudina (2003), who looked at elites' quest in forming the ethnic federal arrangement also argues that the notion that such federal design helps efforts of the state in wealth distribution is flawed. According to him, the way the Ethiopian regional states are designed based on ethnic and linguistic lines shows that part of a population in a given ethnic state could somehow be detached from other populations from different ethnic groups that it has historic and economic ties that featured in the long eras of inter-ethnic relations.

In further adding to the criticism of the ethnic federal arrangement in terms of its attributes towards helping economic inequality, by relying on his case study of Ethiopia and also concurring

to Gudina's argument, Alemante Sellassie (2003) also argues that in order to evaluate ethnic federalism's effectiveness in lowering economic inequality, we need to look at how it affects economic development first. He argues that ethnic federalism has the potential to restrict citizens' mobility (which according to him restricts the labor market), flow of goods, services and capital across subnational localities that are devised according to ethnic and linguistic lines. He contends that as a result of such restrictions, this form of federalism in fact undermines the economic notion of common market. Furthermore, Selassie also stresses that in ethnic federal structure, vast differences in human and natural resources separate ethnic groups that now could self-administer their regional states on their own. Hence, while some ethnic groups may be well endowed with petroleum or diamonds, or reside in economically important cities or ports, other ethnic groups could well lack these economic resources or elements. Therefore, he concludes that ethnic federalism has a potential to widening inequality among groups and not narrowing it. In fact, the breadth of cases that this project presents in its second part, we see that the central government in Ethiopia interferes handily in the the so called 'developing' regional states by stating the fact that such administrative units lack the administrative capability they they need to essentially administrate themselves in an effective manner. Of course, the interference of the political elites at the center in regional states' political affairs is constant across all regions. However, although assisting the so called developing states in terms of helping them build capacities could very well be understood, the fact that such 'supportive effort' can be witnessed even after two decades raises so many questions.

In continuation of the literature review on ethnic federalism across other aspects, the third objective that the EPRDF coalition had in mind in constituting the Ethiopian state along Ethnic and linguistic lines was the thinking that ethnic federalism could serve as a solution in diminishing

ethnic conflicts. Although mentioned as a third rationale by the political elite in adopting the ethnic federal model to constitute the Ethiopian state, the issue of addressing a violent past and ending such potentially recurrent conflicts within the diverse groups of ethnicities evidently was not achieved. That could of course, be seen in the various conflicts that were witnessed within the Southern regional state (formally known as Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State) and the recurring conflicts between the Somali and Oromia Regional States, which at times are considered incited by those political elites at the center for certain political gains that the dissertation explains in more detail in the second part. On the notion of diminishing ethnic conflicts via ethnic model of federalism however, I hereby provide the explanations for and against the argument within the literature on the topic.

Of course, another question in studying ethnic federalism is whether it helps reduce ethnic tension or violence and the probability of conflicts in multiethnic states. When it comes to this aspect of ethnic federalism, Rotimi Suberu (2006) despite his criticism of the model in other areas, here, he credits ethnic federalism in helping reduce ethnic violence despite some flaws in a multiethnic state like Nigeria that he extensively studied, which is a country that has hundreds of ethnolinguistic groups. He argues that, “Ethnic federalism has emerged as the primary organizing principle for conceptualizing and promoting collective interest in Nigeria” (pp. 277). Furthermore, when administrative power is in the hand of minority ethnic groups with the central government promoting the collective interest, he states that there is less risk of enmity towards each other.

In most ethnically diverse states, the goal in preferring ethnic federalism to other forms of government is to balance and accommodate diverse interests of all ethnic groups thereby diminishing the emergence of ethnic conflicts that arise from political oppression of a certain group by

another (Agbodike, 2006). Among other factors that are associated with ethnic federalism's role in conflict reduction is the decentralization of authority to regional states. Moreover, some also explain that the political empowerment that comes with decentralization policies could serve as a basis for power sharing between different ethnic groups, which helps to lower political tension and hostility and substantially reduce ethnic violence. Such scholars in this line of thought, stress that under ethnic federalism, previously suppressed ethnic minorities will also obtain rights of self-administration with all the rights and duties that come with it, which guarantees their group rights. In addition, they contend that this form of federal structure raises the level of awareness about the need to inter-group tolerance that is very instrumental in restraining those groups from being attracted towards ethnic conflicts (Lijphart, 1977; Rotimi Suberu, 2006; Dawn Brancati, 2005).

Contrary to the facts mentioned above, however, other scholars suggest ethnic federalism does not help reduce ethnic conflicts. They argue that the political and economic power reinforcement that comes with ethnic federalism influences ethnic federal states to legislate laws and take actions that discriminate against other ethnic groups. While this is partly because of the nature of ethnic federalism in giving power for ethnic political elites that prioritize self-interests as well as advance particular interests of their group, it is also due to the emergence of competition among ethnic groups to control the power of the central government and its decision making process (Sambanis et al, 2013; Ciepley, 2013; Jinadu, 1985; Ramesh Dikshit, 1975). In addition, others also argue that such economic and political empowerment of ethnic groups will also induce secessionist agendas by some ethnic groups leading to instability and ethnic strife between those ethnic groups who seek national unity vis-à-vis secessionists. In affirming the notion that federalism encourages secessionist conflicts, they also mention the case of Indonesia that has linguistically, ethnically and religiously fragmented societies but its citizens have anti-federalism views due to

their memory of secessionist ethnic conflicts at the end of the Dutch colonial rule and their first test of federalism (Erk and Anderson, 2009).

Finally, the regime in Ethiopia also uses the rationale that ethnic federalism ultimately will help the growth of democratic governance. When we look at the literature from that perspective, Diane Orentlicher (1998) reflects on two basic views of democracy that will help legitimize ethnic federalism. The first view is that this form of government most likely secures the interests of majority of people that are under the federal government's administration. In that respect, Orentlicher further states that ethnic federalism offers the best institutional framework to collectively answer questions that are reflected in the interests of the members of an ethnic group (more focus on group right) and for promoting democratic governance. I believe that the author's argument could be understood better when we think of a multi-ethnic state and the presence of diverse political interests, that will be better served through federal arrangements that provide self-administration rights. The second view of democracy according to Orentlicher, is that the idea of republicanism that offers support to ethnic federalism. According to this view, ethnic federalism creates an enabling environment whereby citizens can consider the commonalities within their inter-group relations and in their public deliberations. According to the author, republicanism calls for the protection of people's unalienable rights from being voted out or dominated by majority groups.

In that regard, ethnic federalism provides a fitting framework for promoting the necessary debates, and achieving consensus about the common good at the subunit level. The fact that a certain ethnic group in its regional state, and the citizens in such a defined territory share similar history, values and traditions implies that, based on such a federal arrangement, the government could more easily extend such same rights across various groups. The other claim that attempts to

legitimize ethnic federalism is the belief that an individual citizen is more likely to participate in the affairs of his or her community or ethnic group than in the affairs of the national community and that increases political participation more effectively (Alemante Sellassie, 2003). I believe that Alemante Sellassie's argument, in particular, could be attributed to the highly entertained notion in the Ethiopian political discourse that most ethnic groups' political participation in the past was very much limited mainly because of the imposition of the central government's powers on the diverse people. However, through such a federal arrangement, both individuals and groups could have a political say in governance matters.

In a different view that also considers ethnic federalism as appealing for democratic ideals, some also argue that to determine whether any form of federalism will be suitable for democracy, we need to look at the concept of federalism in general and its historic effect in politics in particular. From its inception in the modern times, federalism has answered the question of representation in the U.S. after the American Revolution. Federalism's effect in politics in terms of its limitation of the scope of governmental action, the fact that it increases the number of veto players, its creation of multiple avenues for political organization and mobilization, and how it distributes power between regions and political actors are also what among others make this form of government conducive to democracy (Edward Gibson, 2004; Samuel Beer, 1978).

Nevertheless, some others still contend that federalism is not necessarily democratic. For instance, Allan Blakeney (2011) argues that states form themselves into federal systems because they do not wish those groups with majority in certain states from prevailing in the ethnically arranged administrative units' political governance and decision-making process across many issues. Hence, Blakeney argues that ethnic federalism harms the voice of the majority in political

decision-making process because of federal administrative frameworks give equal emphasis to all represented groups. As a result, in a messy politics, the majority interest could be very much limited, which is against the very notion of the concept of democracy. In another argument which dampens the role of ethnic federalism with regards to democratic consolidation, Alvin Rabushka and Kenneth Shepsle (1972) also argue that federalism devised according to ethnic arrangement is not effective for efforts towards building democratic institutions. According to them, in multi-ethnic societies whereby ethnicity is an ever-present question, democracy becomes less feasible or practical. According to them, this eventually and inevitably impacts democratic consolidation significantly mainly because government's efforts to build inter-ethnic alliances to meet various political, economic and social objectives will face difficult challenges.

However, along the lines of whether ethnic federalism is conducive to democracy promotion or not, there are also others who looked at how its adoption could help alleviate many ethnic groups' grievances of lacking political representation that they aspire to enjoy in the process of democratization. Regina Goodnow and Robert Moser (2012) assess federalism's effect in representation of different groups in Russian politics and argue that the electoral system is more critical for the level of minority representation than the type of federal form of government that is in place. They further assess whether ethnic federalism could also increase the votes that a minority candidate receives or even encourages minority turnout, and find out that majority-minority districts are more important than forms of federal structures in place. Therefore, they contend that ethnic federalism does not necessarily translate into ethnic minorities gaining equal representation unless the electoral design is created in a way that empowers the minorities in the first place.

Sonia Alonso and Ruben Ruiz- Rufino, (2007) and Fisseha Assefa (2010) also concur with the above argument in that the most direct way to make parliaments more accessible to ethnic minorities is to establish proportional electoral systems that will maximize their chance of representation while also paving the way for coalition building. The pluralist first past the post electoral mechanism in federal Ethiopia, in that regard, fails to provide such groups the voices they deserved in the most part.

In fact, the arguments above are not without contention, as some argue that ethnic federalism and or proportional representation often exacerbate the problem of political representation. According to them, the fact that ethnic federalism is in place would lead to highly ethnic-centered electoral campaigns that further could lead divisive politics to emerge as a difficult challenge. Hence, they suggest that political representation that reflects demographic composition in electoral districts and constituencies in regional states is preferable than proportional representation (David Ciepley 2013; Donald Horowitz, 2002). There are also arguments that legitimize ethnic federalism for purposes of political representation as foundation for democratic governance. Some argue that strong regional autonomy with empowered minorities not only is the ideal strategy to avoid ethnic conflicts but also it is very instrumental to achieve a measure of democracy by increasing group representation. Besides, ethnic federalism as a form of government in a multi ethnic state and proportional representation as its electoral system offers a platform to equitable representation in state and federal governments (Van der Beken, 2009; Huber, 2012). Of course, reconciling such differences could be possible although the major problem remains whether there is a political will that addresses such issues via genuine political reforms could be available. In the case of Ethiopia, as we could see later in depth, seem less promising.

In general, the sample of literature I presented thus far shows that there is a remarkable debate ensuing over the significance of the forms of federalism that are mainly constructed along ethnic and linguistic lines. And here, as I further attempt to study how Ethiopia's model of ethnic federalism has played out since its inception in the early 1990's, I argue that despite the fact that ethnic federalism could indeed help in answering demands of self government by addressing the question of group rights in certain ways, it might also be costly when it comes to the issue of democracy given it could lead to the reinforcement of clientelistic politics on one hand and paves the way for the every elite who designed the institutional setting to survive and thrive within the political system on the other hand.

However, the most important take away remains that such a federal setting could lead to bolstering chances for authoritarian political survival, a perspective that is not picked up by many in comparative politics research on the topic thus far. Now that I have presented some of the debates on the merits of ethnic federalism given its pros and cons with regards to ranges of issues, it becomes essential to understand what role it also plays when it comes to state stability, and whether the Ethiopian political regime's political survival primarily depended on this federal arrangement. And if so, how? Such a question will be further explored in the theory section where I explore the rationale which the political elite exploited for coming up with the designing and implementation of this form of government. In that regard, what the government documents help describe and how the realization of the ethnic federal arrangement might have impacted political survival of the political elite in practical terms, provides us with the theoretical foundations that explain how such an arrangement ensured the survival of the political elite, as we could later see more broadly. Before discussing the rationale behind the institutional design in the case of Ethiopia more broadly, however, it becomes imperative that we also look at instances of established federal states and how

such states entertained the issues of rights (political or economic and group or individual centered) in the institutional setting they created. Although the project focuses solely on the case of Ethiopia, mentioning cases across the spectrum could indeed broaden our understanding of the topic and how it plays out in practice. Such discussions with regards to the choice made by the political elites in constituting the Ethiopian state via federal arrangement will be discussed in the theory chapter.

Efforts to understanding the workings of most established federal states show that besides fulfilling the desired objectives of the very reasons in newly constituting a given state with a federal setting, the political elite have usually effectively managed to impose their political agenda along those very arrangements they shape. Such imposition of their political will could be attributed in a constructive or a less constructive way. What stands out however, is that the literature in that regard needs to also evaluate how such political goals of the elite transpired in the decentralization schemes they devised regardless of whether the federal arrangement involves ethnicity and linguistic characteristics or not. Jan Erk's (2008) assessment of the Austrian case, for instance, shows that despite the fact that federal structure was devised to accommodate the societal fragmentation within the state, "Pan-Austrian" nationalist agenda of the elite emerged as a uniting force within the political spectrum leading to further reinforcement of Austrian nationalism to the satisfaction of the political elite that desired the nationalist agenda as a way to affirm their legitimacy. Doing so, however, had transformed the Austrian state from what the federal design initially thought to accomplish, which was a high level of devolution of political powers into the federal states. Today, such a phenomenon effectively makes the Austrian state more of a unitary centralist state than a federal one<sup>6</sup>. And such an example from Austria shows that federalism could also help

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<sup>6</sup> Jan Erk's assessment of the case of Austria shows that the political elite at the center effectively used the media and the education system to push the nationalist agenda. This appear in clear contradiction when compared with the Ethiopian case, where we find the nationalist programs were censored and considered

in efforts to build political unity as it was possible due to the political will from Austrian elites. In this case, we see that although the case mentioned shows the change in how federalism played out in Austria, the genuine interest of the political elite in keeping the question of Austrian nationalism together with their democratic agenda as a commendable effort in that case. Reiterating the argument, although institutions matter in equal measure just as the strategic interest of the elite, the latter's influence is much stronger. Even looking at federal cases such as Nigeria, India and to some extent, South Africa, whatever levels of political unity and relative political stability that are exhibited in those countries are made possible mainly through the will of political elite that strive to amend historical problems through a new beginning and genuine political reforms.

As in the case of Austria, it is also very important to look at cases such as India and how the federal relations in the country works vis-à-vis other federal cases from a comparative perspective. Of course, doing so here would be challenging given the scope of the project. However, by taking into account the relative success of federal relations between the national government and the states in India, asking for detailed explanations becomes very much important. In that regard, we find that in the case of India, the political elite at the national government understood if they are about transforming the national economy and improve the lives of ordinary Indians, it is important that the state governments enjoy a level of independence in managing the needed economic reforms so that all member states of the federation would be able to identify their economic advantages to compete in the age of globalization. Such trusting of the national government even was too relaxed since it even allowed that states some level of foreign relations powers in terms of

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as anti-group rights agenda of the EPRDF. For more, look at Erk, Jan. *Explaining federalism: state, society and congruence in Austria, Belgium, Canada, Germany and Switzerland*. Routledge, 2007.

advancing the states' economic interests (Nirvikar and Srinivasan 2002). Whether in the case of Austria or India, one factor, however, becomes apparent, i.e. the genuine interest of the political elite at the national government level.

In sum, we see that ethnic federalism is in fact a very contentious form of federal arrangement among the many types of federal systems that are debated in federalism studies. Nonetheless, I also argue that what matters most in whether a certain institutional design works better in addressing an issue or another mostly depends on the intentions of the political elite that are behind the design of it in the first place and most importantly whether such elites that manipulate such institutions have genuine interests in the success of the very solutions they come up with in addressing the very crucial ideals that I presented in the pervasive debates presented in this section. In the next chapter, I present the debate that was highly entertained in the Ethiopian political discourse in the last couple of decades and that serve as a foundation for the introduction of such form of federal structure in the Ethiopian state, i.e., the discussion on individual rights versus group rights. Because, the political elite in post 1991 Ethiopia, adopted the notion of promoting group rights in the design of the federal arrangement and the various policies that targeted economic as well as political equality among the diverse groups in the country were also designed as such.

### **3 CHAPTER THREE: THEORY-INSTITUTIONAL DESIGNS AND STRATEGIC INTERESTS OF THE POLITICAL ELITE IN AUTHORITARIAN ETHIOPIA: THE QUESTION OF RIGHTS IN ETHIOPIA**

To recall the research questions in broad ways, as I presented in the first two chapters, the goal of the dissertation focuses on understanding whether ethnic federalism as an institutional solution for lingering questions of political and economic inequality, history of conflicts and ethno-

national questions, served the purposes it was designed to deliver, or it just served the strategic interest of rational political elites who are more focused on their survival ambitions. At the center of efforts in constituting the Ethiopian state through ethnic federal arrangement, we find the issue of individual and group rights that the new ruling coalition in post-1991 Ethiopia attempted to address as it strives to correct the problems evident in the past political regimes. However, I argue that what looms large in our understanding of how such institutional solutions evolved show that the political elites had their survivalist agenda ahead of the political promises they presented. Hence, for the elites to succeed with their political goals, such institutional solutions must be maneuvered. In that regard, this theory chapter explains the why the post-1991 political regime seemed to have prioritized the issue of group rights over individual rights and how that enabled them to better manipulate the very federal arrangement they established.

When looking at the most vibrant history of the evolution of the American states as an instance, the constant debates on the issue of rights that started at the outset of the evolution of the American state temporarily culminated with the writing of the first ten amendments to the U.S. constitution that guaranteed civil liberties to all (at least to what were referred as citizens in that period). Some of the debates on the rights of groups on the basis of ethnicity, racial identification, socio-economic status, sexual orientation and much more however, remain ever-present. These debates we see in the history of the United States or similar cases in the evolution of rights in other western nations also played the most important role in laying out the foundations for democratic discourse in those countries and beyond<sup>7</sup>. Ethiopia is not any different. As a country with five

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<sup>7</sup> In a presidential address, Reynolds Bradford noted that while both individual and group rights can be complimentary, in the evolution of rights in the U.S. however, they could be used to

major national groups and over seventy-five smaller ethnic groups, even after the secession of Eritrea with more than ten other ethnic groups, the question of rights remains one that is still at the center of a heated political debate. As mentioned briefly in the introductory part of this project, with the fall of the *Dergue* regime in Ethiopia in 1991 and the coming to power of the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic front (EPRDF), and the establishment of the Transitional Government that included many former rebel groups with the most notable being the Oromo Liberation Front (hereafter, OLF) and Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF), one major aspect that most rebel groups agreed upon as they declared their democratic intentions was the expansion of rights to those many groups, which had questions that ranged from the quest for self administration to the recognition of their grievances that emanated from underrepresentation, lack of economic opportunity and from history of domination from those ethnic groups that such groups perceived controlled the political discourse in the previous regimes. As a result, many of the institutional mechanisms from the introduction of ethnic federalism to the series of economic policies and arrangements emerged as a way to address the grievances and advance equality on the basis of group rights.

The question however, becomes whether the emphasis given to group rights was able to advance democratic rights of all groups in the country. If not, the other subsequent and most important question becomes investigating whether we could assume that the promotion of group rights is just a ploy to advance a certain political regime's interest in the name of advocacy for

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also infringe upon each other's rights. For more, look at: Reynolds, William Bradford. "Individualism vs. group rights: The legacy of Brown." *The Yale Law Journal* 93, no. 6 (1984): 995-1005.

every group's right to self administration, representation in the central government and economic opportunities. In doing so, the regime secures the kind of political legitimacy it seeks to exert the political dominance it craves and protect its interests, that are nothing but survivalist agendas. It is my belief that assessing the phenomenon more carefully through this research undertaking could help in developing this theory further and puts some light on our understanding of the question at hand.

As I have already stated, the post-1991 political regime in Ethiopia, with its plans of advancing the group rights agenda to address questions of political and economic grievances primarily looked at the idea of constituting the Ethiopian state by introducing a new federal structure as a basis for power sharing and by extending the rights of groups to administer themselves, as a result of such institutional solutions. But first let me explain and reiterate how the idea of federalism accommodates the interest of diverse polities based on the literature on the topic and then continue to explain how the current regime in Ethiopia attempted to address the issue of rights within the federal structure it designed and implemented.

Popular classic comparative politics scholars such as William Riker (1975), as well as recent works by Alfred Stepan (2005) had all pointed to the service of constituting polities under federalism as a better solution for the emergence of stable democratic governance. However, after analyzing the Rikerian models of federalism, Stepan in particular, contends that in understanding federal governments and the distribution of political power from the center to the sub-units, it is important to carefully understand how this institutional design affects the issue of individual rights vis-à-vis group rights. According to him, the fact that the United States federalism blossomed and became the strongest most enduring federal arrangement, despite some criticisms is attributed to

the emphasis given to the protection of individual rights. He asserts that the fact that representation in the upper house is “too constraining” of the populace’ voice is what had helped the protection of those same individual rights from the bill of rights<sup>8</sup>. According to Stepan, “Whatever rights the national sub-units may possess, they cannot constitutionally or politically violate the rights of individual citizens. The enforcement of individual rights ‘in fact’ can be an obligation of both the center and the subunits, but the center cannot completely delegate responsibility for the establishment and maintenance of democratic rights and continue to be a democracy” (Page 9). Here, it is important to note that certain institutional mechanisms that a certain polity adopts could play either a supporting or infringing role to the protection of either rights. The answer to the question of how that happens primarily is embedded in the implementation of such institutional solutions and the evaluation of the results in scientific research.

When it comes to looking at the case of Ethiopia under its new constitution that was formally adopted in 1994, the government bestows extensive minority rights in the name of the expansion of group rights. *Article 39, Clause 1* of the constitution states that “Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession”.<sup>9</sup> According to Kjetil Tronvoll (2008), such a statement (especially the addition of “including the right to secession” in the mentioned article) in the constitution was designed to serve as a check on possible violations of such rights by the central government. This notion of granting ethnic groups that have now ‘achieved’ some level of independence in self governance and the

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<sup>8</sup> For more look at pages 6-9 of: Stepan, Alfred. "Federalism and democracy: Beyond the US model." In *Theories of Federalism: A reader*, pp. 255-268. Palgrave Macmillan US, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Look at page 13 of the constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

fact that if they perceive the self administrative rights they have now received are not satisfying and thus they should secede, however is extremely controversial.

Moreover, the fact that there is also a clause in the constitution that has the ability to check the federal government's powers does not mean that an authoritarian central state could not attempt to violate either the autonomy of states or individual rights whatsoever. Tronvoll further argues that, "regardless of constitutional protection of collective group rights, the Ethiopian government is still being criticized for massive and widespread human rights abuses"<sup>10</sup>. This begs a further question in that it is important to note that the Ethiopian government seems to adopt such rights issues as its own core values so it could enjoy legitimacy in the eyes of domestic interests as well as the international community at some level and ensure its control of the state for a prolonged time could very well be the case.

There is credible evidence that point to this theory of elite's maneuver of institutions that they design to achieve their goals of prolonging their political power. Lovise Aalen and Kjetil Tronvoll's (2009) article, for instance points to the fact that the ruling coalition, EPRDF has amassed unprecedented level of methods to skew public opinion in its favor and clear the road for electoral fraud as it seeks to make sure its political dominance remains stable. The authors mention that the ruling EPRDF coalition has effectively used aid money and international aid packages and its distribution mechanisms via government institutions to achieve these political aims. The puzzling explanation for the survival of a minority supported political regime in the country therefore could highly be linked to the ruling coalition's maneuvering of the institutional mechanisms that

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<sup>10</sup> Look at page 50 of Tronvoll, Kjetil. "Human rights violations in federal Ethiopia: when ethnic identity is a political stigma." *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 15, no. 1 (2008): 49-79.

it had created for its benefits although such solutions it had introduced targeted the notion of promotion of group rights. Aalen and Tronvol, in explaining the clampdown on protests and election fraud in post 2005 elections, for instance mention that:

“During field visits to Southern region, people in both rural and urban areas consistently confirmed that the *sub-kebele* (Ethiopian lower level local government) structures had been established during the year of the 2005 elections. In interviews with party officials at regional and local level in Southern region in May 2005, it was apparent that they had been established by an initiative from the upper party structures. The official aim was ‘to make service delivery at local level more efficient and to mobilize people for development work’. In areas where the population relies on relief, these local governments were responsible for distributing aid through the UNDP and World Bank-funded ‘safety net’ programs, which in some areas included the distribution of funds to purchase fertilizer, seeds or oxen, while in other areas it was payment in cash for community work or food for work. Although the ruling party presented these structures as purely public administrative organs, it is apparent that the *sub-kebele* was used for election purposes in an attempt to secure its victory”<sup>11</sup>

I argue that while the Transitional Government (1991-1995) that was set up after the fall of the *Dergue* regime and the stakeholders of this transition had made their democratic intentions

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<sup>11</sup> Look at page 8-9 of: Aalen, Lovise, and Kjetil Tronvoll. "The end of democracy? Curtailing political and civil rights in Ethiopia." *Review of African Political Economy* 36, no. 120 (2009): 193-207.

clear from the start.<sup>12</sup> The proceeding events that started with the introduction of ethnic federalism and series of economic policies that followed all indicate that such efforts, which they used to ‘answer’ popular group grievances from previous political eras served the interest of the ruling elite and were crafted as tactics of the newly emerging Tigrayan political elite to stay in power and safeguard their effective control of the state for many decades to come.

So far, I have attempted to show that in the name of the ruling party’s plans to use institutional mechanisms to protect group rights, important role players in the ruling political coalition enjoyed more political power that reach beyond the confines of what are enumerated in the constitution of the state. Moreover, the economic development plans and series of economic policies that were designed to empower different groups in the country that were also supposed to help create and promote economic equality also failed mostly because such institutional structures that should have served as foundations to distribution of wealth and economic opportunities have also served the interest of those same political elites and their supporters. Here, the invoking of the role of the political elite’s rational interests is very important in that the fact that the institutional mechanisms failed to deliver reinforcements for democratic progress is attributed to the elite’s reluctance towards keeping the promises they made to focus on democratic governance and or economic development that brings about equal economic opportunity across the board. However, as we could see later, such intentions did not accomplish any of such plans. Despite the democratization literature, for instance, boasts an impressive list of scholars that discuss the role of the political elite in the making of democracy or regression back to authoritarianism, I argue that we still need to ex-

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<sup>12</sup> Look at the Transitional charter of the government published in 1991.

plore certain cases more deeply so our understanding of the mechanics of how the elite use institutions for their survivalist agenda could come clearer further. The case of Ethiopia, in that regard, could help show how elites could use institutional frameworks as mechanisms of authoritarian survival provides the opportunity to our understanding of the topic at hand in more detailed fashion.

Here, it is vital to note that those political elites in the Ethiopian state who played such roles from the designing of these new institutions to overseeing the implementation of those policies in the large part emerged from former rebel groups that formed the EPRDF coalition, a coalition that was highly dominated by the TPLF as the transition unfolded. The longtime chairman of the TPLF and the ruling coalition EPRDF, former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, who first served as the President of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia from 1991-1995, and continued to serve as Prime Minister from 1995 until his sudden death in 2012, was considered the architect of the new Ethiopia for better or worse. His comrades in the armed struggle (within TPLF) with gradual additions of loyalist leaders of EPRDF affiliate political parties such as Amhara National Democratic Movement (hereafter ANDM), Oromo Peoples Democratic Organization (hereafter OPDO), and Southern Ethiopian Peoples Democratic Movement (hereafter, SEPDM) remain holding government positions for extended period of time, some for more than two decades and counting. Such political elites representing diverse interests, however, as we could later see in part of the dissertation, are highly co-opted and lack the political power to assert such interests. Even the ‘retirement’ of some of the elites who had held important cabinet positions to lead a way for what the Ethiopian regime claims to pave the road for the emergence of new generation of leadership is

a joke given those retired elites still are serving as ambassadors in very important diplomatic missions and ‘advisory’ and mentorship roles to the new individuals in the political landscape of the state<sup>13</sup>.

After all, such political parties and the historical background to the emergence of these political parties itself warrants further research. Regardless of that however, besides the rolling out of ethnic federalism as an institutional mechanism that guides center-regional state relations, the economic plans and ideological dogmas that the EPRDF coalition led government adopted also plainly rejected the neoliberal school of thought for economic development and growth by opting to use economic paradigms that advocate or call for heavy state involvement in the economy, which effectively created a further opening to the political elite to use their heavy handed approach in the development agenda. The first series of economic development and growth strategies in the country were shaped after the new political and economic development paradigm that they referred to as “Revolutionary Democracy”. This view, as could be seen from the governing documents of the EPRDF coalition, prioritizes group rights over individual rights. The fact that the coalition carries such a goal when it comes to making sure the political representation as well as the autonomy of groups within their administrative regions might not sound threatening on its own. However, beyond putting groups over individuals, it becomes clear that proponents of such a view within the regime are against individual liberty altogether as could be seen more broadly in part two of the dissertation.

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<sup>13</sup> Mr. Seyoum Mesfin, a former rebel within the TPLF and a long serving foreign minister has now retired to become an Ethiopian ambassador in China. Mr. Girma Biru, who had served for almost two decades in various important cabinet positions has now retired to become the country’s ambassador to the United States, Canada and Jamaica all at the same time. Many more examples can be mentioned.

For example, in a document published by Amhara National Democratic Movement, ANDM (which is a member of the EPRDF coalition), the party's development manifesto clearly claims the communist agenda of anti-wealth accumulation as its own and argues individuals' efforts of economic growth mostly comes at the expense of groups and mostly minorities that the ruling coalition refers as the unfortunate classes.<sup>14</sup> For the ruling coalition in Ethiopia, to make sure group rights are protected even if it comes with costs of negatively impacting individual rights, the issue of property rights (with land rights being the most important one) becomes the focal point. Under such a plan that the government adopts, the issue of land rights and the fate of the peasants who rely on their wealth of only property of land would fall on the hand of the highly dominant party owned state, which is highly interventionist. Many have written about the failures of the "Revolutionary Democracy" paradigm and its damaging legacies on democratic as well as economic development of the country while arguing it could pave the way for the survival of the authoritarian elite. This project therefore attempts to assess thoroughly and provide the causal explanation that could explain the puzzles of whether such institutional solutions (such as the ethnic federal arrangement) that were designed to address issues of rights and historic political and economic grievances played a role in the survival of the minority political elite, who devised such institutions in the first place.

When looking at the regime's track record on how it manipulates the institutional frameworks and economic policies it designs to its goals of survival, amongst the major instances we

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<sup>14</sup> The Revolutionary democracy document and the statement mentioned above can be accessed at: <http://www.aigaforum.com/documents/Abyotawi-Democracy-Hidar-Magazine.pdf>.

have, what happened after the major split within the TPLF leadership in 2001 can be a prime example. In the aftermath of the famous intra-party conflict that had shaken the government following the brutal war against Eritrea, the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi produced new writings on the “Revolutionary Democracy” economic and political paradigm to the EPRDF coalition council members. The coalition’s council members easily signed off on such new plans by the then prime minister, who had also served as the main political and economic ideologue of the party, the coalition immediately put the plan into practice and decided that properties (mainly land) would be used to support supporters and punish those who were perceived as opposition supporters and would be opposition (especially, those who were suspected to be former regime backers or antagonists to their rule). The regime also used land and property policies to punish former civil servants instead of the mere protection of group rights that they had claimed first, which affirms that the institutional mechanisms that were put in place were designed to eventually serve the interest of the elite who effectively manipulate and use the system to create winners and losers and prolong their political rule through their control of the state and its institutions on many fronts.

In the year 2008, the regime replaced the Revolutionary Democracy with another interventionist state economic development and growth paradigm known as the developmental state economic model<sup>15</sup>. According to Befekadu Woldegabriel (2013), the idea of adopting the developmental state economic development and growth approach in Ethiopia was again initiated by none other than the late Prime Minister of the country, Mr. Meles Zenawi, who ruled the nation from 1991 - 2012. In an unpublished paper that Zenawi presented at conferences, he discussed the failure of neoliberal economic paradigm to transforming not only Ethiopia’s but Africa’s economy and

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<sup>15</sup> Part of the essay on the emergence of the developmental state approach in Ethiopia and its initial implementation I indicated next was taken from another unpublished small article I wrote in 2014.

how the liberals in the west failed to support continuing economic growth in a way that benefits Africans. Wolde Gabriel states that Zenawi argued, “the fundamental nature of the neo-liberal paradigm has thus led Africa into another economic dead end and into a fragile unstable democracy that is not only incapable of evolving into a stable and mature democracy but actually hinders the development of an alternative path of democracy that leads overtime to such a mature and stable democracy.”<sup>16</sup>

The political coalition in Ethiopia, then led by Prime Minister Zenawi, also enacted such reforms not only on the basis of economic development strategies for the country alone, but to primarily make sure that they continue the promotion of group rights in terms of expanding opportunities that they previously attempted through the implementation of the strategies derived from their Revolutionary Democratic economic and political programs. The question at heart remains however, what role such political solutions of ensuring various groups’ questions of representation as well as economic opportunities did play in strengthening the political reign of the governing coalition in power<sup>17</sup>. If so, understanding how the regime manipulates the ethnic federal arrangement in making sure it strengthens its political rule and maintains its dominance is very much important. It is my belief that in the economic programs attempted in the last two decades, we see that the institutions designed to facilitate such programs of economic development and empowerment of historically underprivileged ethnic groups, are merely serving as platforms that the elite maneuver to achieve their political goals. The fact that ethnic model of federalism still

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<sup>16</sup> Befekadu Woldegebriel’s short paper can be found: <http://www.aigaforum.com/articles/EPRDF-DS-RS.pdf>. Moreover, I would like to point that the writer as well as the website indicated here are regime affiliated.

<sup>17</sup> Here, I am not arguing that such reforms brought economic opportunities for all groups, but just attempting to show the regimes’ declared aspirations.

permitted the most important powers to remain within the federal government also shows that the ruling coalition and its disciplined and well crafted party organization is able to embark on the implementation such programs with a goal of achieving nothing but political survival.

In general, in any of these economic reform programs (such as the revolutionary democracy economic political paradigm or the developmental state approach), the state has magnified its superiority in charting considerable levels of economic progress, which are recognizable across some levels. Moreover, the fact that the state has a goal of promotion of group rights is not also a problem in its own. However, as I attempted to show thus far, the way the government addresses the question of political as well as economic equality mostly reflect the interest of the political party and its affiliates in political power, which might have contributed to the regime's effective control of the state and political survival amid the many challenges the dominant coalition party faces. Here, we see that the elites, with their rational strategies of manipulating the institutions they devised, are able to hold on to political power by effectively controlling the state and ensuring stability in most of their political reign. The theoretical explanation I presented thus far shows that while the debate that centered on individual rights versus group rights was a healthy part of the discussions in the political discourse of the state, the fact that 'winning idea' of the promotion of group rights is exploited to create winners and losers, to reward regime loyalists and supporters and punish those perceived opposition and critic, as evident in the explanations from part two of the dissertation, show that the elites' maneuver of the very institutional solutions they provided for their survivalist agenda is very clear.

Before moving on to my explanations of ethnically arranged federal Ethiopia and the mechanisms of authoritarian survival in the country however, the next two chapters, I hereby present

help us understand the historical evolution of the modern Ethiopian state, the missed opportunities by varying political regimes and the political elite at the helm of political power within those regimes. And most importantly, the cycle of political culture that also serves as the most crucial aspect of elite centered politics in Ethiopia is discussed more broadly. Careful understanding of the following chapters indeed presents the persistence of the political and economic questions, the varying priorities of the different regimes that are discussed, the solutions provided by such regimes for the lingering political and economic grievances and at the heart of all the survivalist agendas of the political leaders that defined their respective eras. The following two chapters hence will also discuss the patrimonial and neo-patrimonial past of the state and how such important aspects of political culture that are also prevalent in much of Sub-Saharan Africa still remain large in the state of politics in the country to this day. The historical comparative analyses presented in discussions within the chapters finally culminates with the emergence of the EPRDF coalition and its entrance to what Ethiopians refer as the Menelik Palace, named after one of the strongest and influential leaders of the Ethiopian state in the modern era and the introduction of ethnic federalism as the new face of the old nationalistic and or Pan-Ethiopian political discourse in post-1991 Ethiopia.

#### **4 CHAPTER FOUR: THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF THE ETHIOPIAN MODERN STATE: POLITICAL CULTURE AND A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES' METHODS OF SURVIVAL IN CONTEMPORARY ETHIOPIA (1930-1991)**

To carefully understand causes of lack of democratization or why certain authoritarian regimes survived longer than they should under challenging circumstances in Ethiopia is critical to

what this project attempts to achieve at the end. However, it is important to note that attempting to elucidate the problems within the state of Ethiopian contemporary political history is such a demanding scientific endeavor that such a meagre experiment to fill a bigger void would not be adequate. Nevertheless, it does not mean that possible avenues that assist our further understanding of the problems are non-existent. With that in mind, I argue that we need a careful understanding of the modern history of the country at large. Of course, attempting to delve deep into historical explanations alone is not ideal given the constraints of time and resources and given the grand interest in this chapter is to look at the historical explanations, by which the Ethiopian state's failures and the vicious legacies could be further explored.

The most appropriate way, therefore is to study each important political era in the modern history of Ethiopia so that our understanding of the development and evolutions of issues that we crave to learn about are explained in orderly fashion while also making sure the possible theoretical foundations and explanations that we rely to draw causal arguments are well built and play an imperative contributing role in future research undertakings. Throughout the presentation of such historical narratives, however, the political culture embedded in the Ethiopian state looms large and cannot be ignored. In this chapter, therefore, first I look at the political culture in the Ethiopian context and how that also serves as an approach that help us understand the democratic failings and most importantly how the political elite in their respective eras are able to survive the challenges that come from voices of reform and critics alike.

#### **4.1 The Political Culture in the Ethiopian Context: The Literature**

In the movie entitled 'Imperfect Journey' and produced by Haile Gerima (1994), the story begins by showing a speech given by one of the most decorated foreign officers and former foreign

ministers of Ethiopia, Ketema Yifru, to an audience of African foreign ministers in the old Organization for African Unity (OAU). Yifru says, “We started having coup d’état here and coup d’état there. A lieutenant taking over power here. And then you say to yourself, ‘what’s going on?’ A lieutenant, or a major or a colonel for that matter replacing a certain leader, a colonel replacing ‘one leader’ or some general replacing Nkrumah and then we had a Major replacing Haile Sellassie....and so, here we are as we have lost our compass, as if we have lost our objective, as if we have nothing to live for. And that is what really bothers a person like me, who was there from the beginning and still alive to witness to what depth of this attitude that Africa has come through? What happened?”<sup>18</sup>

Of course, regardless of the role played by Mr. Yifru at the times of his service to the country and the political regime and the era that he served, his words in fact speak volumes. Whether it is the absence of institutions, the role of the strategic interest of the rational elite, or other well equipped approaches that look upon the issue very closely, I argue that learning the political culture of Sub-Saharan African states in general and primarily the case of Ethiopia at hand is foundational to our broader understanding of authoritarian survival, regime changes and democratic progresses, if any. Many scholars who specialize in Ethiopian political discourse contemporarily have also focused on relying on the political culture in the Ethiopian state by going as far back as the beginning of the country’s modern era (Donald Levine, 1965; DL Donham, 2001; Jon Abbink 2000; Vaughn and Tronvoll, 2003).

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<sup>18</sup>The 1994 movie entitled, ‘Imperfect Journey’, produced and narrated by Haile Gerima, can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQYwYEMCANA>

Vaughn and Tronvoll's (2003) effort in particular, by relying on the argument that Donald Levin had previously stated, argue that the current ways to study the the Ethiopian state in fact moves in the direction of seeking to understand questions "beyond the constitutional developments, and formal structures which provide the waxen form of politics in Ethiopia, to illuminate its 'golden' alternate: the relations and systems of power and convention which underpin and give it life and meaning"<sup>19</sup>. The authors in fact were seemingly and or openly interested in the complexities of understanding the Ethiopian intellectual literary development, which most of the natives describe in the form of what is known as a '*wax and gold*' of the Ethiopian literature. In *wax and gold*, the meanings of writings on topics of anything Ethiopian are extremely challenging given such scholarly works usually lack transparency in sharing direct meanings to those who attempt to understand the texts without the experience of learning the secretive meanings underpinned in literary forms of the *wax and gold* tradition. Because, in wax and gold literary tradition, messages are often coded and require not only high level fluency of the Amharic language, but also experts of that tradition and their help in solving some of the puzzles that are out of reach to the many who attempt to study Ethiopia. Regardless of the ambiguities in this literary tradition however, scholars who study the Ethiopian political culture and its foundational influence over politics of old and current times have made a substantial progress in their efforts.

Paulos Milkyas (2009) argues that the fact that the political culture is so pervasive and far reaching in Ethiopia, our understanding of it signifies our research in identifying the explanations in regime change and or our understanding of the underlying workings of political exercises within

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<sup>19</sup> For further information, please look the SIDA sponsored work by Vaughn and Tronvoll starting at page 25: <http://ehrp.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/VaughnandTronvoll-The-Culture-of-Power-in-Contemporary-Ethiopian-Political-Life.pdf>.

the political elite across many of such regimes is of a paramount importance. In making an analogy of how political culture is essential in that regard, he states that, “the divine right to rule that Haile Selassie had put in place and his modernization of autocracy which was guided by an absolute monarchy was challenged when the clash between an archaic feudal system and a new political culture of modernization brought down the regime.”<sup>20</sup> He also further explains that what eventually replaced that regime was in fact another form of “subculture of junior military officers forming the *Dergue*, which was fundamentally authoritarian”.<sup>21</sup> As I stated earlier, the reason for a focus on the historical analysis that I discussed in the last two chapters of part one of the dissertation is that it helps the scholarly efforts in understanding the ramifications of the different patterns of elite interaction, which is embedded in the political culture Ethiopian state while also contributing to the making of the causal argument in a broader sense.

Besides the historical underpinnings, the current state of politics in post introduction of the ethnic federal arrangement in Ethiopia is found to be very much similar to the old times. The ‘recognition’ of age old ethnic grievances and the larger emphasis given to group rights, the old ways of interaction, questions of ethnic identity and history of conflict that defined inter-group relations that are entrenched in the country’s political culture all remain large. In fact, those who study the politics of ethnicity in Ethiopia thus far explain that ethnicity and ethnic relations in the country are carbon copies of the political culture in the historic as well as political sense (Jon Abbink, 1997). In fact, the politics of Ethiopia as we later see is highly entrenched on the debates that centered on ethnicity, ethnic grievances and ethnic rights. Our understanding such questions

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<sup>20</sup> For more Look in to, “Authoritarianism and the Ethiopian Body Politic”, 2009 page 677.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, page 677.

thus will be aided by our understanding of the political culture that is easily identifiable in inter-ethnic relations in the past and present. For instance, Jon Abbink, in the same article, by citing the definition of ethnicity by Claude Ake (1993) states that, the concept of ethnicity in general implies, “a cultural interpretation of descent and historical tradition by a group of people, as opposed to others, and expressed in a certain behavioral or cultural style.” The African Studies Center, in its info sheet published in 2010 also explains that the complexities in ethnic relations in the country given the political culture of old and apparent and purposeful lack of effort in correcting that is the root causes of lack of prospect of democratization in the country and what eventually elucidate the survival of the current authoritarian regime in power since 1991. In such an info sheet, it is explained that,

“The TPLF (which is the most dominant political party within the EPRDF coalition and the party that controls the security and intelligence apparatus of the state) saw the nationalities question (and not the issue of class) as the root cause of Ethiopia’s political and economic problems in in 1991 and took it as the basis of a new federal constitution that was ratified in December 1994. Ethnic identity or ‘nationality’ was put above civic Ethiopian identity, and sovereignty was not placed in the Ethiopian people but in the various nations, nationalities and peoples. This innovative but obfuscating formula left the federal government in control of a largely non-negotiated political order. The concept of ethnic identity (in the dominant local language of Amharic, *behereseb*) was based on a combination of cultural, territorial and linguistic criteria that were largely inspired by Stalin’s Marxist definition of nationalities.”

The fact that politics of ethnicity is so entrenched in the political culture although remains very much explanatory of the old and contemporary politics that the above quote attempted to elucidate. In the terms used by Merera Gudina, (2010) the historical narratives employed to assist our understanding of each political regimes' and political elites' role in the makings and remaking of the state were nothing but the study of combination of "grand failures".<sup>22</sup> As a result, this project attempts to not only present the political culture and its embedded challenges that have become a definition of where the country has come to and what is awaiting moving forward. But also, the project provides an in depth analysis of the historical narratives that explain the cycle of political circus in the Ethiopian state.

#### **4.2 The Political Culture: The Ethiopian Historical Narrative**

In doing so, the first task becomes how to divide the modern history of the country and how to identify the critical historical episodes that aid our attempt to draw causal explanations from. The age of the nation's history, after all, has divided mainstream historians as well as diverse sets of scholars who look at the Ethiopian state from different lenses. Teshale Tibebu (1995), in his work entitled, 'The Making of Modern Ethiopia' explains that, "it is more customary to cite three possible times scales for Ethiopian history: (1) Ethiopian history is 3000 years old; (2) it is 100 years old; (3) and it's 40 years old" (pp. xii). Tibebu indeed eventually explains that instead of delving deep into arguing why a certain approach could be considered wrong than the other, it is vital to consider the values that each approach contributes to our further understanding of the

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<sup>22</sup> Merera Gudina's paper presentation prepared mostly from his book entitled, 'The Elite and the Quest for Peace, Democracy and Development in Ethiopia; Lessons to be Learnt.' 2010. Page 159.

case at hand<sup>23</sup>. Although I concur with his peacemaking approach in general, I tend to look at the making and unmaking of the modern Ethiopian state by closely looking at the political eras that are associated with leaving behind the many political, societal and economic changes behind them. As a result, the imperial regime under Haile Selassie I will be explored starting from the years that preceded the second Italian invasion of the country in 1935. This is mainly because the first major attempt (a practical one for that matter) in constitution writing in the country was accomplished during that period. The socialist regime in the country, which overthrew the imperial regime in 1974 and the uniqueness of its legacy for where the country is today is also very much significant and deserves and a great deal of attention. At last, today political regime led by the EPRDF coalition, since 1991, which offered “the synthesis of the Ethiopian state formation”<sup>24</sup> will bring us close to full circle of our historical understanding of the Ethiopian state. Before presenting such historical explanations and the somewhat similar attributes of the political culture of such eras, I also will bring in the historical discussion of the prior few regimes in the first decades of the modern era in the nation’s history given today’s elites’ debates usually go as far back to these times especially when making arguments with respect to their groups’ history of oppression by others is voiced.

Here, we need to keep in mind that the first part of the dissertation project so far has laid out the literature as well as the theoretical foundations for which we can use to of understand what

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<sup>23</sup> Teshale Tibebu’s explanations such historical periods came up as a result of what many debate as to the age of the Ethiopian empire and such differences are inherently related with the historical and cultural identities of the political and intellectual elites that write about it.

<sup>24</sup> For more, see Merera Gudina’s work that analyzed the Ethiopian state’s historical evolution and its quest for democracy (2003) page 270.

today's sustained challenges of the Ethiopian state emanated from. Moreover, explaining the current ethnic federal setting and its proponents' rationale in coming up with it in the first place, deserves careful scholarly consideration in studying the historical episodes that preceded it. Using process tracing in learning from the trajectories of Ethiopian history and identifying path dependent scenarios therefore lays out the most needed surface to build the arguments in the second part of the dissertation, which entirely focuses on ethnic federalism and the authoritarian survival strategies that the EPRDF coalition depended upon for extending its rule in the last 26 years of its domination of the political space. My invoking of path dependence does not actually fully indicate that a certain political actor might have used prior era actors' decisions in altering or building new ideas. However, throughout the research, it will also be clear that each political regime's political elite, despite carefully attempting to undo the past, have always fallen back into using similar political strategies for survival's sake. In that regard, through a historical lens, the chapter attempts to look at contemporary Ethiopian political discourse from cultural and institutional perspectives while marrying them into the strategic interests of the political elite across different political eras.

Firstly, I argue that the continuing nature of political culture in Ethiopia outweighs every constructive attempt of the political elite, which always vied to redefine the political discourse of a state that is considered multi-ethnic as well as multi-national. Unlike experiences in Sub-Saharan African states that passed via the misgivings of colonialism (and as a result their political culture is somewhat constructed along), the case in Ethiopia is very much different.<sup>25</sup> In understanding the

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<sup>25</sup> David Laitin's argument in his study of the Yorubaland in Nigeria shows that the experiences of Sub-Saharan African countries is that political culture could be constructed. For more see: Laitin, David D. *Hegemony and religious conflict: British imperial control and political cleavages in Yorubaland*. Cambridge University, 1985.

ever present political culture in terms of the patterns of elite interaction that we witness in contemporary Ethiopia, we see how the old patrimonial political culture evolved by closely looking at the three political eras that the chapter analyzes throughout. In such chapters, I argue that patrimonial political culture is what laid out the foundations and paved the way for the emergence of a neo-patrimonial clientelistic state. Secondly, we see that in the evolution of the Ethiopian state, the notion of ethnicity and competing ethnic interests that I also touched upon above, remain embedded in the political discourse, which further necessitates a closer and detailed look. Thirdly, the role of the intellectual elite in the country and its influence is understudied. The “most celebrated” Ethiopian student movement in the 1960’s and the products of that generation also remain very influential to this day, which further necessitates a detailed explanation so our understanding of the perception of the intellectual elite in Ethiopia and its significance becomes more clear. Before attempting to explain each one of them however, our understanding of the concepts of patrimonialism and neo-patrimonialism is important. Thus, next I present what the social science literature (mostly from sociology and political science) has to say about such concepts within the broader context of such terms.

### **4.3 Patrimonialism and Neo-Patrimonialism: The Literature**

I argue that most cultural theories of patrimonialism and neo-patrimonialism regime types could explain the historical trajectories that failed the prospects of democratization in Ethiopia in both historical imperial times as well as in laying out the foundations for our understanding of authoritarian survival strategies in the country today. Before presenting the historical analysis (assessing the patrimonial past) of the country as well as attempting to provide current description of the neo-patrimonial regime with respect to the failed democratizing efforts, which turned to play out as survival strategies of the political elite, I discuss the generally accepted definitions of the

two concepts as well as what the neo-patrimonial literature explains about challenges to the prospects of democratization in general. Because, ultimately our efforts to understand authoritarian survival in the political science literature, although stands proudly in its own, also shares some approaches within the comparative democratization literature at large.

Max Weber (1978) first defined the concept of patrimonialism alongside another concept, patriarchalism.<sup>26</sup> While patriarchalism is what Weber refers to “the individual who presides over the communal network of obligation and obedience”<sup>27</sup>, in patrimonialism, he finds that this individual could turn to his social cleavage or ethnicity, kinship and loyalties among the ruling elite to form and force his rule<sup>28</sup>. In his writings on ‘Economy and society’, Weber later explained that traditional patrimonial rule exists when a ruler considers political power as his private property.<sup>29</sup> For Victor T. Le Vine (1980), such sources of “traditional roots” of political alliance are also critical in our study of political regimes in the African continent. According to him this political culture is what paves the way for authoritarian leaders to go “beyond traditional limits of their political rule”, which essentially poses a threat to the initiation of a democratization process<sup>30</sup>. Here, we can also infer that the fact that their ‘intent’ on democratization goes wrong eventually

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<sup>26</sup> See Weber, Max. (1978). Patriarchalism and patrimonialism. *Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, 1006-1069. This work can be found in the volume edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (1978), pages 1006 -1070.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> See Victor T. Le Vine’s (1980) work entitled “African Patrimonial Regimes in Comparative Perspective” and his interpretations of Weber’s accounts of Patrimonialism from the African states perspective. Page 658.

<sup>29</sup> For more see, Robert H. Jackson and Carl Gustav Rosberg. 1982. *Personal Rule in Black Africa: Prince, Autocrat, Prophet, and Tyrant*. University of California Press. Page 121.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 659.

lead them to think ways that keep their political reign intact are much bigger than the contributions they could leave to the society and state they leave behind.

In further strengthening authoritarians' ambition of political survival, Guenther Roth (1968), who further analyzes Weber's explanation of the concept of patrimonialism, also refers to patrimonial rulers as individuals who put maximum efforts to increase their grip on political power. Roth, further argues that when such leaders face fierce challenges that threaten their authority and control, they could "avail themselves of various political and administrative devices that transcend the bases of their legitimacy."<sup>31</sup> Gero Erdmann and Ulf Engel (2006) are also in agreement with Roth in that concepts of patrimonialism and neo-patrimonialism are in line with "Weber's political sociology, which is based on domination and legitimacy."<sup>32</sup> Within that respect, I argue that such patrimonial traditions and the leaders quest for legitimacy is what determines how a leader attempts to shape his regime while eventually constraining the prospect of democratization in the process given his focus in affirming his rule takes all the priorities. Guenther Roth, who is known for his contributions in analyzing many of Weber's works, further argues that Ethiopian imperial regimes of the past are "the foremost example of traditionalist patrimonial regimes"<sup>33</sup>

I argue that the definitions that I highlighted above of patrimonialism could be associated with the reigns of both emperor Menelik II (who ruled Ethiopia between 1889-1913) and who is considered by the northern and central Ethiopian elites as founding father of the modern state as

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<sup>31</sup> See Guenther Roth's "Personal Rulership, Patrimonialism, and Empire-Building in the New States", 1968. Page 195.

<sup>32</sup> See their work entitled "Neo-patrimonialism Revisited –Beyond a Catch-All Concept" page 7.

<sup>33</sup> Guenther Roth's "Personal Rulership, Patrimonialism, and Empire-Building in the New States", 1968. Look at Pages 195-196.

well as Emperor Haile Selassie (whose reign lasted from 1930-1974 although had served the state as a de facto leader for over a decade before his coronation as a king). Of course, these leaders were very crucial in laying out and strengthening the foundations of the Ethiopian state as well as known for their historical roles in shaping the political future for better or worse. Whereas, the current ruling regime, led by the EPRDF coalition, that came to power in 1991 by overthrowing the brutal socialist regime known as the *Dergue* fits the theoretical explanations of a neo-patrimonial-clientelistic regime. To our further general understanding of the concept neo-patrimonialism, Gero Erdmann and Ulf Engel's (2006) profound definition reads as:

“A mixture of two, partly interwoven, types of domination that co-exist: namely, patrimonial and legal-rational bureaucratic domination. Under patrimonialism, all power relations between ruler and ruled, political as well as administrative relations, are personal relations; there is no differentiation between the private and the public realm. However, under neo-patrimonialism the distinction between the private and the public, at least formally, exists and is accepted, and public reference can be made to this distinction (it is a different matter whether this is observed or not). Neo-patrimonial rule takes place within the framework of, and with the claim to, legal-rational bureaucracy or “modern” stateness. Formal structures and rules do exist, although in practice, the separation of the private and public sphere is not always observed”<sup>34</sup>

As we could see from the above definition of the concept, the characteristics of neo-patrimonial regimes could negatively influence the prospect of democratic efforts while also paving

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<sup>34</sup> For more, see Gero Erdmann and Ulf Engel's (2006) work entitled “Neo-patrimonialism Revisited – Beyond a Catch-All Concept” at page 18.

the road for the political elites' desire of survival by eliminating the lines between bureaucratic governance and the traditional markings of the state along ethnicity and political loyalties, which are the foundations for political legitimacy in the contemporary Ethiopian state. Moreover, it also shows that in the guise of political democracy, leaders with authoritarian tendencies still could rule the state with iron fist. In that regard, Jonathan Hartlyn's (1998) definition of the concept as "a type of political regime with important within-type variations, which can crosscut authoritarianism and democracy (while constraining the later)" shows that neo-patrimonialism allows a seemingly democratic regime feature that could effectively constrain a democratization process while validating the elites' survival ambitions only serving their political, societal as well as economic base (p. 6).

Moreover, in line with my earlier argument of the legacy of a patrimonial past influencing present day politics, Hartlyn further argues that neo-patrimonialism shows that "some kinds of political patterns can continue, and even be reinforced over time, in the absence of particular kinds of sustained social change or concerted effort by political leaders from above" (p. 6). In concurrence with Hartlyn's argument, Michael Bratton and Nicolas Van De Walle (1994) also argue that contemporaneous political transformation in states characterized by neo-patrimonial regime type governments are mostly "conditioned by the mechanisms of rule embedded in ancient regime" (p. 3). In the same way we saw the definition of patrimonialism earlier, and from the explanations by the authors above, we could learn that political leaders in a neo-patrimonial regimes like Ethiopia's, still impose their authoritarian rule, which simply is the continuation of the characteristics of previous authoritarian regimes in a newly minted fashion. They accomplish that by showing off

some democratic signs for the purpose of legitimizing their rule<sup>35</sup>. Here, my earlier argument explaining why the persistent nature of Ethiopian political culture outweighs the constructive attempts must be clear.

In an attempt to identify the main characteristics of neo-patrimonial regimes, Nicolas Van De Walle (2001) argues that ‘the levels of clientelism, citizens’ access to state resources, how much power is centralized, and the “hybridness of neo-patrimonialism as a regime type” could give us the opportunity to predict and define such regime types more clearly (p. 118-127). As we could see from Van De Walle’s measurements’, we could indeed operationalize this regime type by virtue of many variables. However, we see that clientelism features in many scholarly works that study democratic attempts in neo-patrimonial regimes (Bratton and Van De Walle 1994; Bratton and Van De Walle 1997; Van De Walle 2001; Hurtlyn, Jonathan 1998; Medard 2002; Van De Walle 2007; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007).

Van De Walle (2001), in his explanation of clientelism that extensively features in neo-patrimonial regimes, further argues that “clientelism is viewed as critical in countries with a tendency toward multiple ethnic and regional divisions, and in which few regimes can count on either a successful economy or electoral mandates for their legitimacy” (p. 52). When we look at the Ethiopian state, which is home to highly diverse ethnic groups<sup>36</sup>, it is apparent that the prevalence

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<sup>35</sup> Michael Bratton and Nicolas Van De Walle (1994) provide justifications to consider neo-patrimonialism as a regime type. Although I argue that this concept could be seen as kind of political culture, which is an offspring of patrimonialism, its peculiar characteristics show it could also be a stand-alone regime type.

<sup>36</sup> Although many encyclopedias and fact-books offer different numbers as to how many ethnic groups make up the Ethiopian state, Asnake Kefale (2013) does a great job in explaining the ethnic and linguistic make of the country in his book ‘Federalism and Ethnic conflict in Ethiopia: a comparative regional study. Routledge Series on Federalism.

of clientelistic relationships could adversely impact democratic consolidation efforts, which in a way cement the significance of survival strategies of the political elite. Moreover, in reference to the use of state wealth by patrimonial regimes in Africa, Van De Walle (2001) also states that “clientelism is based on the extensive use of state resources for political purposes, and clientelist regimes almost inevitably produce highly interventionist economic policies” (p. 52).

Of course, the economics of the political elite ruling Ethiopia today and its interventionist state and how it hampered the very rationale that the ethnic federal setting was proposed and implemented is broadly assessed in chapters six and seven more broadly. However, given such characters of a neo-patrimonial state (as we could see with my analysis of the current regime in Ethiopia later in the second part), I argue that when an incumbent political party of a neo-patrimonial regime (the political party that rules) considers the wealth of the state as its own, or forms businesses that the party crass controls at the top in addition to their political administrative duties and capacities, it further blurs the political space for opposition political parties and harms any prospect for democratic consolidation altogether. In concluding the importance of the patrimonial and neo-patrimonial political culture and its significance to authoritarian survival schemes, Medard’s (2002) work attests that the reason for the neo-patrimonial regime’s obsession to control the economic and political resources of the state emanates from nothing but its sheer desire for survival.

Consequently, I attempt to show how such political culture played out in contemporary Ethiopian political history by first delving a bit deeper into the imperial regime of Emperor Haile Selassie I and what it left behind for the political elite that followed, which further reinforced the neo-patrimonial tendencies of the state. In the second part of the dissertation project, mainly in chapter six, I will also follow on how ethnic federal setting as an institutional solution, which is

built upon traditional ethnic and linguistic classifications also helped reinforce such a cycle of Ethiopian politics and authoritarian survival strategies that this work broadly assesses. Henceforth, before discussing the era of Haile Selassie I, I will also present a short overview of the political periods that preceded his regime as it remains significant that how the Ethiopian state evolved in the initial periods of the modern state remains relevant and indicative of the cycle of political culture that defines the state of the country's politics to this day.

#### **4.4 Short Overview of Political Narratives in the History of the Ethiopian Modern State: Patrimonial Ethiopia (1855-1930)**

The Ethiopian state in the 18<sup>th</sup> and large part of 19<sup>th</sup> century was highly fragmented and power was concentrated in four regional political centers that were dominated by four different warlords who established quasi-sovereign independent states (Tibebu, 1995). That era in the country's history is referred as *Zamana Mesafint* (in Amharic) or the Era of Princes or as some refer to it the era of warlords, mainly because of the existence of such various strongmen leading various regions in the northern and central Ethiopian highlands. The coming to the political realm of a warlord called Kassa Hailu, who defeated several of the warlords one after another and latter crowning himself as the first 'modern' emperor of country as Tewodros II (1855 -1867) changes a course of warlordism and laid out the foundations for a strong Ethiopian state. His short reign however, brought the change of fortunes for the Ethiopian state and gave birth to a process of highly centralized state formation (Tekle Tsadik Mekuria, 1981).

The death of Tewodros II in 1868 after a battle against the British, whose anger because of the king's imprisoning of British expatriates resulting in a war leading to the emperor's downfall, led to the coming to power of Emperor Yohannes IV (1872 – 1889) who continued and added

pace to the process of state formation with his declarations of the boundaries of the Ethiopian state and by further centralizing the territories under his control (Bahru Zewde, 2002, Tekle Tsadik Mekuria, 1979). Both Tewodros II and Yohannes IV attempted to modernize the country's military, created formal diplomatic relationships with European powers and exerted a strong control of the domestic politics. However, I argue that Menelik II (who replaced Yohannes IV) and Haile Selassie I (who replaced Menelik II) were the ones that not only strengthened the Ethiopian state in ways unseen in the past but also had possessed the opportunity to introduce the modern political structures that are critical to the process of institutionalizing a state that prior to that only had a primitive and backward ways of manipulating political discourse. From the introduction of a ministerial cabinet to the writing of the first constitution of the Ethiopian state, Menelik II and Haile Selassie I were the ones who put bold blue prints to what had followed their political reigns, respectively. Teshale Tibebe (1995) summarized the roles that the first four modern Ethiopian emperors played in the formation as well as modernization of the Ethiopian state as "emperor Tewodros II initiated, Yohannes IV elaborated, Menelik II consolidated, and Haile Selassie I completed the process of transformation from parcellized sovereignties to centralized sovereignty" (Page 31).

Hence, although the likes of Tewodros II and Yohannes IV contributions to the political consolidation and modernization of the Ethiopian state could not be ignored, I start the historical analysis with brief overview of the very significant era of Menelik II who ruled the Ethiopian state from 1889-1913. My justifications for starting the historical analysis by starting from Menelik II's reign ranges from the fact that Ethiopia received its current shape and form during his reign to his introduction of many institutional and political reforms and the scope of challenges he encountered

as a king of kings of Ethiopia in a very defining period in Ethiopian history and that of black Africa given his legacy of defeating colonialism is what made him a hero in the continent and beyond.

As we could see from the introductory paragraph to my historical analysis, during the early decades of the modern era (late 19<sup>th</sup> century to early 20<sup>th</sup> century), we see that the fragmented Ethiopian state has achieved a centralized and stronger state with recognitions given to the efforts made by emperors throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, whether they did manage to create a political system that could entertain diverse groups that are now part and parcel of this centralized state is what I assess henceforth. Because doing so is what leads to our understanding of the birth of ethnic questions and grievances.

As Zewde Gabre-Sellassie (2014) noted in his writing of the political biography of Yohannes IV, both Tewodros II and Yohannes IV, as they attempted to centralize the Ethiopian state, had persuaded local kings to remain administrators of their respective regimes. For instance, once Emperor Yohannes IV asserted his rule as King of Kings of Ethiopia, he received the blessings as well as humility of King Tekle Haymanot of Gojjam, while Menelik remained king of Shewa (central Ethiopian highlands that also encompass the current capital of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa) accepting Yohannes IV's legitimacy as King of Kings of Ethiopia. However, the fact that the already centralized Ethiopian state added even more territories due to Menelik II's ambitious expansionist policy, once he assumed political power after the death of Yohannes IV by yet the help of another external political dynamic (i.e. the Sudanese Mahadist forces' defeat of his predecessor), means that the number and size of diverse ethnic groups in the country increased drastically. In that regard, the need to form a representative state structure that accommodates the multi ethnic

Ethiopia that had emerged as a result of Menelik II's expansionist policy and actions became apparent. Moreover, in the words of Bahru Zewde (1991), once Ethiopia also assured of itself lasting independence after "it stemmed the tide of colonialism", this need of accommodating such diverse interests with a fair and balanced political system that entertains the rights of the citizens in newly incorporated territories became clearer (p. 84). Here, it is very important to assess how Menelik II attempted to solve that problem.

The problem in the analysis however, how did really Menelik II tackled the varying interests of the newly incorporated states. Unfortunately, we find that Menelik II did not attempt to devise a strategy to create a modern and fair political system that could be representative of the several homogenous territories that his forces invaded as they expanded the boundaries of the Ethiopian state. Instead, As Bahru Zewde argues, Menelik II imported the historical traditional rules that had guided the relationship between the peasantry and the ruling class in northern and central Ethiopia to the newly incorporated territories of the South, South West and South Eastern parts of the country. Hence, given the Northern Ethiopian highlands had some what better institutional patterns for the king's liking means that the same institutional patterns had to be imposed on the southern newly admitted and highly fractured political entities. That system, according to Zewde is critical since the political power in Ethiopia was mainly explained by economic foundations such as 'tribute and surplus labor', which are the most profound economic institutions that defined even the prior regimes of the old Medieval period in the country's history and even that of the era of the princes (Bahru Zewde 1991, 87). Hence, the tributes in form of tax and the availability of free labor immediately served the interest of the huge military that had successfully protected the country's sovereignty against colonial ambitions of an up and coming European nation, Italy.

That indeed led to Menelik's strong efforts in empowering the military elites at the expense of the elites in the newly acquired territories. As a result of his policies of empowering the military elite, that he considered loyal and deserving of political administrative duties, the newly acquired territories therefore lost their political autonomy except some that did not challenge the emperor's invasion by choosing to submit peacefully. The military commanders that led Menelik's army in the fight against colonialism would become governors of these newly incorporated territories that they invaded. Thus, a patrimonial political culture that rewards loyalty and kinship became the norm rather than the exception. In addition, those who facilitated the new economic system Menelik imported from the North and adapted to new territories became entrusted with leadership roles. While assessing how Menelik II suppressed the rights of these newly incorporated regions of the south and deprived of their rights to self-administration and representation in the central government, an Ethiopianist western scholar, who had written extensively on the country's political history, Harold G. Marcus (1995) states that:

“In some circumstances the emperor upheld the positions of rulers who voluntarily allowed their countries (traditional states) to be incorporated into the empire; in almost all cases, however, it was expected that such individuals would rapidly acquire the mannerisms and customs of the north. The very nature of new empire mitigated against regionalism, and the emperor also worked through the central government to weaken the powers of traditional provincial authorities. Whenever possible the emperor reduced the importance of hereditary lords; he preferred his appointees to be self-made men who were completely dependent upon the crown for their administrative posts” (p. 2).

In general, we could see that Menelik II's intention was neither to recognize the right to self-administration nor he had a political platform that could provide the citizens from newly incorporated territories an opportunity to have their voices heard at the central government. Here, I am not expecting Menelik II of the era to be a democrat nor I think others do. However, understanding the failings of the era are certain to indicate what follows from that period and into the repetitive cycle of the political history of the Ethiopian state at large.

Although his actions might have deprived of the rights of the newly acquired Ethiopian territories however, it is also important to mention that Emperor Menelik II essentially attempted to create a form of federal structure (although very central to point that neither the king nor the loyal ruling elite had the understanding of what devolution of political power or federalism mean in ways we understand them in political science today) by at least giving some level of political autonomy for few of the newly added territories that had submitted peacefully, with the Kingdom of Jimma and its king Abba Jifar being the prime example (Marcus 1995; Zewde 1991). However, Menelik's actions although strengthened the process of state formation that was started by his predecessors as well as consolidated modernization schemes of Ethiopian state especially at the center in Addis Ababa (given the amount of taxes being collected increasing rapidly). Regardless of that fact nonetheless, he failed to instill the roots of 'democratization' by not creating a genuine political system that would lead to the representation of diverse groups in his administrations through out his reign. Rather, we see that his genius tactics of imposing his rule strengthened the state while ensuring the survival of the political elite that remained loyal to his throne, which underscores the fact that survival strategies of the political elite of the political periods that followed first might have emanated by taking lessons from politics of the Menelik II's rule.

In the latter years of his action-packed reign, we also see that Menelik II had also successfully attempted to create a ministerial cabinet for the first time in the country's modern political history, which was lauded as an effort that could lead to the possible representation of various ethnic groups' voices in the government. However, that too ended with no success as it signaled its whole purpose was only to seek out Menelik's successor and arrange succession plans given his deteriorating health conditions and the advises of some western diplomats and few educated elites of the political period, which mainly come from the Orthodox Christianity clergy. It is also important to note that the individuals selected for cabinet positions were 'neither men of stature nor from the eminent families or clans', which potentially diminishes their role in aiding to start of a democratic process in the country, whereby political power remained entrenched in his military loyalists and political elite close to him (Marcus, 1995).

As I stated at the beginning of the chapter, Menelik's reign over the Ethiopian state was patrimonial in that it depended on loyalties, kinship and alliance formation (based on the willingness of some rulers of the newly acquired territories to submit to Menelik's regime) for maintaining his rule and of course the continuing influence of his close circle that served him and the state from defeating colonial powers to aiding the expansionist Ethiopian state under his regime. His patrimonial political rule that depended on loyalties was in fact the reason behind the problems that emerged when the need to arrange succession became apparent and the cabinet that he had created and its role in aiding a successful political transition failed resulting in division within the political elite. The fact that the emperor's wife, Empress Taytu Bitul, had become a very influential political figure who posed a real threat to the ruling elite that her husband considered untouchables while at the peak of his political power in the last years of the emperor's rule shows how the patrimonial political culture was in shambles once Menelik's time on the throne ultimately approached its end.

According to a further analysis by a known historian Bahru Zewde (1991), Taytu's political maneuvers that transpired mainly through marriage alliances were critical to her "matrimonial politics" (p. 120). However, the influence of the ruling elite, considered his close circle, finally overcame the Empress Taytu's challenge so the successor that Menelik named could eventually take over the state.

The successor of Menelik II was Lij Iyasu (1911 –1916). Menelik's grandson, young Lij Iyasu's reign, however, was increasingly tumultuous as the whole process was filled with tension with the same nobility who effectually reduced Menelik's strong and charismatic wife, Empress Taytu's political role. When the nobility opted to support Lij Iyasu's ambition of assuming political power as his grandfather promised, the possibility that they can manipulate his young age and lack of experience to their gains was evident. However, the ruling elite realized that they were not able to accomplish what they had planned given the successor's rigidity to accept their demands and ultimatum to get their support. Hence, they started to complain about the half-Muslim background of the successor, Lij Iyasu. Moreover, there were also conflicts among the nobility for the prospects of becoming the regent of the new king, who at that point was a teenager and given becoming a regent holds the possibility to have greater influence in the new regime. Such internal political problems later contributed to the downfall of the youngster through a coup orchestrated by Fitawrari Habte-Giorgis, one of Menelik II confidants (Zewde 1991; Marcus 1994; Marcus 1995; Tibebu, 1995). Hence, the eventual successor of Menelik II's regime, due to his short and tumultuous reign, failed to leave any legacy when it comes to the future of the Ethiopian state.

Besides the lack of attempt by the first few kings of modern Ethiopia to create a political platform where by diverse groups could voice their concerns through a fair representation in government, it is also very important to mention that religious inequality was also absent. For instance, Zewde summarizes how the emperors suppressed the Muslims of Ethiopia by going as far as the era of Tewodros II as:

“Tewodros, a man of wide vision in many respects, was bigoted when it came to Muslims, particularly the Muslims of Wollo. Yohannes, liberal and almost federal in his politics (of appeasing regional kings and men of influence), was even more uncompromising on the question of Orthodoxy and Christianity. Menelik, builder of the largest empire Ethiopia has ever seen, did little to integrate the heterogeneous entity into one nation. Iyasu’s religious policy was the first major attempt to tackle the question of national integration, a question which has not been satisfactorily solved to this day “(Zewde, 1991, 124).

Here, from the above assessment of failed attempts of addressing the question of political or religious equality, we learn that the reformist and the most accommodating efforts of Lij Iyasu had to be debunked because of the fact that the political elite that remained united and loyal to the causes of political survival were reluctant to give him any chances.

In general, the historical analysis above attests to the fact that the Ethiopian Political history at the start of the modern period was dominated by the legacies of emperors who led the country in a patrimonial rule, resulting in their legacies to become a hindrance to the consolidation of the democratization process while serving as a school where future leaders and political elites could learn the smarts and strategies of political survival. I argue that the patrimonial system of old was

in fact more about how the ruling class was set up and how it deterred the creation of a more representative political structure that could accommodate diverse group interests in a new bigger and stronger Ethiopian state. However, as mentioned earlier by presenting Zewde's summary of religious inequality across the periods of four emperors in the modern period, we could also see that there also existed other problems apart from political representation that could impede the process of democratization. Of course as some argue that although inequality in different forms might not affect the democratization process, it affects the consolidation of it<sup>37</sup>. However, the fact that rebellions could emerge in some parts of Ethiopia because of religious inequality in the 20<sup>th</sup> century shows us that religious inequality could in fact harm the prospects of effective representation in government (since certain ethnic groups could also identify with one religion or another) constraining the democratization process as well. Here, this study is not about discussing the inequalities especially from religious point of view although the issue of representation that the future self proclaimed reformist political leaders would use it as a rationale to strengthen their rule and assert political legitimacy. Moreover, we see that the fact that the political maneuverings of the state by the political elite depended on loyalty and kinship that align with patrimonial political culture solidifies the important role culture played in modernization schemes as well as the survivalist agenda of the political elites in the regimes in at the start of the modern era.

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<sup>37</sup> Houle, Christian. "Inequality and democracy: Why inequality harms consolidation but does not affect democratization." *World Politics* 61, no. 04 (2009): 589-622. His article refutes theories that argued inequality both threatens democracy and consolidation and agrees only with the inequality's negative effect on consolidation.

#### **4.5 The Imperial Regime Under Haile Selassie I: Political Culture and Survivalist Institutional Solutions (1930-1974)**

Thus far, I have attempted to show that although Menelik II effectively led Ethiopian resistance against colonialism, beckoned the country into transformations in transportation, communication and helped bring instances of modernization, he failed to contribute in the initiation and promotion of democratic ideals and to embark the nation into the democratization process, that might have solved the issue of the emergence of far greater scales of political grievances in the state. In fact, expecting Menelik II to deliver in the creation of representative institutions at a time it was even extremely difficult to find any consolidated democratic states in the western hemisphere. What I opted to see remains whether the diverse groups that are now parts of the greater Ethiopia he built were represented in his government. To the contrary, Menelik II sustained the political traditions of the north that depended on loyalties (such as rewarding the military elite), ethnic ties and kinship when considering individuals for appointments to national or local offices. Such traditions that he relied upon are what explain the patrimonial political culture that I discussed earlier and remain relevant in explaining what follows henceforth.

Once Menelik's political reign was over, and his successor's role is diminished to the extent of historical and political irrelevance and problems that emerged because of the lack of consensus among the ruling elite, Teferi Mekonnen who later assumed the throne as Haile Selassie I comes to the political scene as the most important historical figure in the history of Ethiopia, resulting in the emergence of a king that defines most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Ethiopian political history yet again. Emperor Haile Selassie, who first received valuable political experience as a regent to Menelik's daughter, Empress Zewditu (who for a short period of time had become the leader of the country

after the *coup d'état* that ousted Lij Iyassu), continued the modernization efforts that Menelik II had started. Moreover, with a stronger state apparatus that Menelik had left behind and backed by a strong military and Menelik II's ruling elite that supported him to assume the imperial throne and keep his legacy intact, I reiterate that Haile Selassie I emerged as the strongest Ethiopian political leader of the most vital period of the modern era.

The problem with how the political reign of Haile Selassie I started however, is that although some of his first actions seemed promising at the beginning, just as his predecessors, Haile Selassie I had not also had the political will to recognize the interests of diverse ethnic groups in the country by failing to establish a political structure that accommodates diverse group interests. The emperor, who had become the first Ethiopian political leader to visit several European cities, seemed to have learned the values of western civilization that he was keen to bring aspects of it to his country. Not only that, without the need to actually copy the western ideals of governance, he did not dare to bring in the democratic ideals of some of the newly incorporated states under Menelik II, such as a democratic *Gada* system of the Oromo of Ethiopia, which deserves big continuing research in its own right and, which also might have benefited the Ethiopian state if had been incorporated in tandem with modern democratic ideals in some ways (Assefa 2001; Hassan 1973; Asmerom 2017)<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> The *Gada* system is a democratic setting of the Oromo of Ethiopia that deserves to be further studied, although some great scholarly efforts are out there. Under the *Gada* system, Oromo tribes of Ethiopia not only enjoyed political rights and democratic culture that includes term limits, but also such a democratic culture also effectively created a horizontal distribution of political power as opposed to a top-down approach that is practiced as a norm in authoritarian regimes.

Regardless of the perceived and clear gaps in how he started his rule however, Haile Selassie, who is now the emperor, (after the regional kings that had served to administer the seemingly federal past had gone), would later play an instrumental role in persuading himself and his close circle to write the first ever constitution of Ethiopia. Of course, the writing of the constitution initially received praises and raised greater expectations among the citizenry and the growing educated elite. However, it ended up being an unfortunate constitutional reinforcement of the imperial rule. As Tefera H. Selassie's (1997) account of the 1931 Ethiopian constitution states, the emperor attempted to create a legislative assembly with an upper and lower houses, with their members elected by the emperor and those who owned immovable property respectively. Here, keep in mind that those who had owned immovable property were the very elite whom the newly drafted and enacted constitution allows him to select the members of the two houses. Nevertheless, to borrow the words of Tefera, "His subjects had neither the right to elect nor to be elected. At any rate, the constitution could be regarded as an important departure towards a constitutional rule in a society where the rights and duties of the people were determined by the whims of an emperor" (p. 37). Thus, unfortunately, the document failed to mention neither the rights of ethnic groups by bringing in some aspects of Dahl's procedural democratic ideals nor spelled out the limitations of political power to his rule as well as the legislative bodies that he introduced.

Furthermore, as Teshale Tibebe (1995) states, Haile Selassie also continued Menelik's staunch policy of appointments and dismissals (*shum-shir*, in *Amharic*) of individuals to the point it seemed his only function as an emperor at a certain period. Such series of appointments and dismissals under his regime are a testament to his intent of keeping those loyal close and the suspected traitors in check. An anonymous interviewee, (interviewee number 3) whom I had an extended interview with, who also happened to serve in the Emperor's cabinet, however, said that,

“the emperor, to his defense, was the most forgiving leader in Ethiopia’s modern history. Although his dismissal of the political elite was with a design to keep them in check, he did not attempt to harm them. Rather, the emperor made sure that the dismissed cabinet member or a former influential advisor would be ordered to serve the state by becoming an appointee in a remote peripheral region, which also ensured that the individual’s threat at the center would be diminished given he will be far away from the political capital of the state, Addis Ababa.”

Teshale Tibebu (1995) however, further argues that the emperor created a stronger bureaucracy that helped him eventually remove the *geber* system (tax collected from the peasant in cash or in kind as well as labor), which Menelik II had highly expanded when he applied it to the newly acquired territories (by copying from the northern, usually referred as *Abyssinian* political practices). The creation of the bureaucracy, according to Tibebu was critical since it afforded the emperor a greater freedom to control political power by eradicating those that are not his “patrimonial clients” or those that he no longer considered loyal for his throne (p.122). Such an important political development of the emergence of a bureaucracy that also accommodated the newly growing and western educated intellectuals, would lead to the eventual replacement of the patrimonial political culture by a newly emerging neo-patrimonial politics, which still has the characters of the old era in terms of the ever present emphasis on political loyalties, but also intertwined with the emergence of a functioning bureaucracy and a well functioning stronger state.

It was while the emperor, Haile Selassie I was shaping Ethiopian politics as he pleased however, that we also learn a second Italian colonial attempt emerged, which would become the greatest challenge than anything he had ever faced in the earlier stage of his political reign. Whilst the rest of the country continued the struggle against colonialism, Haile Selassie went in to exile

after his plea to the League of Nations to avert the Italian invasion could not bear any fruit (Zewde 1991; Tibebu 1995; Marcus, 1994; Tefera H. Selassie 1997). After a hiatus of five years to his imperial rule, the emperor ultimately returns to rule the country once the Italians were defeated with help from the allied powers, mainly the Britons. His skilled political maneuverings however, remained intact and the emperor continued to rule the multi-ethnic nation single handedly with the new neo-patrimonial client (the bureaucracy) now orchestrating the show. In their book entitled 'Personal Rule in Black Africa: Prince, Autocrat, Prophet, Tyrant', Robert H. Jackson and Carl Gustav Rosberg (1982) analyzed Haile Selassie's post WWII period and how he still affirmed the patrimonial nature of his political reign in that new setting. The authors assessed the second major modification to the 1931 constitution that was rewritten in 1955 and argue that under that newly enacted constitutional reform, "Ethiopian patrimonialism was given formal constitutional recognition" (Page 121). Jackson and Rosberg summarized the reformed and ratified constitution of 1955 as:

"In 1955 the newly adopted Constitution for Ethiopia "legalized" the traditional principle of divine emperorship, vesting sovereignty in person of the Emperor, who alone exercised "supreme authority" over "all affairs of the empire" (Art. 26). The patronage (appointive) powers of the emperor over the government and the administration were extensive, enabling him to treat state affairs as exclusively his own. He was empowered to determine the "organization, powers and duties" of all the ministries, departments, and branches of the government, as well as appoint, promote, transfer, suspend and dismiss "the officials of the same" (Art. 27.)" (p. 121).

In general, as the 1931 as well as the 1955 constitution clearly show, Haile Selassie I never had the political will to create laws as well as institutions that help at least prepare the groundwork for emergence of solutions for representative institutions and address the lingering inequalities across many groups. Instead, both the constitutional reforms or the occasional decrees that are published in *Negarit Gazetta* (a newsletter which publishes approved legislative bills in the country), served his interest of ensuring political survival and strengthening of the imperial rule at the expense of addressing the growing interest of the educated elite that began to demand bestowing of political representation and new programs that provide economic equality to all ethnic groups. Hence, just as Menelik II, who among his accomplishments, defeated colonialism at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and created the modern state boundaries failed to contribute to initiating the process of democratization, Haile Selassie I, the most key Ethiopian political leader of of the 20<sup>th</sup> century also failed to contribute for realization of democratic aspirations of the Ethiopian people. The emperor instead left behind a legacy of political manipulation, which serves the ever present political cycle of working for nothing but survival. The student movement and ethnic rebellions, which also emerged as a result of demanding greater freedom and equality became a further challenge to the regime's legitimacy.

As a result, the imperial rule's political powers would eventually come to an abrupt end after a group of ranked military officers formed a committee (who referred to themselves as the *Dergue*), orchestrated a successful military coup in 1974. After the military coup ousted emperor Haile Selassie I from the helm of political power that he had held for so long, Ethiopia went deep into a protracted civil war and civil strife (1974 -1991). The prospects for democracy became unthinkable. The new regime, led by Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, which created alliances with the Eastern European political powers mainly USSR (Soviet Union), and other members of the

eastern bloc such as Cuba and Yugoslavia, would also emerge as a political force for the worst. This friendship with the Eastern bloc, important to note, did not help the military regime to survive, which essentially voids the issue of foreign intervention playing any role. At the end of the cold war, and after the conclusion of brutal seventeen years of civil war, a hastily formed political coalition called Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) assumed political power after their defeat of the socialist military regime.

The military regime (1974-1991), despite staying in political power for seventeen years, the opportunities it had to wage nation wide development efforts, introduce political reforms in most of the country were limited given the bulk of its time power was spent on war efforts except the initial period whereby its leadership declared its famous proclamation with regards to the distribution of rural land to the peasantry thereby attempting to address the economic inequalities in heavily agricultural parts of the country. However, although the military regime spent most of its history engaged in war with the rebellions that it considered anti-Ethiopian unity, it is important that we also briefly assess the *Dergue's* era in terms of how the bureaucracy evolved and the cycle of political culture continued, more broadly in the next chapter. Moreover, besides the historical analysis of the political era dominated by the military in the seventies and eighties, I also assess how the failings of the *Dergue* led to TPLF led EPRDF coalition came into the political scene, attempted to address the ethnic question, the popular grievances of various groups and how they also in turn used such solutions for their elites' ultimate political survival.

## 5 CHAPTER FIVE: THE MAKING AND UNMAKING OF THE ETHIOPIAN MODERN STATE UNDER THE MILITARY REGIME AND THE EMERGENCE OF TPLF LED EPRDF POLITICAL COALITION (1974-PRESENT)

### 5.1 The *Dergue*: Political Reforms Going “South”

In discussing accounts of the political regime of Emperor Haile Selassie, I mentioned that his majesty’s rule, that was based on receiving political loyalty in a return for trust and power that he bestowed on individual elites and groups left those who felt excluded to ponder what to do next. For most groups that felt alienated, forming armed rebellions and fighting for either to win greater freedoms to the people they represent or even to seek secessionist agendas would become the new and ultimate solutions they relied upon. The student movement that was transformational and that was quite an unprecedented development in the country’s history would also become a cultivating ground for individuals with political ambitions and ideas that emanated from their desire to change the political fortunes of ethnic groups that they emerged from. In particular, students that are primarily from the northern and historically strong part of the country were the ones behind the revolutionary ideas of toppling the imperial regime so a more equal Ethiopia emerges, mostly hoping that the future could entail the realization of their seemingly utopian socialist ideologies that were extremely popular conceptions due to the inspirations they drew from the socialist revolutions in the Soviet Union’s history and Marxist teachings.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> The famously circulated small article by a young student, Waleign Mekonen represents a symbolic and historic alliance of the mostly considered privileged Amharas’ alliance with the then considered oppressed ethnic groups.

The rise of guerilla fighting rebellions, sizable recurrent student protests, and underground networks of resistance would all become unbearable for the imperial regime and thus difficult to handle. The emperor, who would later introduce reforms to appease the rising tensions at first bestowed so much power for his Prime Minister who was able to oversee an extended cabinet, although still most of the important political powers remained in the hands of the king. Secondly, the pay raises that were designed to appease the broader elite, the military and some part of the bureaucracy also failed to hit the strategic targets of maintaining the dwindling loyalty of those very sectors. In general, everything the emperor accomplished to satisfy the demands of the growingly frustrated elite and the educated youth who raised arms failed.<sup>40</sup> The famine that emerged in most of Southern, North-Eastern and central highlands, and the ineffective and disappointing responses of the imperial rule to the impending humanitarian crisis would further begin to delegitimize his rule. Coupled with the stroke that paralyzed his son, Crown Prince Asfaw Wosen taking a huge toll on the moral of the aging emperor, most of the political powers he had possessed for so long slowly but dramatically started to slip, leaving the country's political fortunes in the hands of the 82 years old emperor.

The students' uprising that carried the famous motto of "land to the tiller", which was well received by the peasantry and the urban educated elite would also resonate with the lower ranking military elite as well as by small numbers of the highly ranked generals. Because, in feudalistic patrimonial Ethiopia property rights were non-existent and those who had those rights had been the nobility who were loyal, as patrons of the imperial regime. When the military deposed the

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<sup>40</sup> According to Bahru Zewde (1991) and Harold Marcus, the emperor's acts in raising salaries of the bureaucracy and the military could be mentioned as last ditch attempts by the emperor to appease those who revolted. None of them would work.

emperor in September 1974, the revolutionary movement comes to full circle. The problem, however, turned out to be, as Harold Marcus, touts it, “the replacement General of the old elite with a new one”<sup>41</sup>. The compromising voice and the initial leadership of the *Dergue*, led by General Aman Andom, who was of Eritrean origin and General Teferi Benti, as promising their leadership was, both of them would be executed by the military and the initial hope disappears. With the murder of such ‘reformist’ individuals for some, the military regime’s solutions to appease the rebellion in the north, mainly Eritrea and the Tigray highlands, and the economic programs they envisioned were also laid to rest. Here, the question of political representation and economic equality, the very reasons that had the rebellions started in most of the north and the Oromos led by the Oromo Liberation Front in the south, further enticed students’ uprisings. Small and large scale mutinies of the military would again reemerge, keeping the issue of lack of political and economic inequalities as the most foundational problems that drive the quest to the new Ethiopia. The new Ethiopia, that should emerge to everyone’s liking would remain the central question and debate for the next couple of decades that followed.

But here, let’s see what the *Dergue* actually did accomplish, if any. With the eventual declaration of scientific socialism in 1976 as a guiding ideological principle of the military rule, which quickly formed Peasant Associations (*Gebere Mahibers, in Amharic*), new youth and women associations that would be formed along the socialistic modes of operation, the country not only becomes isolated from the western world that the imperial rule had relied upon for political as well as economic support and legitimacy. But also, the land reforms that started with the nationalization of land and its eventual distribution of the rural land to the rural households would lack uniformity

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<sup>41</sup> For more, see page 189-192 of Harold Marcus’s work entitled, “A history of Ethiopia”, 1994.

across the nation resulting in the emergence of further grievance of the disgruntled. The patronage system of old that focused on the prior regime's reliance on the nobility would be soon replaced by a different form of patronage that relied on the *Dergue's* newly established Ethiopian Workers' Party's political ideology of socialism. Membership to the newly formed *mahibers* (associations) of the youth, women and the peasants would become a requirement to receive acknowledgement of any form from the government. The various groups' quest for recognition of ethnic grievances would be left unanswered. Taking the once hugely growing infrastructure and modernization schemes, from the imperial era, in jeopardy, the military regime's subsequent decision to take the nation's wealth onto the war front to counter against those very ethnic rebellions that it considered an 'unfortunate' challenge to the country's unity and nationalist programs (instead of addressing their now decade old grievances and bringing them into fold) would take the country into uncharted territories of uncertainty and a long protracted civil war that would last for at least seventeen years.

The reforms under the military regime that mainly focused on the issue of property, despite satisfying the peasantry, would soon be forgotten. Here, I elect not to discuss the various infightings within the *Dergue*, mainly the break up of ideological camps within the military and the most damaging divisions within the military's intellectual ideologues as well as some independent on-lookers that attempted to broker dealings (which were devoid of any influence any way), for a reason that doing so will be nothing but a mere historical narration. Nevertheless, the politicization of ethnic tensions by the propaganda of the rebels in every direction of the country brings the so called "competing national and ethnic interests" to a whole another level. Such developments would also lay the foundations for the individual versus group rights debate that to some extent, had already emerged in the previous imperial era. Because, for the political elite who were fighting

within the *Dergue* regime and for those who also raised arms to fight them, addressing the issue of rights would be considered the only avenue to also address the issue of political and economic inequality across the many groups in the Ethiopian state.

## 5.2 The 1974 Revolution

I argue that failing to discuss the historic nature of one of the most crucial events in the country's history, i.e. the 1974 downfall of the imperial regime, and its significance definitely would be a disservice and hence deserves a short elaboration. The 1974 change in government and subsequent transition event was a full-fledged revolution with historical similarities to so many of the world's popular social revolutions such as the French 1789 and the Cuban 1959 revolutions. Through this revolution in 1974, Ethiopia was transformed from a feudalistic imperial state to a socialist one within just a few years. As discussed earlier, the revolution in Ethiopia had also involved the students, the workers, the peasantry, the educated elite and of course was also acknowledged by the broader sets of political elites in the old and new regime. The revolution, as clearly stated earlier, was of course based on widespread popular grievances. Despite containing all the elements of arguable a true revolution however, it failed to deliver on the promises made to that widespread popular movement, which had rising expectations. As one former rebel leader (interviewee #7) clearly stated, "the problems with the country's political transitions is that the seeds that enticed revolutionary movements, which also receive wider support for a hope of new beginning would soon disappear and the new political regimes emerge as worst copies of the old regime".

Just as interviewee number Seven, I also argue that the revolution, which failed to provide answers to such expectations, was indeed a wrong replacement that never seemed interested in

relieving the burdens of those who were deprived of their political as well as economic equality. Instead, the military regime induced a nationalist agenda that many consider a simple nostalgia of creating one national agenda out of the competing ethnic interests that their differences seemed at times irreconcilable. Moreover, the fact that the regime would also lose its potential to make amends to its mistakes as its rule evolved would also lead to its removal from power in 1991 with the coalition of rebellions that had successfully participated in the almost two decades old civil war. Gebru Tareke (2009), a renowned Ethiopian political scientist, in his seminal work entitled, 'the Ethiopian Revolution: War in the Horn of Africa' sums up such a failure as, "the revolutionary government ultimately lost because it failed to deliver on its big promises: freedom, equality, and prosperity" (page. 2). However, Tareke also makes sure to point out that the political elite at the center of political power were not much affected, rather explains that the top-down political maneuverings of the past were also ever present in the military socialist regime. Hence, the affected, the people in the political 'periphery', kept their grievances buzzing and emerged as a force that feed the now stronger and emerging rebellions that eventually toppled the military regime, that had ruled the country with iron fist while relying on the socialist eastern block for military and economic support, which was nowhere to be found given the crumbling of the eastern socialist bloc in the last few years of the eighties and early nineties.

Such is fact that the international political dynamics in the post-cold war era had its own huge say in deciding the fortune of the Ethiopian state. However, both the departure of Eritrea, with the success of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), and the coming together of the Oromo nationalists, the Tigrayan nationalists and some Amhara elites that had fought the military regime under an Ethiopian nationalist agenda led by Ethiopian Peoples Democratic (EPDM), (which later serves as the foundation for the establishment of the Amhara National Democratic

Movement, ANDM) as well as the emergence of other satellite PDOs (Peoples Democratic Organizations that represent various ethnic agendas) show that despite the international factors playing out among the determining factors that ended the military's rule, the downfall of the *Dergue's* regime was ultimately based on the fact that it failed to bring about political and economic equality to the peoples within the Ethiopian state. As a result, I believe that one writing on the political history of Ethiopia or working to come up with a causal argument in understanding the Ethiopian state's democratic failings and mechanisms of authoritarian survival must present fresh perspectives on those competing ethnic tensions in the past and present.

### **5.3 Competing Ethnic Nationalism at the Forefront of the Political Struggle**

In an effort to analyze the post 1991 democratic setbacks in Ethiopia, the role of the opposition and the issue of competing ethnic interests, Sandra F. Joireman (1997), summed the earlier failings of the country's political elite stating, "previous Ethiopian regimes, eager to foster Pan-Ethiopianist feeling and break down the opposition posed by organized ethnic groups, have tried to downplay the issue of ethnicity. But their attempts to minimize the 'nationalities question' have been remarkably ineffective. Indeed, many of the currently legitimized political parties started as ethnically based movements during the Imperial or *Dergue* eras" (page. 389). The author's argument indeed serves us that the continuity of the ethnic agenda based on the popular grievances born out of political and economic inequalities are the ever-present debate in the country's politics. Certainly, the fact that the main political actors that emerged in the last decade of the imperial rule, the ones that flourished in the *Dergue* era and the newly emerging political opposition in today's Ethiopia are devoid of common national agenda and that I believe might have inspired Joireman's article that actually was entitled, 'Opposition Politics and Ethnicity in Ethiopia: We Will All Go

down Together” is very much telling of the complexities of what has of the Ethiopian states in the last few decades (page 386).

#### **5.4 TPLF led EPRDF: Welcome to a New Reality**

The EPRDF coalition led by its pioneer, the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) promised democratization and eventually adopted a new constitution that made such intentions clear from the outset. The practicality of what is written in the Ethiopian constitution (which is ratified in 1994), however, would immediately become questionable. Inquiring ‘where Ethiopia is going’ now became a central question. Nevertheless, I argue that as one could see from the political history of Menelik II and Haile Selassie I and how the patrimonial political culture impeded any prospects of democratization in their political eras, and how the *Dergue’s* reluctance to answer the question of freedom and equality by prioritizing the creation and implementation of a nationalist agenda, that are all nothing but systematization of authoritarian survival, it is clear that these previous regimes’ legacy also influenced the EPRDF led political regime to function under a political structure that has become an obstacle to democratic consolidation efforts at present times. The Ethiopian elites that vie to rule a state of multinational and multi-ethnic groups, a nation of more than eighty languages and a complex history that escaped the era of colonialism by fighting together as one nation, are devoid of common national agendas and issues of consensus remain puzzling to this day.

Why the political elite both at the center of political power in various regimes and the elites behind the political rebellion would fail to agree on the commonalities of the need for the political and economic equality in the type of Ethiopian state they envisioned however, is not a mystery.

The central political power in the modern Ethiopian state has always been decided by the northerners such as the Amhara and Tigray political elites whose cultural similarities, their dominant Orthodox Christianity, and history had been at the center of their political strength. The difference however, was that while political elites in Tigray, in particular Emperor Yohannes IV, had nationalist agendas, the elites that followed within the Tigray political block shifted from their nationalist agenda towards a more focused agenda of the need to limit the stronger Amhara dominance that followed the death of Emperor Yohannes IV.<sup>42</sup> While the Amhara elite, with the exception of growing Amhara educated elite in the era of Haile Selassie I, remain focused on the need to brokering ethnic differences by creating a centralized government structure that becomes a basis for a Pan-Ethiopian identity and thus unity, which they also considered as an ultimate solution that serves better in diminishing ethnic tensions and potential conflicts. The Oromos of Ethiopia, arguably a majority ethnic group in the country, with a deeply strong ethnically limited democratic political culture, that had relied on the impressive *Gada* system, (which had managed diverse Oromo political interests harmoniously), had however, been removed from the political discourse in much of the modern Ethiopian history. Such a reality was not taken lightly by the newly growing Oromo educated elite and as a result started to demand not only greater freedoms to this highly excluded but extremely powerful ethnic group but the elites also made their intentions clear by stating the fact that establishing a country for the Oromos, the Oromian state, independent of the Ethiopian state that they considered oppressive and unrepairable, should be their ultimate goal.

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<sup>42</sup> The TPLF, at the initial stages of anti-government struggle had published a 'Manifesto' that detailed their political goals as they waged the armed resistance representing the political disappointments of the Tigrayan Elite. The Document, among others, mentions the 'Amhara' as the enemy of Tigrayans and thus their dominance had to be defeated. Moreover, it also chronicles that after the downfall of Emperor Yohannes IV and the coming to power of Emperor Menelik II of Shewa Amhara, the influence of the Tigrayan elites declined in the Ethiopian state. Thus, TPLF leadership insisted that that had to be corrected. For more, see Tigray Peoples Liberation Front political manifesto published in February, 1968.

Hence, given the political programs or ambitions among the three ethnic groups' political elites were difficult to mend, the Ethiopian state's fate had to rely on miraculous political circumstances that might lead the way for one of those influential groups' political elites to change course in their ideological dogmas and political programs. Such a conundrum would be solved when the Tigrayan elite that eventually dumped their separatist agenda (although the TPLF remains a liberation front, in name, to this day) by providing a new agenda of compromised Ethiopian state via an ethnic federal arrangement with ambitions of granting equal political and economic freedoms on the basis of a larger emphasis on group rights. An Ethiopian Oromo political opposition leader and a renowned political scientist, Merera Gudina (2001) in fact sums up such developments as, the Ethiopian state was initially a "political thesis" of the Amhara, which faced the growing "anti-Ethiopian thesis" of the Oromo, which later had to be saved by the federal "synthesis" of the Tigray political elites<sup>43</sup>. Here, the question becomes whether such new promises of answering the ethnic question of political and economic equality becomes a reality.

But why did the nation get here in the first place? The neo-patrimonial political culture, which was manifested through its rewarding of loyalty and kinship as a basis for political trusts and opportunities in terms of how this dissertation looked at the patterns of elite interaction, might have addressed the question and could be an adequate answer for the failings of the state in the eras discussed thus far. However, it is also very crucial to discuss the various political scenarios

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<sup>43</sup> Merera Gudina's work shows that despite the so called 'grand failures' in the varying political regimes and the emerging road blocks remain a challenge, the creative ways of the Tigrayan elite with their understanding of the minority status in fact might have saved the nation from a possible disintegration. For more, see: Gudina, Merera. *Ethiopia: Competing ethnic nationalisms and the quest for democracy, 1960-2000*. Shaker Pub., 2003.

that might have saved the nation from continuing ethnic tensions that kept the competition among the ethnically organized political elite alive. Here after, I discuss the new era of TPLF dominated EPRDF Coalition's rule of the country and how the political culture I discussed in the large part transforms itself in the new political era.

## **5.5 Emergence of Neo-patrimonial-Clientelism Afresh and Challenges to Democratic**

### **Consolidation in a Survivalist EPRDF Coalition**

There is a big consensus that democratization in Ethiopia was introduced after the military dictatorship led by Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam was overthrown in 1991 by a coalition called Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) under the leadership of a savvy young politician and former rebel leader, Meles Zenawi, who also chaired the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) that successfully designed and implemented the construction of the EPRDF Coalition (Abbink 2006). The 'intentions' in democratization efforts remains true to this day (given the periodic elections and popular participation with involvement of opposition political parties), that had not been the case in previous regimes in particular. However, I argue that the EPRDF regime's projection of its intentions still has neo-patrimonial characteristics in the guise of democratization, which indicates that it is indeed a modern patrimonial (neo-patrimonial-clientelist) political regime.

As we earlier saw from Erdman and Engel's definition of the concept, neo-patrimonialism is a clientelistic relationship that overshadows the 'constitutional rulebooks' of the state. With a neo-patrimonial regime in power, all signs of democratization in the country are only for show. Moreover, the representation of Ethiopia's diverse ethnic groups in government is also constrained by the clientelistic nature of neo-patrimonial politics, which still rewards political loyalty along

ethnic and linguistic lines. In an attempt that seemed to solve such a problem, the EPRDF coalition led regime, along with its institutional capacity building schemes after few years of its new rule, did not waste time in also introducing a federal structure constituted along ethnic and linguistic lines. Such an institutional design, which Merera Gudina (2003) had explained as the Tigray elites' conciliatory mechanism to appease the highly divided approach of the Oromo and Amhara elites, was primarily a brokered solution to keep the Ethiopian state intact with the exception of the departed Eritreans that went on to establish a new state after a successful but highly controversially completed process of secession.

However, despite the clientelistic EPRDF led regime's attempts to create highly representative government, among others it fails to clearly put separations of power between regional governments and the central government (led by TPLF controlled EPRDF Coalition) in practical terms despite the fact that the constitution had already emerged as a promisingly democratic federal law of the land with its Article 49 stating the powers of the newly minted regional states in the federal design.<sup>44</sup> In addition, the institutions that EPRDF designed to facilitate the political representation of various ethnic groups became too narrow (Fisseha 2012). Although the subsequent chapter in part two of the dissertation explains this clientelistic nature of the new state led by the coalition more broadly, let me briefly attempt to show what makes the federal arrangement clientelistic in nature and thus still qualifies it as neo-patrimonial.

When we closely look at the case studies conducted on few regional states by Asnake Kefale (2013), we see that even the ethnic federal arrangement in place seemed to have provided

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<sup>44</sup> Chapter six of the dissertation assesses and explains the political clientelism in the country more broadly and has a discussion of where the constitution went wrong.

political frameworks for representation of minorities in the central government and bestowed some level of regional autonomy. In practice however, the seemingly neo-patrimonial regime tightly controlled by the TPLF political apparatus (which I stated dominates the EPRDF coalition) becomes the one that exclusively oversees the center-regional relations in Ethiopia. Kefale argues that the fact that the federal constitution does not explain the institutional context of the federal – regional relations in Ethiopia in clear terms has allowed the EPRDF led regime to effectively dominate the two layers of the federal structure in Ethiopia (p. 237). The author further argues that EPRDF’s decision to establish an Office of Regional Affairs (ORA) in 1995 was to help their agenda of effective control of the regional governments by installing advisors that are expected to guide the day-to-day decision made by the regional governments. The role of such advisors is to verify whether such decisions are made according to the interests of the TPLF led EPRDF political coalition party. Such political schemes by EPRDF hampered different minority led regional governments in the Afar, Benishangul Gumuz, Gambella, and Ethiopian Somali regions’ rights to regional autonomy as well as right to self administration that they were promised in the very Ethiopian federal constitution that was sponsored by EPRDF. In his study of how EPRDF controlled the regional administrations from 1992- 2001, Kefale further mentions a regional official from the Somali region that told him,

“In the first place, when the team of advisors who were supposed to provide assistance come to our region, their group leader would be stationed at the office of the regional president. Soon after his arrival, he would assume the utmost power in the regional government. No important decision can be made without his approval. Even those advisors who came to provide technical advice in different policy sectors do not work with their professional colleagues. They would rather give instructions to the bureaus” (p. 238).

Such failures of attempting to create a political framework (through ethnic federalism) to accommodate diverse ethnic groups in political representation shows that the federal setup was not genuinely planned from the start (Aalen 2006). As a former political elite (interviewee number 4) who worked for the Amhara Regional State (which is the second largest in the country) also mentioned to me in an extended interview, the regional advisory office that was set up by the EPRDF Coalition, (which is tightly controlled by the TPLF that had always maintained its control of the military and intelligence units of the state), had always been led by political appointees that are mostly come from the Tigray regional state, which is an administrative home to the TPLF.

Given the greater control of political power by the Tigrayan elites, that I broadly discuss in part two of the dissertation, such opinions shared by the respondent were not in any way shocking. According to the interviewee's account, "all the decision made by regional state presidents and authorities, either simply a routine one or big ones, must be first communicated to the regional advisor which was appointed by the federal government (which is considered TPLF political leaders' play ground)". Another interviewee (number 11), also corroborates interview number four's assertions by saying that "most regional state authorities were dismayed by the presence of the shadow of someone like the regional advisor, whom they eventually considered a position that was created just to spy the activities of the regional state political elites and make sure that the individual appointee checks their loyalties to the TPLF led EPRDF coalition's political programs and goals.

Moreover, such gaps in the intended purpose of the federal structure and what transpired in practice in the country are responsible in causing the problems that affected the democratization attempt in Ethiopia (Fisseha Assefa, 2006). Here, the question is how such a dysfunctional federal

structure could show us the clientelistic nature of the neo-patrimonial regime, which I argued is an obstacle to the democratic consolidation in Ethiopia while making sure the survivalist interest of the new regimes stays intact. In that regard, Paulos Chanie (2007), after an extensive field research across regions in Ethiopia, also argues, “new patronage systems or unofficial mechanisms for maintaining traditional clientelism exist. Regional political leaders cannot raise issues concerning the new patronage mechanisms as this would endanger their political position” (p. 381). Paulos Chanie, further argues that in Ethiopia, the decentralization that many minority groups had believed would solve problems associated with their lack of political representation in government and self-administration rights in previous regimes turned out to be unsuccessful due to the clientelistic dealings between federal and regional political authorities. Such clientelistic political relations that are exhibited via the patron-client relationship that emerged between the regional states and the central government as well as the bureaucracy’s diminished role due to the dominance of the newly emerging EPRDF party structure will be discussed in detail in part-two of the dissertation. However, it is vital to note that what I attempted to present here is to indicate that the plans that the EPRDF had in mind coming to the helm of political power, with regards to the promotion of the group rights agenda was a failure. In further explaining such patronage networks and the nature of clientelistic relations between the central government and regions in the country, Paulos Chanie further states,

“Nonetheless, traditional clientelism between the TPLF and its constituency is maintained through different and unofficial patronage networks, off-budget funds and non-transparent central government infrastructure allocations to regions. Revealing patronage systems through reliable and complete data is not possible, since such systems are secretive and may incite ethnic conflict.” (p. 379).

Chanie's attempt in studying the failure of decentralization efforts in Ethiopia in fact shows the failure of the ethnic federal solution in creating a democratic framework for political representation as well as a balanced federal structure that entertains both interests at the center and regional states. As Wolf Linder (2012) also argues, decentralization is very helpful in assisting newly democracies in their democratic consolidation efforts but that without the stricture in place being conducive, chances that it works is not in any way guaranteed. I also argue that as findings from Paulos Chanie's field research further show, because of the high levels of clientelistic relations between regional and central political leaders (given the political parties in the biggest regional states are also members of the EPRDF political coalition at the center, creating branch political parties at the regional states), the prospect of democratic consolidation in Ethiopia is slim. Moreover, the author's findings also state that the existence of financially strong "TPLF-owned large conglomerates, patronage networks through off-budget funding, and the presence of non-transparent distribution of centrally funded service provisions such as transport, communication and energy infrastructures" all indicate what strengthened and maintained the clientelistic relations that effectively hampered democratization efforts (P. 379-381). Moreover, as interviewee number eight, who I mentioned Chanie's findings and asked if he could corroborate to some of the arguments mentioned, stated to me "in my work for the government both at a federal and regional levels, not only what Chanie mentioned are what reinforce the clientelistic tendencies and characters in the relations between the regional state elites and those at the center, but even more so the jobs they those at the regional states possess are also guaranteed by their willingness to work with those at the center by keeping EPRDF party discipline intact".

Clientelistic relations between regional states and the federal government also transcends to the bureaucracy, which is highly affected by the patronage structure that a clientelistic neo-

patrimonial state demonstrates. In that regard, in explaining how ethnic federalism in Ethiopia extended such a clientelistic character of the state into the bureaucracy, Samuel Bonda's (2011) states,

“Despite, the ethnic federalism has granted regional states to administer themselves and promote their language and culture, the ethnicization and politicization of staffing the bureaucracy is still problematic. In other words, the recruitment and appointment of bureaucratic staff is mainly based on ethno-language criteria rather than competitive meritocracy. As a result, state capacity and effectiveness is still a key bottleneck to implement the policy. Moreover, the ethnicization and politicization of state bureaucrats in the country is critical challenge” (p. 5).

As we could see from Samuel Bonda's explanation, the clientelistic nature of the neo-patrimonial regime's incursion into the bureaucratic apparatus of the state could indeed derail confidence of the civil servants, politicizes services rendered to the people, and hiring and promotions within the bureaucracy which all indicate that in fact the EPRDF regime does not differentiate the public sphere from its own political sphere as it is evident in any neo-patrimonial regime type. Here, it is important to mention that the bureaucracy had already emerged as even more strong component of the Ethiopian executive branch's arm in a post-1991 political transition. The problem that the next chapter, in part two of the project, would also explain in more broad ways is that the way it was designed and implemented never allowed it to operate independently from the political system. The regime's design of the bureaucracy in general and its tight control of the bureaucracy in regional states in particular entails that the political elite at the center (TPLF's political machines in the federal government especially at the EPRDF headquarter in Addis Ababa, the

capital) had already been aware of the importance of seizing the bureaucracy as a way to create the patronage system that works to the interest of the survivalist ambitions of the political coalition at the helm of the administrative power of the Ethiopians state.

Thus far, I attempted to describe how the clientelistic nature of the EPRDF led neo-patrimonial regime in Ethiopia hinders democratic consolidation efforts through its undemocratic designs of institutions that now serve as roadblocks in how the state functions under ethnic federalism and how it manipulates relations by overshadowing the constitution of the state. Next, I attempt to describe how clientelism is also constraining the democratization process in Ethiopia with regards to the electoral system and how elections are conducted, which also constrains the political representation of minorities in the government as well as their rights for self-administration in regional states leading the way to nothing but survival of the political elite that seemingly designed such forms of institutional relations for that purpose.

As Goodnow and Moser's (2007) explanation also shows, the type of electoral system a state follows is critical in affecting the level of minority representation more than the type of federal form of government. In their assessment of whether ethnic federalism increases minority candidates' vote share or encourages minority turnout, they find that majority-minority districts are more important than what ethnic federalism could provide for same purpose. Therefore, in that respect, we see that the EPRDF regime's ethnic federal agenda fails to translate into ethnic minorities gaining equal representation. In that regard, I agree with the assertion that the most direct way to make parliaments more accessible to ethnic minorities is to establish proportional electoral systems that will maximize their chance of obtaining parliamentary seats given with that comes political representation (Alonso and Rufino 2007 and Fiseha 2012). The current electoral system in

Ethiopia, as Desalegn Beza (2013) discusses, has effectively shutdown the political representation opportunities for many minority groups in Ethiopia. Dessalegn argues that,

“The ‘first past the post’ system embodied in Ethiopia’s electoral law denies national and regional minorities equitable and adequate share of political power in the respective federal and regional councils. Hence, taking into consideration Ethiopia’s long history of competing ethnic nationalisms and lack of consensus, there is the need for securing adequate representation proportional to the numerical presence of minorities in constituencies in lieu of stubborn adherence solely to the majoritarian plurality system” (Dessalegn, p.1)

In line with Beza Dessalegn’s argument, John Ishiyama (2009) also conducted simulation of Ethiopia’s election results by employing different electoral systems and argues that in different electoral systems than the current majoritarian rule, the country’s opposition political groups would perform better and election violence that followed in 2005 would have been prevented. The most important aspect of my discussion in how the TPLF led EPRDF coalition rule evolved is however, to restate that despite the emergence of institutions that seemed to have addressed the grievances of the many, such promises of political representation and hence equality in political and economic terms become not different to the ones the majority had already experienced in the previous regimes.

Moreover, not only the EPRDF regime fails to integrate its newly adopted federal structure with the right kind of electoral system that support each other’s success, but it also impeded minorities as well as opposition coalition parties from likely electoral success by employing various undemocratic tactics that made electoral competition non-existent. In showing how EPRDF’s successful obstruction of the electoral process transpired starting from the early years of the regime,

Alemante Gebre Selassie (1992) states that “The EPRDF undermined the prospects for democracy by employing violent and undemocratic tactics to upset election proceedings in order to maintain power. The upshot of these policies is the illegitimate concentration of political power in the hands of the EPRDF, especially on the hands of the members of the TPLF leadership, that had initially orchestrated the formation of the coalition thereby keeping most of the control of political power within the coalition (that mainly explained due to their control of the military and intelligence of the state). The absence of any demarcation between the powers that the EPRDF coalition elites have, as the dominant party that is ruling the state, and the regional state authorities was also and still is non-existent - a situation that Gebre Selassie confirms using French saying: “the more things change, the more they are the same” that I had also earlier mentioned citing one of the interviews I had (Page. 2). From Gebre Selassie’s further arguments, we also see that the fact that the regime considers the wealth of the state as its own in fact signifies the neo-patrimonial characters of the EPRDF were not anything new but they were there from the start. Replication of the old rule in a new way becomes the norm rather than the exception.

Here, let me elaborate as to why it is also crucial to look at how the EPRDF led neo-patrimonial regime’s election tactics are also clientelistic in nature. As Martin Shefter (1994) claims political parties that consider the economic resources of the state as their own have clientelistic tendencies in their electoral allures. In that regard, I argue that the EPRDF led neo-patrimonial regime in Ethiopia is that kind of clientelistic political party not just by looking and analyzing the characters of the elite at the top rather, it is apparently manifested in the institutions they designed and implemented while altering the evolutions of those same institutions when their intended consequences seem to differ from their expectations. As Jon Abbink (2006) explains such clientelistic character of the regime, he states that,

“There is no doubt that post-1991 Ethiopia saw significant political institution building and that a public ethos of democracy emerged. But the process is still closely controlled by the ruling Tigray People’s Liberation Front–Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front (TPLF–EPRDF), and has a high ingredient of rhetoric not backed by practice. In conditions of political insecurity and contested legitimacy, a network of political and economic control was built up by this party from its circle of trusted people, loyalists, and former comrades in the armed struggle. Thus, a selective hold on politics and economics in Ethiopia was established” (p. 174).

The fact that the TPLF-EPRDF rule brought the “comrades” from the armed movement into directly administering the new state that they control reminds us what I earlier discussed about Menelik II’s decision to bring the military leaders that served the state in the fight against colonialism to now administer the newly acquired territories, more than hundred years ago and shows how the old culture never fades away. Irrespective of that however, continuing his assertion, Abbink further argues that such characteristics of the ruling political party in Ethiopia indicate the need to reconsider the Ethiopian political culture from the perspective of neo-patrimonialism (p. 176). In that regard, from his study of the 2005 elections in Ethiopia that are the most contested elections in the country’s history, Abbink states that the political party in power had to harass civil societies from rural Ethiopia, which paved the way for starting an attack against the property rights of the peasantry that would oppose the government. Moreover, according to Abbink, “because of state ownership of all land, the political party also periodically redistributed to uproot possible interest groups or entrepreneurs and keep the peasantry dependent” (p. 178). Such actions by the neo-patrimonial regime to reward its supporters and punish dissent indicate its clientelistic char-

acters that are impediment to the democratization process in general and hinder in creating a genuine framework for political representation in particular while serving the survivalist agenda more effectively.

In a further discussion of the clientelistic characters of the regime, Leonardo Arriola (2005) also argues that Ethiopians who rely on food aid from the government, voted for EPRDF (the incumbent political party). However, he also argues that, although the reasons for such voting patterns could not be adequately explained due to lack of variations (given similar elections were not held before), the citizens in such food aid dependent constituencies “may do so out of their own belief that only the EPRDF can ensure the continuation of such assistance, or local officials may have suggested that aid would be withdrawn unless they vote for the EPRDF” (p. 14). In concurring with Areola’s argument that I mentioned, an interviewee (number fourteen), who had worked for the Amhara regional state stated that “...even the children in schools located across Northern Wollo of the Amhara regional state, where he spent most of his time, in fact sing songs of praise for EPRDF’s efforts in providing food aid, school supplies.....and what is more astounding is that their parents also fear that if EPRDF is to lose power, chances that they continue receiving such economic support would be zero. The EPRDF officials, mostly from TPLF fear that North Wollo’s geography, which is conducive and known for folk hero bandits and rebels is very frightening to the regime that they always remind the residents in the area not to support any descent in their localities”. Along the lines of Arriola’s argument and that of interviewee number fourteen who claimed how the ruling coalition uses issues such as food aid as a way to legitimize the regime’s importance to the ruled, Ryan Jablonski (2014) who also studied EPRDF’s handling of food aid distribution to target voters argues that, “The practice of allocating foreign aid for political purposes has a long and sometimes less than savory history. Meles Zenawi’s (the long time leader

of the EPRDF, 1991 - 2012) government in Ethiopia consistently withheld the distribution of foreign aid from families that failed to vote for EPRDF”<sup>45</sup>. A Human Rights Watch report also documents systematic bias in the distribution of basic agricultural inputs, such as seed and fertilizer, as well as food aid to opposition supporters (Human Rights Watch 2009)” (p. 2).

In the interviews I conducted in my field research, most interviewees also concur with the argument that that the food aid programs that the regime manages, the bureaucrats that are coalition party members, first identify regime support base that needs (or deserves, to their thinking) the food aid. Interviewee number seven, in particular mentioned that, “the regime instructs regional state authorities to conduct public meetings in small towns as well as localities among the peasantry so they could explain who deserves the food aid.” He adds that, “the saddest experience for me is when I had to explain to the deserving poor in small towns and the peasants that although they were highly impacted by recurrent droughts, the food aid would not arrive to them in time because those localities that had been impacted by the war in late 1980s were the ones who would receive the aid because of their support for the regime in political power despite the fact that at the time of receiving the food aid, those localities that had been impacted by the war were not highly

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<sup>45</sup> Mr. Meles Zenawi was the president of Ethiopia in the Provisional government (1991-1994) and served as Prime Minister of Ethiopia and Chairman of EPRDF until his death in 2013. The quote can be found on page 3 of the article by Jablonski. Jablonski, Ryan S. "How aid targets votes: the impact of electoral incentives on foreign aid distribution." *World Politics* 66, no. 2 (2014): 293-330.

impacted by the drought that necessitated the food aid programs in the first place.” From the conversations I had, with the individual, his position with such an issue is that firstly the ruling coalition targets areas that are perceived anti-regime and forbids them from gaining the vital economic aid the area so deserves, which shows the regime governs in a way that benefits its supporters and negatively impact those that could oppose it. Secondly, the individual clearly stated that the regime’s use of food aid in such a way signals its clientelistic attributes, that I have also discussed early on.

Moreover, the regional states also lack the capacity to identify and help their citizens in their times of their need mainly because the federal financial distributions to regional states in Ethiopia take place in the discretionary procedures of the EPRDF although the House of the federation, which is the upper house of the parliament that uses vague budget calculations that was designed to distribute budgetary allocations to the states was supposed to address the issue. Nonetheless, there are also further evidences in which the government uses these financial disbursements to punish and reward voters. In a further attempt to understand the mechanics of financial distributions in the country, John Ishiyima (2012) argues, “ultimately resource-allocation and utilization decisions are made by political officials at both the national and regional levels. Thus, there is room for manipulation of disbursements” (p. 8). Given such a reality, Ishiyima explains that the ruling party indeed distributed more money to electoral districts that had supported opposition candidates in the 2005 general election and ensured that such districts remain loyal regime supporters. In summarizing his research results, the author states:

“At least in the years shortly following the controversial 2005 parliamentary elections in Ethiopia, the EPRDF regime has sought to “buy off” and “appease” districts

outside of Addis Ababa that supported the primary opposition party CUD. This finding supports the “appeasement” hypotheses, articulated by Daniel Treisman and others, who have argued that central authorities use federal disbursements to buy off political opponents to maintain the federation and the control of the “party of power” rather than dedicate funds to swing districts or to reward loyal constituents” (p. 19).

As John Iyishima’s work indicates there is ample evidence that shows the neo-patrimonial clientelistic characters of the EPRDF regime in Ethiopia in how it rewards patrons and punishes those considered dissenters. However, what Ishiyama fails to mention is that although the regional states might seem to have control on the budgets allocated to them, their use of it depends on the regional advisors that participate in the administrative affairs of regional states, while also controlling and reporting of every financial spending at a regional state level, which takes away the administrative powers of the regional states to a large degree. In fact, regional states are expected to return a third of their budget to the Federal Treasury, which then transfers to the regional State of Tigray, the home base of the TPLF leaders and its party members.

In general, while the regime’s attempts of establishing political legitimacy influenced the ruling party to focus on an effort of establishing a federal arrangement to accommodate the question of political equality via fair representation, and economic reforms that empower various groups, its clientelistic behavior did nothing but exposed its eventually emerging primary agenda, i.e. staying in power at all costs. Among others, the regime’s failure to meet its defined goals of political representation, which I also broadly discuss in the second part of the dissertation, leads to the coming into being of its dysfunctional federal arrangement that opened the door for a further

evolution and spread of clientelistic politics that harmed the validity of their declaration of democracy after its introduction in 1991. My discussion of the neo-patrimonial regime's clientelistic actions with regards to electoral issues that range from its design of the electoral system that is ill-advised for a multi-ethnic nation, and which resulted in a failure of the fair representation schemes, the creation and implementation of the bureaucracy that ultimately served the patron-client relations of the new political elites, and the use of food aid as a political instrument and the undemocratic ways that it relies in repressing its own democratic openings all indicate how the EPRDF coalition, which is tightly controlled by a coalition member, TPLF and its clientelistically loyal regional elites failed the prospects of democratic consolidation in the last couple of decades of the country's reality. The regional elites while adhering to party discipline and principle of staying in power, their agenda of creating a one party monopoly of the state has fully materialized in the Ethiopian state.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

So far in the first part of the dissertation, I have presented the literature review on authoritarian survival in general and the debate with regards to pros and cons of ethnic federalism in particular. I have also presented the discussion on individual rights versus group rights that the Ethiopian political as well as intellectual elites have debated for a long time when it comes to picking the most appropriate approach towards addressing the age old issues of political and economic inequality. As a theoretical foundation for the arguments laid out in this project, I indicated that group rights and the promotion of those rights indeed guided the political elites' choices for the types of institutional designs that guide the relationship between those at the central government and the regional states. The federal government's policies and regulations are also drafted

with goals of empowering the diverse groups of the state based on the group rights agenda. Moreover, the theoretical chapter also indicated that the elites that are behind the making of such institutional frameworks have effectively maneuvered the functions of such institutional frameworks in a way that benefit their survivalist agenda. In that regard, we have seen that the relations in practice between various governmental entities in the federal setting are highly blurred and show that the elites based in Addis Ababa remain extremely powerful.

The last two chapters in part one of the dissertation also explained that the political culture embedded in the Ethiopian state and modes of political operation in more than hundred years remain fundamentally unaltered and are foundational part of the explanations for authoritarian survival in the country. I argued that that the formation of the Ethiopian modern state and those of the reformers at the beginning relied on their relations based on kinship and loyalty in brining the elites within their close circle together and assert their rule for the decades of political control. Although there is no credible evidence to back up the allegations directed at these former leaders of the country in benefiting their ethnic groups at the expense of others within the Ethiopian state, it is very clear however, that any of the political regimes of the modern era have failed to address the political and economic grievances of the various groups in the country. The various reforms undertaken by those regimes lacked uniformity and mostly served the interest of the political elite and those who already had substantial political and economic power. The first Ethiopian constitution, which is ratified in 1931 and the second one in 1954 did nothing but reaffirmed the rule of the king and did nothing significant in terms of addressing the grievances that had already emerged. Such utter failures in terms of lacking a legal framework to address such issues would also be manifested through out the political spectrum and led to the emergence of competing ethnic and national interests that led to the breakout of damaging civil wars, famines and irresponsible history

of governance that led to the reinforcement of authoritarian tendencies and the emergence of vicious political cycle that define the Ethiopian state to this day.

The historical analysis that I presented in this part of the project that focused on the political culture of the Ethiopian state, institutional reforms and the role of the strategic interests of the political elite indeed show that the challenges that we see today are the same problems that are evident through out the most important periods of the modern era. Such explanations, regardless of their contribution in opening our eyes to the current challenges however, cannot be considered as full-fledged answers to the challenges of authoritarian politics in today's Ethiopia. As a result, the detailed examinations of the institutional reforms that define the contemporary Ethiopia and how such institutional reforms might have contributed in reinforcing the political culture of the state the survivalist agenda of the political elite need to be presented. Part two of this project attempts to do just that.

In the next chapters presented in part-two of the dissertation therefore, I provide the wider assessment of the Ethiopian model of ethnic federalism and how the design and implementation of it effectively contributed to our understanding of authoritarian survival in the country. As I argued time and again, the persistence of political culture, the institutional solutions that I examine and the strategic interest of the the political elite all matter in equal measure. Firstly, I examine the Ethiopian federal constitution, the constitutions of the regional states, and the reforms that occurred in post 1991 Ethiopian state and identify what went wrong especially when it comes to the issue of individual and groups rights issues. Secondly, I assess the relations between the federal government and those at the regional states and broadly explain the role of the EPRDF coalition as it is dominated by the TPLF. In that regard, I present the conflicts between the government and its

bureaucracy vis-à-vis the dominant party structure. Thirdly, part-two of the project also presents what I refer as the most pivotal times in the Ethiopian ethnic federal state since its inception in post-1991 political era and how the implementation of it led to the emergence of clear mechanisms that assisted the current coalition's leaders quest for political survival amid many challenges they face within themselves and other factors outside of their political comfort zones.

Moreover, at the end of part-two of the dissertation, I broadly assess the economic reforms that the political elite introduced as they aimed to address the age old economic grievances and examine if solutions that brought about such changes accomplish anything at all. In that regard, I assess such economic schemes and their implementations within Ethiopia's ethnic federalism more broadly and how that could also aid the political elites in their quest for political survival. Both the revolutionary democracy in the first decade and the developmental state economic paradigm inspired strategies in the second decade that aimed to bolster economic equality and address the grievances among the various groups in the country would be further examined. Most importantly, I discuss the role of the political coalition in the country's economy and how such economic reforms transformed the political coalition and its leaders as economic bosses further consolidated their grip on political power and bolstered their survival strategies. Moreover, the chapter also outlines how the newly emerging challenges to the political elites' survival strategies led to their empowering of the military as a force in the economy with survival remaining the most important objective of the ruling leadership. The fact that the ethnic federal arrangement also failed to reform strong federal institutions like the military, I argue need to be part of the broader explanations in our understanding of authoritarian survival in Ethiopia as it pertains to the newly emerging political challenges that are currently testing the regime.

**PART TWO**

## **6 CHAPTER SIX: EMERGENCE OF ETHIOPIA'S ETHNIC FEDERALISM: STRUCTURAL FRAMEWORKS AS MECHANISM FOR AUTHORITARIAN SURVIVAL**

### **6.1 Introduction**

Before delving deep into what this part of the dissertation presents, it is important to note that in part one of the dissertation thus far, I indicated that the persistence of political culture in the Ethiopian state remains one of the most foundational explanations. Through the discussion of the political culture embedded in modern period political regimes, our understanding in respect to the elites' propensity to seek survivalist political approach at the expense of answering the popular pleas to address political as well as economic inequality remains the challenge of the state. In arguing so, I relied on the analysis of the historical narratives in the evolution of the Ethiopian modern state in making causal arguments for the failure of emergence of democratic reforms in the older regimes, as it is replaced by elites' priority of staying in power at all costs.

Moreover, in chapter five, I have also indicated that today's incumbents' purposeful ignorance of the need to consolidate the initial democratic intentions that they showed in post-1991 Ethiopia, by opting rather for survivalist political strategies, could also be attributed to the continuity of the political culture in place. In the latter part of the discussion on the adoption of model of ethnic federalism in the Ethiopian state in particular, I also presented scholarly works that criticized the notion of federal-regional state relations and showcased conversations that I had with former and current members of the political elite in the TPLF led EPRDF coalition, who at times to my surprise and many others' possible dismay, explained to me the practical aspects of such relations.

Most of the secondary literature that examines Ethiopia's ethnic federalism and the unique circumstances under which it was implemented criticize the greater aspects of the federal-regional state relations in the country, present plausible arguments in reasoning for such failures and reveal policy directions for possible reforms. Compared with the contribution of this dissertation, however, one major difference stands out. This research project not only builds on the contributions that the current literature on the topic already presented on the topic, but most importantly, it demonstrates how the model of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia is utilized as a mechanism for authoritarian survival. In doing so, in the following two chapters, I provide extended emphasis on the wider topics pertaining to the federal-regional state relations and how the political elite on top of the political transition in post 1991 Ethiopia initiated, designed, and implemented policies that cleared the road for the success of their survivalist agenda so that the ruling elite takes over the political sphere in the country in general and use the federal structure to such a goal in particular.

This chapter, entitled 'Emergence of Ethiopia's Ethnic Federalism: Structural Frameworks as Mechanism for Authoritarian Survival', therefore first, discusses the country's federal constitution as well as the constitutions of the regional states. Then, presents discussions with regards to citizens' rights with a focus on whether the political equality promotions on the basis of group rights were able to materialize. If they failed, how individuals and minorities rights were impacted due to such structural changes will be assessed. Moreover, the chapter also thoroughly discusses among others, how the EPRDF designed the regional states along ethnic lines and how the group rights agenda impacted the issue of minority rights and the overall assessment of how the ethnic federal arrangement evolved in post-1991 Ethiopia. In doing so, I indicate the initial setbacks such a setting suffered as part of the effort in showing the critical junctures in the life of the federal arrangement, especially the challenges in the initial period. In terms of how methodological basis

in the writing of this chapter, as we recall from how part-one of the dissertation is presented, the use of comparative historical analysis, explanations of very important defining moments and some use of primary interview data were helpful as used in the making of the causal arguments. In this part of the dissertation, I also use similar methodological avenues while mostly marrying the primary interview data that I collected in my intensive field research with the secondary source information.

## **6.2 Background to the Emergence of Ethnic Federal Ethiopia: Post-1991 Transitional Government**

In the part one of the dissertation, I mentioned that the first constitution of the Ethiopian state in 1931 as well as a bit improved constitution of 1954 concentrated much of the political power on what was considered a sovereign emperor. As a consequence of that, it was clear that such constitutional makings failed to provide the necessary platform for the evolution of the constitutional democratic rights of the diverse groups in the country. For instance, for the emperor and the political elite that orchestrated the show in his political reign, recognizing the rights of such diverse groups were considered moves that could endanger Pan-Ethiopian political ideology, while giving way for the emergence of forces that could imperil the unity of the state. In fact, what has become apparent unfortunately, was that the absence of ways towards the recognition of such popular demands for freedom, and most importantly political and economic inequality, in these constitutional attempts indeed led to the emergence of various rebel forces that would take the country towards unchartered territories of civil war that would claim hundreds of thousands of lives, displaced millions and kept the people at large in poverty and as targets of recurrent famine.

Even after the 1974 revolution, the *Dergue* and its military leaders after so much delay had introduced a new constitution in 1987. The problem with that constitutional effort however, was that despite it now puts the ‘working’ citizens at the center of political power, it failed to mention the grievances of so many armed rebel groups that claimed to carry their respective groups’ grievances in legitimizing their struggle. The 1987 constitution’s preamble for instance, explains:

“We, the working people of Ethiopia, based on a centuries-old glorious history, are engaged in a great revolutionary struggle ourselves from our current state of backwardness, and to transform Ethiopia into a socialist society with high level of development where justice, equality and social prosperity prevail.”<sup>46</sup>

Given the regime’s open identification of itself as a socialist government and its sole focus on the ‘workers’ as the most important segment of the citizenry was not of any surprise given similarities across most socialist regimes, the fact that through out its rule of seventeen years, the regime failed to mention the overarching reasons for the disheartening civil war that was weakening the state and its citizens during that period was indeed a significant disappointment. Although the *Dergue’s* 1987 constitution very much differed from both the 1931 and 1954 constitutions, it mostly focused in preaching the unity of the state and indicated several mentions of the glorious past of Ethiopia. However, to the dislike of the regime, at that particular period in time, such efforts were not acknowledged by the rebellions as well as the citizens that did not consider themselves part of the Ethiopian state’ oppressive military regime. Of course, among considerable number of factors that I mentioned in part one of this project, I believe that the fact that the *Dergue* and its

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<sup>46</sup> The preamble was taken from the 1987 Ethiopian constitution, became law in effect from February 22, 1987.

military leaders were rigidly focusing to stay in power invoking the unity of the state and the sole goal of preserving that unity at all costs ultimately contributed to their downfall.

After the emergence of TPLF led EPRDF coalition as a new political force in the country, after which the formation of the coalition was formalized in what is popularly known as the ‘London Conference’ of 1991 and the addition of the Oromo liberation Front (OLF) and Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF) as part of the old rebel consortium that have now taken over the political proceedings of the Ethiopian state from the defeated *Dergue* leaders, Ethiopia entered into a new political transition in May 1991. These consortium of now old rebel groups reached consensus towards Eritreans’ right to determine their own future even including secession from Ethiopia if that is what they prefer. With the American government and its envoy, assistant secretary Herman Cohen as negotiators and then eventual advisors to these group of former rebels, the group decided that Ethiopia’s future would be democratic and shared their commitment for the formation of a transitional government that the EPRDF coalition would be in charge of. The Eritreans started the processes of formally seceding from Ethiopia and the OLF, a political force that represent the majority ethnic groups of the state would also become part of the transitional government. The transitional government then did not waste time before it published the transitional charter of the state, which goes on to serve as quasi constitutional document that guides the transition until the new constitution would finally be ratified in 1995. Here after, with important discussion of the transitional charter of 1991, and the laying out of the foundations for federal Ethiopia, our understanding of the questions at hand in this dissertation would become richer.

### 6.3 The Post 1991 Transitional Charter

The Transition Charter in 1991 laid out the most necessary ingredients for the publication of the most federal constitutional framework for the country later in 1995. In many ways, the Charter was a departure from the age old constitutions and rule books of the state in how it projected the democratic intentions. The preamble of the new Transitional Charter however, starts not by discussing the dawn of a new hope for the people but by bashing the *Dergue*. The first sentence starts by stating:

“Whereas, the overthrow of the military dictatorship that has ruled Ethiopia for seventeen years presents a historical moment, providing the Peoples of Ethiopia with the opportunity to rebuild the country and restructure the state democratically...”<sup>47</sup>

It then references what it presumes the Ethiopian people lacked under the leadership of the previous regimes and makes a new assertion for the need to establish a federal state whereby the self administrative rights of all peoples in the country are respected and guaranteed. In doing so, it states that:

“whereas peace and stability, as essential conditions of development, require the end of all hostilities, the healing of wounds caused by conflicts and the establishment and maintenance of good neighborliness and cooperation...”

Keeping in mind that the previous regimes had all been indoctrinating the populace about the need to strengthen Ethiopian unity and their nationalist agendas, as clearly stated above, in its

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<sup>47</sup> The Transitional Charter published by ‘peaceful and democratic transitional conference of Ethiopia’. Negarit Gazeta, 50<sup>th</sup> year-NO 1, Addis Ababa, 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1991, page 1.

attempt to provide the framework of addressing the need for self administration and addressing the lingering political and economic inequality, the Charter now considers the diverse groups in the country as ‘neighbors’ that are now coming together for the first time to constitute the Ethiopian state afresh and the charter effectively lays the ground work for the materialization of ethnic federalism as an institutional solution.

Moreover, although the fact that the Charter invoked the idea of self determination with regards to its attempt to lay the ground work for the emergence of self administrative rights for the various groups, the fact that such a concept was historically used by most formerly colonized states seeking such rights to determine their future resulted in a new confusion among the scholars who observed the transition very closely. Thus, the literature had to come in agreement in that the concept of ‘self determination’ in fact has an ‘internal dimension’ to it as well. In that regard, Aaron P. Micheau (1996) states that:

“While self-determination has generally been recognized as affording a right to independence from traditional colonization, recent writers have argued that the principle has an "internal aspect" that provides for democratic rights and social and cultural expression. This form of internal self-determination, if applied and observed, may preempt and prevent secession and/or civil war, and protect human rights. In some societies, application of internal self-determination may also require juridical recognition of ethnic or national groups. Such recognition is at odds with traditional human rights discourse. It also challenges a more conservative view that nationalism is "invented" by political leaders, and is

not a reaction to ethnic or cultural repression. The existence of hierarchical, culturally un-integrated societies requires a new approach to human rights discourse and the self-determination principle<sup>48</sup>.

Obviously, the struggle for independence that many armed movements in Sub-Saharan Africa waged against colonial forces was mainly a similar goal of achieving self determination rights to the people that they represented and struggled for. Regardless, the most important point thus becomes whether the charter, with its explanation of the democratic rights it bestows towards all peoples of Ethiopia, provided the important credence for both individual and group rights alike. Given individuals cannot in conceptual or logistical terms protect their self determination rights without credible commitment coming from those with political authority, the question becomes whether such rights attributed to groups could negatively affect the individual rights. That of course is in addition to questioning whether institutions that are important in protecting these individuals and minorities in a new federal setting are even available, and if available, are they permitted to function free from the ruling coalition's interference also becomes an important question.

Despite the fears, in terms of the fact that the document mentions such a right would lead to other groups to also vie for secession by following the footsteps of the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front's withdrawal from the Ethiopian state, the political elites in later day interviews have clarified that the notion of self determination had to be included as a guarantee for each ethnic group's political elites' understanding that Ethiopian identity is not imposed on them. Rather,

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<sup>48</sup> Aaron Micheau (1996) mentions that the fact that self determination was heavily used even when it looked as a ground work for the emergence of the federal agenda, was primarily to indicate the historical domination of the Amhara and to equate that with colonization of other groups within the Ethiopian state. Page, 367-368.

being an ‘Ethiopian’ becomes a national identity that they preferred to accept as a way to perfect the union that they were forming during that particular period<sup>49</sup>. Part one of the Charter in fact has accomplished that. Part two of the document in its articles also mentions the rights of individuals first and then goes to the group rights. In its *Article One*, such rights are explained as follows:

“Based on the universal declaration of human rights of the the united nations, adopted by the assembly... Particularly, every individual shall have, a) the freedom of conscience, expression, association and peaceable assembly; and b) the right to engage in unrestricted political activity and to organize political parties, provided the exercise of such right does not infringe the rights of others.”<sup>50</sup>

And *Article Two* of the Charter mentions group rights as:

“The rights of nations, nationalities and peoples to self-determination is affirmed. To this end, each nations, nationality and people is guaranteed the right to: a) preserve its identity and have it respected, promote culture and history and use and develop its language; b) administer its own affairs within its own defined territory and effectively participate in the central government on the basis of freedom, and fair and proper representation;

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<sup>49</sup> The then president of the transitional government Mr. Meles Zenawi and his comrade within the TPLF leadership, Mr. Abay Tsehaye had in separate interviews mentioned the need for the rights to self determination and up to secession as that guarantee.

For more of that interview, watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SPq4pVvONVE> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XeTvULgSfs8>.

<sup>50</sup> The Transitional charter published by ‘peaceful and democratic transitional conference of Ethiopia’. Negarit Gazeta, 50<sup>th</sup> year-NO 1, Addis Ababa, 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1991, page 2.

c) exercise its rights to self-determination of independence, when the concerned, nation/nationality and people is convinced that the above rights are denied, abridged or abrogated.”<sup>51</sup>

As could be seen from the above quotes of the charter, the political rights of both individuals and groups were protected and the democratic nature of the document was in fact on display. However, as one of the interviewees (interviewee number twenty-one), who at the time was the member of the OLF leadership and active member of the group of scholars and leaders part of the drafting of the charter mentioned to me, one of the most important aspects of the charter that was debated behind the curtain, as they “were working towards laying out the foundations for the constitution that will later emerge replacing the transitional charter” was the issue of individuals’ property rights<sup>52</sup>. The interviewee states that the fact that the nature and identity of individual leaders presiding over the writing of the charter came from the rebel groups that went through the armed struggle. Such a fact, according to the individual, made it conducive to ignore the individuals’ property rights altogether. According to the interviewee, most leaders especially from the TPLF were unyielding in that most within their leadership argued that the constitution will later explain everyone’s rights explicitly and the fact that they were trying to address the issue then was for nothing but appeasing what they refer as ‘the Amhara chauvinists’ that were considered to have control of so much disproportionate wealth across the nation.

In fact, the property rights in the constitution would be later addressed but short of respecting the individual’s right to the ownership of properties in the newly introduced federal setting, at

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<sup>51</sup> The Transitional charter published by ‘peaceful and democratic transitional conference of Ethiopia’. Negarit Gazeta, 50<sup>th</sup> year-NO 1, Addis Ababa, 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1991, page 2.

<sup>52</sup> The interview with interviewee number twenty-one was conducted in Atlanta, United States, on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

least to the level of expectations of so many would be avoided. However, in light of the objectives of the dissertation, two important accomplishments of the transitional charter remain critical. In my view, firstly the fact that the charter laid out the foundations for a federal constitution was hugely important. Secondly, the declaration of the transitional era's political elites' intent towards democratic development, which had been understood to be legitimate was the other. In the following sections of this chapter therefore, I assess what has become of the new transitional government, the setbacks it suffered and what has become of the 1995 Ethiopian constitution as well as the discrepancies within the regional state constitutions that I argue will eventually become a challenge for the national unity of the state under ethnic federalism.

#### **6.4 The Initial Setbacks Towards Democratic Governance and Emergence of Survivalist Political Elite: Partnership Fractured**

The post 1991 political transition, although seemed democratic and promising at first was not devoid of critical setbacks that take the country back to political uncertainties. As interviewee number twenty-one argued, from the beginning it became clear that the leaders within the TPLF that orchestrated the formation of the EPRDF coalition of four parties and kept the most important powers within the military. Furthermore, the rapidly growing and harassing intelligence forces that are loyal to the TPLF immediately started to play important roles supporting the ruling coalition's political agenda, which even expanded to controlling the political state of affairs in transitional Ethiopia mostly in the name of restoring stability. The interviewee states that, "for the OLF leadership that participated in the transitional process and had occupied certain ministerial cabinets in the transitional government, patience would become so important as TPLF's power started to grow and everyone within the transition became aware of the fact that questioning such dominance and

asking the TPLF leaders for respect of our party's independence in administrative duties became unquestionable and dangerous.”

After the departure of the EPLF with Eritrea's independence, the only parties that participated in the transition and had considerable number of soldiers, armaments were the TPLF, EPDM (Ethiopian Peoples Democratic Movement) which had already joined the EPRDF coalition and thus merged its military with the TPLF and OLF. The problem within the partnership of such former rebel forces first occurred when the TPLF led EPRDF coalition convinced the OLF leaders to disarm their soldiers given the country is now undertaking a new and democratic transition and thus having a strong and united national army was important more than ever. After the OLF obliged to do so and disarmed its military, the TPLF had assured that not only the political transition had been completed in their favor, but also they made sure that if any failures within the transition are to occur, the OLF's strong and sizable army is not anywhere to pose any challenge whatsoever. Eventually, within a short period of time, OLF leadership decided to leave its partnership with the TPLF led EPRDF coalition. Such a decision by the OLF was made because staying in the transitional government became unbearable since watching TPLF's dominating role was too much to the extent of interfering in the daily and routine decisions of the OLF leadership. Unfortunately, the OLF leadership and their political movement despite its sizable support in light of the population size of the people of Oromo that they represent would be declared a new enemy for the EPRDF coalition government led Ethiopian state, immediately after their exit from the transitional government.

Dima Noggo Sarbo (2009), one of the former leaders of the OLF, who also had served as cabinet minister in the Transitional Government of Ethiopia until the OLF shortly left after the transition had embarked its journey, recently wrote in his dissertation:

“The transitional government however collapsed in less than a year, the TPLF declaring war on its erstwhile partner, the OLF and the latter leaving the TGE. The TPLF however, continued to rule in the name of the transitional government for another three years. The regime also requested the United Nations to facilitate the independence of Eritrea, the first such case, and in 1993 Eritrea formally declared independence and joined the United Nations, making Ethiopia a landlocked state. The TPLF regime was the first to recognize the new state. In 1994 a Constituent Assembly, made up of TPLF and its surrogates, was elected, which approved a constitution that, in theory set up a federal government of nine regional states, five of them dominated by the principal national groups, and the rest multinational regions (FDRE, 1995). A general election was conducted in 1995, contested by the TPLF without any challenger and power was transferred from the TGE to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE). In practice, however power remained centralized under the dominant party and the coercive apparatus of the state, the army and security services, loyal only to the core leadership of the ruling party.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Although the author mentions the TPLF’s role in Eritrea’s secession to a certain degree as an agenda initiated and implemented by the TPLF, I believe that the EPLF’s struggle firstly was to secure independence from Eritrea. Secondly, the right to self determination in the transitional charter was signed with the agreement of the OLF, which was part of the drafting of the document. However, at the quote above shows, it was apparent that the TPLF had already embarked on preparing the political framework for its survival from the start given its treatment of the OLF and the latter’s decision to leave its temporary partnership with the TPLF led EPRDF coalition. The dissertation by Dima Noggo can be accessed at: [http://trace.tennessee.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1130&context=utk\\_graddiss](http://trace.tennessee.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1130&context=utk_graddiss).

As the above quote is very important to the argument here, more context is needed. The author's point, I believe is in part to show how the TPLF was behind the successful and seamless process that ultimately achieved the Eritrean state independence from Ethiopia, which realized the dream of the EPLF (Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front) leaders to come into fruition. The second point that the author attempted to invoke is to show that the transitional political era process was quite dominated by the TPLF, contributing to OLF's withdrawal from its governing duties as a partner to the ruling coalition of EPRDF.

The departure of the OLF leaving its administrative role in Ethiopia's transitional government and the subsequent decision by the TPLF led EPRDF coalition to wage war against the newly departed foes thus culminates as the first most important setback for democratic development in post 1991 Ethiopia. Such events with regards to the fracturing of the transition government, with OLF long gone, also made everyone's already rampant suspicion of EPRDF's 'declared' intentions for democratic Ethiopia as nothing but empty talk. Moreover, as the complaints of the OLF are already discussed, the TPLF, would emerge as the strongest political block within the EPRDF coalition.

## **6.5 The End of Democratic Opening: Crackdown on Civil Society**

One positive development that came out of the seemingly open democratic space in the country's transitional period was also the emergence of stronger civil society, especially free-press that was not seen at any period in pre-1991 Ethiopia. The TPLF dominated transitional government however, published its first press proclamation in 1992, under which it started to directly attack and detain journalists, and shut down the doors of newly emerging free-press publishing houses. This, as we would see further in the discussion below, made such a democratic opening short lived

and thus, disappointing. Interviewee number twenty-six, who was one of the first five independent journalists to be ever charged under the 1992 press proclamation stated that, “the amount of freedom journalists had enjoyed in the initial period of the transitional government was beyond words. That level of unrestricted freedom in journalism however, started to dwindle downwards immediately after the press proclamation of 1992 became officially published in *Negarit Gazeta*. At the time, I was reporting the continues harassment of the Amhara citizens of the country in Oromia and Ethiopian-Somali regional states and the government considered my reporting as inciting violence against the brotherly peoples within the federal state. In my reporting, I explained that the then transitional charter that laid out the country’s federal structure before it became official in 1995 constitution was problematic in how it was impacting individuals’ rights and greater freedom of Ethiopian minorities, especially those who live and work in regional states that are dominated by certain ethnic groups that such individuals do not identify with were the ones that suffered the most and that was what I thoroughly indicated in my reporting.”<sup>54</sup>

The interviewee further asserts that, “among some of my colleagues in the free-press, one who extensively wrote about the killing of an Addis Ababa University student, who was murdered by intelligence service members of the regime in summer of 1992, was forcefully asked to write false reports about the murdered student. The intelligence officers demanded that he described the student as sympathizer of the *Dergue’s* military regime and a former member of the Worker’s Party of Ethiopia, which was the only political party in the *Dergue’s* political era. When he refused to do so, they kept him in a police station, abused and tortured him until he fainted. He would later

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<sup>54</sup> The discussion with interviewee number twenty-six was conducted in Snellville, Georgia, USA in March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

be released him after he suffered so much pain and eventually left his profession in journalism given the agony he experienced was too much to bear.”

Moreover, the government’s use of the said proclamation to silence its critics, and its efforts in subjecting them to high levels of abuse and torture is well documented. Amnesty International’s recent publication mentions the use of such proclamation by the regime stating that,

“The EPRDF government has used legislation to stifle dissent since the early days after it came into power. More than 200 independent publications, including over 60 newspapers, were registered by the then Ministry of Information under the 1992 Press Law, which criminalized defamation, and established a number of other crimes, for instance the “instigation of one nationality against another”. These crimes attracted stiff penalties and up to three years’ imprisonment. By 1998, the application of the press law had significantly reduced the number of independent media publications in Ethiopia to less than 20.”<sup>55</sup>

The assault on civil society in general and the free-press in particular at the start of the post 1991 transition is well documented. But what eventually happened after many years was that a further new proclamation would come out which the EPRDF further utilizes to charge the journalists and their work that criticize the government with terrorism. The Press Proclamation of 1992 in general, however, was the worst news for those who hoped that the democratic opening at the start of the transitional chapter and the alternative sources of information that had been growing during that period to even expand and help the democratic consolidation efforts. As Tracy Ross

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<sup>55</sup> The statement by Amnesty can be accessed at:

<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR2541782016ENGLISH.pdf>.

(2010) indicated, “While nations across the world have come to respect and honor freedom of expression and access to information as inalienable human rights, the government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has spent years retreating from the international norm on media rights. The Ethiopian Constitution lays out the legal rights of citizens to hold opinions, thoughts, and free expressions. In the past, the government used a 1992 Press Proclamation as a means of restricting those rights of private media and, consequently, the citizens of Ethiopia.”<sup>56</sup> Where the free-press is today indeed in a very much worse position than the period I present in this segment. Today, free press in Ethiopia is no more and the only ones that are circulating mainly in the capital are entertainment newspapers and magazines and of course, the newspapers that are owned by TPLF supporters for promoting the government, its political elite and the TPLF-EPRDF policy agendas alone.

At the end of this chapter, I also examine today’s developments in more detail, as what I presented thus far are just the initial setbacks. What is even very significant in the post 1991 Ethiopia (during the transitional period and beyond the constitution’s ratification in 1995) was that the free press was even under siege in areas out of the capital, Addis Ababa. Because, the circulation of the free press’ newspapers in regional states was hampered by continuous control of the newspaper distributions by the intelligence services at regional states that receive their direct orders from the central command of the EPRDF, from its headquarters in Addis Ababa.

A former bureaucrat who served in both the Amhara and Tigray Regional States, (interviewee number twenty-two), states that when it comes to the press freedom throughout the regional

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<sup>56</sup> Tracy Ross explains the overarching assault directed at the free-press in her article: <http://www.pennstatelawreview.org/articles/114/114%20Penn%20St.%20L.%20Rev.%201047.pdf>.

states he served in for over a decade, given most regional states are out of the sight of foreign diplomats, international aid agencies and most importantly the international media, the harassment of those who attempt to write about governance issues, complaints of citizens, and even any columns that focus on those regional states are not tolerated and usually face very stiff punishment from the authorities<sup>57</sup>.

What is very much noteworthy about interviewee number twenty-two's account however, was the story he shared me about how the Tigray regional state controls the flow of news papers into the state. According to him, "the TPLF who controls the EPRDF's coalition and also administers the Tigray Regional State knows full well that the if the news-papers from the free press are to be freely circulated in the region, the Tigrayan population will be presented with information that explains about how much the the rest of the country is complaining about the TPLF's dominance of the country and the criticism of their governance. As a result, through out my service in the region, I have never seen any copy of news paper from the free-press in Addis Ababa reaching the streets of Mekele or Axum (cities in the regional state of Tigray). If you are lucky to read some, it must be a friend or a relative who came from Addis Ababa or other cities that must have brought them to you."

What I described thus far shows that the Transitional Charter which seemed promising despite its flaws practically failed given the growing dominance of the TPLF from its role in ousting the OLF from the transitional government as well as its assault on the newly emerging and then encouraging civil society. Especially, the assault directed against the free-press led to the end

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<sup>57</sup> The interview with interviewee number twenty-two was conducted on march 20<sup>th</sup> 2017 in Atlanta, Georgia, USA and a second telephone interview was also conducted on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

of the democratic opening but the emergence of formal process leading to an establishment of a dominant party state. Next, I discuss the federal constitution ratified in 1995 and the emergence of the TPLF dominated EPRDF as an authoritarian party that puts its survivalist agenda above and beyond the age old popular demands for freedom and political and economic equality and how that evolved in Ethiopia's newly introduced federal setting.

## **6.6 The 1995 Ethiopian Federal constitution and the Emergence of TPLF Led EPRDF Dominated Party State**

Understanding the rationale behind OLF's exit from the transitional government, which resulted in TPLF-EPRDF's emergence as a sole dominant party, and the crackdown against the civil society ensured that critics are now silenced, it's clear that the transitional period was not even completed before the authoritarian nature of the leading coalition's political elites emerged. Shortly before the 1995 constitution was written and formalized by the constitutional assembly whose proceedings and agendas were mainly dominated by the EPRDF coalition, and given the fact that the newly formed opposition political parties lacked the plain playing field to compete against the growing power of the TPLF led EPRDF political elite, the EPRDF coalition's intention to create a single party dominated state became clearer than ever before.

Here, it is important to remember that, the EPRDF is a coalition of political parties, but the fact that they operate as one party and all four member parties follow strict party discipline mean that their desire to create a party state would be a smooth sailing. Terrence Lyons (1996), a scholar who closely observed the growing power of the EPRDF coalition although dominated by one of the coalition members, the TPLF, clearly stated it:

“The EPRDF led throughout this transitional period and capitalized on its commanding position to consolidate its power. The party dominated the political landscape by virtue of its military power, effective organization and leadership, and control of the agenda and rules of competition. It structured the transition around new ethnically defined regions, a constitution that emphasized self-determination, and a series of largely uncontested elections.”<sup>58</sup>

What Lyons described in fact was that in May 1995, a national election was held to elect the members of the House of Representatives of the the new parliament that marked the end of the political transition of the Post 1991 Ethiopia. And the process culminated with the newly elected parliament ratifying the constitution in August of that year. Here, what is apparent is that with the civil society under siege, the emerging opposition lacking equal playing field to compete against EPRDF and as a result boycotting the election altogether, EPRDF’s position became even stronger in the absence of any credible political opposition. I argue that the 1995 election cemented such dominance of the political elite that were formerly rebel leaders and as a consequence, the newly elected parliament members’ main roles emerged as nothing but approving of everything the leaders of the coalition (most of them are also ‘elected’ parliament members) put on the table. In August 1995, therefore, the parliament approved the first of its kind ethnic federal constitution that

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<sup>58</sup> Look at page 121 of: Lyons, Terrence. "Closing the transition: The May 1995 elections in Ethiopia." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 34, no. 1 (1996): 121-142.

effectively transformed the Ethiopian state and targeted the promotion of group rights more broadly than what the transitional charter had already attempted<sup>59</sup>.

## **6.7 The 1995 Ethiopian Constitution**

One of the the first interviews I conducted at the start of my field work was with an individual who has served the TPLF-EPRDF government since 1991 holding various cabinet positions. The interview entirely focused on learning his assessment of how the ethnic federal arrangement unraveled in the country since it became official in 1995. Interviewee number two, however, argued that the federal constitution in Ethiopia, “should not be characterized as an ethnic federal model.”<sup>60</sup> According to him, the constitution was designed to address both the issues of individual rights and group rights without discriminating one over the other. Moreover, he stated that although the constitution bestowed various groups in the country with the ability to administer themselves, its ultimate goal was also to safeguard the national unity of the state. However, many who study the country’s federal state disagree by explaining that from the nature of formation of the regional states to the electoral politics within those newly formed states, the federal constitution in Ethiopia promoted ethnic rights and the country’s politics become ethnic centered. Jon Abbink (1997), another scholar who closely followed the coming into existence and implementation of the federal arrangement, states that, “According to the policy of the EPRDF-led government (in power since 1991 and confirmed in a general election of sorts in May 1995) ethnic identity has been

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<sup>59</sup> It is important to note that the federal setting was in place since 1991, it is just that it became formalized in 1995 once the constitution was officially approved.

<sup>60</sup> The interview with interviewee number-two was conducted in March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017, in Washington D.C.

declared the ideological basis of political organization and administration, and has also been enshrined in the Federal Constitution of December 1994 defining the outlines of the new Ethiopia.”<sup>61</sup>

Obviously, one very significant development in the Ethiopian constitution, as I stated earlier, was that of the political elite’s intention of putting the group rights agenda that was engrained in their political platforms starting from the armed struggle. The constitution of course mentions ‘full respect of individual freedoms’<sup>62</sup> as the most important part of the constitutional making. However, it is also critical to note that most of the content of the constitution focuses on the group rights agenda dominating that of the individual. Interviewee number twenty-one, who had actively participated in the writing of the transitional charter and who later closely followed the processes of the drafting of the 1995 constitution also argues that in times of any conflicts arising between the individual’s rights and that of the regional state that administrates ethnically classified region or local government and thus protecting the group rights with in the defined territory, the later would always have an upper hand in any bureaucratic decision making processes or court proceedings and debates.

The Federal Constitution’s preamble that starts with: “We, the Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples of Ethiopia: Strongly committed, in full and free exercise of our right to self-determination, to building a political community founded on the rule of law and capable of ensuring a lasting

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<sup>61</sup> The characterization of Ethiopia’s federal setting as ethnic federalism and the politics as ethnic centered is now the norm in Ethiopian government studies. For more: Look at Abbink’s work on: Abbink, Jon. "Ethnicity and constitutionalism in contemporary Ethiopia." *Journal of African Law* 41, no. 2 (1997): 159-174, and the quote is taken from page 159.

<sup>62</sup> The preamble of the constitution, for instance makes a mention of the individual rights as, “firmly convinced that the fulfillment of this objective requires full respect of individual and people’s fundamental freedoms and rights, to live together on the basis of equality and without any sexual, religious or cultural discrimination....” Federal Negarit Gazeta-No. 1, 21<sup>st</sup> August 1995-page 2.

peace, guaranteeing a democratic order and advancing our economic and social development....”<sup>63</sup>, indeed puts greater emphasis on the promotion of groups rights agenda, that needs to be also seen from the perspective of how such an agenda effectively empowered the four members of the the EPRDF coalition (TPLF, ANDM, OPDO and SEPDM) that are in charge of the administration of the four largest regional states in addition to most of the federal government’s powers in Addis Ababa and the so called EPRDF affiliate political parties in the states that the government refers as ‘developing’ regional states, which the chapter discusses more broadly further down.<sup>64</sup>

This chapter sporadically discusses the application of the constitution through out and how the debates I mentioned above play out in the federal setting will be further assessed. However, it is also important to see that all of the regional states in the country have also ratified their regional state constitutions and assessing such constitutions’ presentation of the foundations for the peoples’ rights within their respective regions is important. As the individual who has served the post 1991 Ethiopian state in different capacities (interview number-two) in his part stated that, ‘it’s known that the political elite in charge of the state actually believe that the federal constitution and all other rule books of the state are designed in a way that would not put the national unity and the people to people relationship in jeopardy’.

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<sup>63</sup> See: Federal Negarit Gazeta-No. 1, 21<sup>st</sup> August 1995-page 2.

<sup>64</sup> What the government refers as developing regional states are states such as Afar Regional State, Ethiopian-Somali Regional State, Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State, Gambella Regional State and Harari Regional State. Such regional states are administered by ethnic political parties that are considered ‘EPRDF Affiliate parties’ and as we see deep in this chapter, the elites on top of such ethnically organized political parties are highly coopted by the EPRDF political elites, which effectively undermines the constitutional rights for self-administration.

According to interviewee number-four, who worked as a federal prosecutor in Amhara regional state in the nineties, however, although the federal constitution is not written in a way that translates as anti-national unity in any way, (which many critics say when referring to the constitution), the regional states' constitutions when carefully studied focus on the rights of ethnic groups in their respective regions and make mentions of historical rights that gave birth to the rights they enjoy today.<sup>65</sup> However, such historical accounts were explained in terms of purposefully reminding the citizenry within regional states of what the political elites consider an awful past in ethnic relations in the country.

## **6.8 The constitutions of Regional States in Ethiopia**

The regional states' constitutions that were also finalized at a similar period of the 1995 Ethiopian constitution are starkly similar in the wordings of the articles, and even the number of articles in such constitutions are mostly similar. Although I stated that the federal constitution gives more emphasis towards group rights, the regional states make good job of indicating that their respective constitutions protect the interest of those individuals who live in the regional states that do not align with their ethnic origins. The problem that is evident in regional state's constitution appears to be that such political entities in the federal setting lack the necessary enforcement mechanisms to protect such rights given they are effectively controlled through a centralist authoritarian party structure.

However, in terms of what I mentioned earlier about how such constitutions are designed, it is critical to explain that such constitutional attempts were crafted in a way to firstly remind

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<sup>65</sup> The interview with interviewee number four was conducted on march 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017 in Silver Spring, Maryland.

everyone of that ‘awful past’ and to depict how the EPRDF controlled ruling regime should be considered the savior. The purpose here is that in the part one of the dissertation, I have extensively discussed that the ethnic question has already been central in Ethiopian politics starting from the last decade of emperor Haile Selassie I’s reign and the pivotal events such as the student movements and the emergence of armed rebellions that carried ethnic grievances at a forefront of their struggle. Moreover, within that discussion I also stated that the rationale for the country’s elites making ethnicity the epicenter of everything politics was the perception that the Amhara’s culture and language was so dominant that it served as a foundation for the grievances of other ethnic groups claims of historic oppression. Indeed, that had contributed to the legitimization of the then armed rebellion’ expanding support base. What I argue here is that the fact that such a history contributed to the evolution of ethnicity and the promotion of group rights as an agenda taking center stage in contemporary Ethiopian politics was clearly evident in the making of the constitutions of the regional states. For instance, let’s look at a couple of examples (out of the many) in how the preamble of such constitutions were presented:

Example one: The Preamble of the Constitution of the Oromia National Regional State, reads as:

“We, the people of the Oromo Nation: Cognizant of the fact that we have paid enormous sacrifices, with other oppressed peoples of the country, in our unflinching struggle to uproot the oppressive system which, for years, was imposed upon us and perpetuated conditions that relegated our history, neglected our culture, suppressed the growth of our language, violated our human and democratic rights, took away our land, looted our resources and hampered our economic development thereby threatening us as second class

citizens within our own land and exposing us to hunger, nakedness, illiteracy and destitution;.....”<sup>66</sup>

Example two: The Preamble of the Constitution of the National Regional State of Tigray, reads as:

“The people of Tigray are one of the peoples and nationalities of Ethiopia who suffered a lot under the yoke of the feudal system which prevailed throughout Ethiopia. In the period between 1975 and 1991 protracted armed struggle of the people of Tigray together with their oppressed Ethiopian brothers had been the most impressive feature of the Tigrayan people. In the course of this struggle for peace and democracy, the region made about 60 thousand live sacrifice and large material destruction. After such along and bloody war, our people have proved the abolishment of the undemocratic government and formed a Transitional Government. Thus, strongly committed in full and free exercise of their right to self-determination, to building a political community founded on the rule of law and capable of ensuring a lasting peace, guaranteeing a democratic order, the people of Tigray are on track record of advancing their economic and social development.”<sup>67</sup>

As we have seen from the above preambles of the constitutions of regional states, it is clear that such sub-national members of the federation provide an important credence to the formation of the federal state of Ethiopia, which ended decades of oppression. Such an assertion in fact raises questions as to who was the oppressor indeed and how that oppression had taken place. Historians

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<sup>66</sup> Oromia regional state constitution, October 1994, proclamation 46/1994.

<sup>67</sup> The Tigray regional state constitution, 19<sup>th</sup> of June, 1995, Mekelle, Tigray Regional State.

that closely study Ethiopia also concur with the existence of dominant cultures of the north and the oppression of the many others (Markakis 2003). However, it is also important to mention that those who ruled the country in the past, although considered were primarily of Amhara, the population in what is known the Amhara National Regional State of today, were also subject to the same oppression that fellow ethnic groups in the country suffered under. Regardless of such a fact, however, the political elites presiding over the political transition in post 1991 Ethiopia and beyond have made sure the newly regional states' constitutions mention the awful past that they went through so they underline the fact that such a history is long gone thanks to the EPRDF. Interestingly, those same political elites have also made sure that the Amhara national regional state's constitution also mention the oppression and injustice other ethnic groups suffered in the previous regimes. The Preamble of the Constitution of the Amhara National Regional State thus in part reads as:

“We, the peoples of the Amhara National Regional State: having been desirous to do away with the negative impact hindering our overall development which the age old oppressive system had for long imposed upon us by cruelly suppressing our human and democratic rights and thereby exposing us all to the scourge of poverty and backwardness as a result unjustified economic and social policies in place; being dully convinced of the fact that we had for long been victims of an unbearable harm caused to us directly or indirectly to an atrocious national oppression which had to be committed in the past on and **against the majority of our nations**, nationalities and peoples, and henceforth needs to be corrected and rectified hereafter;.....”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> The revised constitution of the Amhara National Regional State, proclamation 59/2001.

What is evident from the above preamble of the Amhara National Regional State's constitution is that while it mentions the oppression of the peoples of Ethiopia, which in fact includes Amharas as well, in the first segment, in the second it explains that such oppression was indeed against the 'majority' of Ethiopia's ethnic groups. According to the preamble's implications, while the Amhara were among the victims of the oppressive systems in the past, such suffering was not to the level of what others had experienced at large and thus acknowledge that 'their forefathers' indeed are to blame.

Interviewee number-three, who had served as prosecutor in both the Amhara Regional State's Supreme Court of Justice, located in the City of Bahir Dar as well as in federal courts in the City of Addis Ababa, extensively mentioned in the interview, although the wordings of the regional constitutions, in their English versions, do not quite resemble that of the stronger wording in their Amharic versions, it is understandable that the political elites in the current regime make sure that the Amhara know their historical dominance and thus need to own the oppressive history of the past regimes as their own faults. When I also pressed the individual about why constitutions that are the most important legal frameworks, would have even the slightest differences in other language versions, the individual mentioned that, "it is very common and not surprising to see differences in interpretation and at times, content of the many legal and other documents of the government. The government, purposefully writes and publishes the same press statement or policy with confusing translations in their Amharic and English versions. They know that the majority of Ethiopians mainly look at the Amharic version and they consider the publication of the English

version just to satisfy the needs of foreign governments, aid organizations, diplomats, researchers and the international media's consumption."<sup>69</sup>

An individual (interviewee number-fifteen) with a wider social media following, who considers himself an Amhara activist also described, the current ethnic federal arrangement is anti-national unity and the day to day governance of the government at the federal and regional state levels take place mostly cognizant of the political elites' efforts in making sure the various ethnic groups are always reminded of, whatever level of development they receive is because of the elites' (formerly rebel leaders) success in toppling the oppressive military socialist regime. Therefore, by doing so, they mainly hit two targets. Firstly, they make sure whatever level of development and freedom such groups are enjoying are historical breakthroughs and the various ethnic groups therefore must feel grateful for the new found blessings. And secondly, any questions or grievances in the political and economic grievances of the people are answered in a way that makes sure such groups become aware of the current regime's best efforts to provide answers and remain patient until they receive such answers. Moreover, the political elites also mention that if the current government will be replaced in any violent and unconstitutional means, whatever levels of historic improvements that they are counting on will be replaced by the old regime remnants' (sympathizers of the old domination of the Amhara) destructive and anti-democratic agenda, which will come against the majority of the ethnic groups that make up today's federation.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> The interview with interviewee number-three was conducted in April, 3<sup>rd</sup> of 2017 in Washington D.C.

<sup>70</sup> The interview with interviewee number-fifteen was conducted on a telephone conversation on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The interviewee's location will not be disclosed given my agreement with the individual.

## 6.9 How the 1995 Federal Constitution Failed to Protect Rights of minorities and Individuals?

Immediately after the transitional charter, which served as the foundation for today's constitution put into practice, the other important test to the newly minted federal scheme, as I indicated earlier, the fate of the citizens who continued to live in newly constructed regional states that are formed along ethnic and linguistic identity lines and what happens to their rights remained an open question. Especially, individuals who are ethnically Amhara, Oromo, Tigre and Gurage in addition to many other groups who are known to live all across Ethiopia and the fate of their rights in the newly arranged federal setting becomes a dire concern.<sup>71</sup> Despite the federal constitution as well as the regional state's constitutions assert the rights of individuals to live in places of their choice, the practicality of it came under a huge scrutiny. In the earlier periods after the introduction of the federal setting, ethnically motivated massacres were immediately evident in areas known as *Bedeno* and *Arba-Gugu*, which are located in the Oromia Regional State. Eventually, such ethnic tensions and hate crimes motivated by such ethnic tensions expanded across many regions in Southern Nations Nationalities Peoples Regions (*Gura-Ferda* areas), Gambella Regional State, Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State<sup>72</sup> and Ethiopian Somali Regional States. While in most of

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<sup>71</sup> For instance, an individual with huge political power and importance to the Oromo Peoples Democratic organization (OPDO), in Addis Ababa, who was also interviewee number thirty-one, for instance, mentioned that, "According to the demographic files within OPDO, the Amharas constitute more than eleven million of the population in the largest regional state in Ethiopia, Oromia Regional State."

<sup>72</sup> From the United States' State Department report, it is stated that, "Authorities in the western region of Benishangul-Gumuz forcibly evicted as many as 8,000 ethnic Amhara residents from their homes; some of those evicted alleged police beat and harassed them because of

such cases, the victims were of ethnic Amharas, in the case of the Ethiopian-Somali Regional State, that largely impacted the Oromos and to some extent the Amharas have suffered as well. In Gambella, the ethnic group known as Annuak would continually suffer from routine massacres directed at them by forces within their regional state while the federal government's army failing to protect them<sup>73</sup>.

In the public spheres and across the Ethiopian opposition media based mainly in the diaspora, the problem in the existence of such tensions and ethnically motivated violence is discussed mostly by raising questions about who perpetrated these criminal acts and why. The fact that the government had ignored the probability that such a federal setting could also be a liability moving forward and how it could be managed thereafter are however, ignored as every major opposition, social and political activists are just busy to advocate for the sake of one ethnicity over the other, that is mainly the result of the current system which has almost effectively managed to reduce the level of Ethiopian nationalism and replaced it with tribalism at its best.

Here, it remains very critical to understand the role the federal government and especially the security forces in making sure such violent incidents are controlled and do not pose any threat. However, their efforts, are extremely discouraging as they purposefully ignored the need to address

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their ethnicity.” (Page 32). For the full report, see: <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/220323.pdf>.

<sup>73</sup> For instance, see this report from Human Rights Watch on the massacre in Gambella: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2005/03/23/ethiopia-crimes-against-humanity-gambella-region>. For more on related abuse of minorities and others in Gambella, see: [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/ethiopia0112webwcover\\_0.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/ethiopia0112webwcover_0.pdf).

such problems. An individual who extensively has written about the Amhara who suffered extensive human rights abuses, forced evictions, and who had also extensively interviewed families who lost their family members in some of the massacres, (interviewee thirty-three), stated to me, the federal government's security apparatus which is highly dominated by the TPLF, has ignored such situations all across the regional states time and again. According to him, some of the bureaucrats, heads of security office in some regions have also secretly told him that when they tried to stop various conflicts against minorities in the region, "people from the higher up" had even stopped them from preventing the violence.<sup>74</sup>

A government official since 1991, interview number-two, who had provided me an extended interview opportunity also concurred with the problems with regards to forced evictions, killings and arbitrary arrests directed against individuals and minorities in some regional states. The individual argues that, "although this federal constitution is the most important victory that Ethiopians achieved in a long and painful struggle, one of its major failings however, is that it has created narrow nationalists all across the nation. What we hoped to accomplish was to empower the groups while simultaneously teaching them the essentials of how to respect and protect individual and minority rights. Unfortunately, the lack of proper and sustained training is the reason for the increase in the number of those narrow nationalists who are less tolerant of others in the regional states they now administer." When I pressed the interviewee if he could agree with the notion that the government security forces might have encouraged some atrocities in certain regional states against the Amhara and the Oromo, he insisted that such questions are "an unfair

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<sup>74</sup> the interview with interviewee number thirty-three was conducted in a telephone interview and email exchanges on March, 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The location of the individual will not be disclosed per agreement.

characterization of the armed forces and the government's efforts to improve good governance across the country.”

Most opposition political figures in Ethiopia and abroad in general, interviewee number thirty-five among those who I interviewed in particular, believe that the EPRDF coalition that is mostly dominated by the TPLF leadership act oblivious to the atrocities that happen against minorities in different regions since they are well aware that the growing division among many of the ethnic groups in the country would mean the continuation of the TPLF domination and EPRDF's hold on political power. Of course, that assertion must be conceivable given what we see in the political elites' efforts to prolong their rule by relying on their survivalist political approaches and the use of the federal setting for such a goal is very much clear. However, the assertion by opposition officials also is amenable given what our observation of how the smaller regional states in the country are constructed in the current federal setting. For instance, looking at the regional states of Harari and Benishagul-Gumuz, we see that the number of minorities combined outweighs the number of the ethnic groups who are given the authority to administer such regional states.

**Table 6.1 Demographic Description of the Harari Regional State<sup>75</sup>**

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Population in percentage</u>
Oromo	56.41
Amhara	22.77
Harari	8.65
Gurage	4.34
<u>Others</u>	<u>7.83</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>100</u>

**Table 6.2 Demographic Description of the Bannishangul-Gumuz Regional State**

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Population in percentage</u>
Oromo	13.55
Amhara	21.69
Berta	25.41
Gumuz	20.88
Agaw-Awi	4.22
Shinasha	7.73
<u>Others</u>	<u>6.52</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>100</u>

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<sup>75</sup> Central Statistics Agency (CSA), Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census, December, 2008.

From what Table I and Table II describe about the two regional states' demographic make-up, we can infer that the federal structure, with its intent on promoting groups' rights in every aspect of political life in general and groups rights' for self-administration in particular, designed and implemented institutional solutions that in the long run served as the platform for the emergence of ethnic conflicts that overshadowed their highly celebrated rights promotions agenda. Moreover, as it is evident from the tables, the Harari Regional State, as its name indicates is created as a region that its administration of it 'belongs' to the 'Harari ethnic group' while the population size of the group is merely less than nine percent of the population within the said regional state. The problem, as mentioned earlier, is not the fact that such groups are now in charge of the administrative duties of regional states that have now arguably achieved that right to self-administration; however, the fact that such an opportunity arrived at the expense of the other ethnic groups who actually outnumber the Harari ethnic group lead to many questions.

The same argument also goes to explain what exactly happened in the Bannishangul-Gumuz Regional State. In this region, we see that the Oromos and the Amharas, combined outnumber the rest of the ethnic groups but are considered majority-minorities in the state given the administration apparatus of the region is being handled by the minorities. The question, again, is why the institutional design is so poor? According to interviewee number-thirty nine, who worked in the Amhara regional state's bureaucracy and visited the Benishangul Gumuz region multiple times for official purposes, for the EPRDF coalition and its dominant elite within the TPLF, empowering minorities makes it easier for the co-optation mechanisms that the elites devised to work more seamlessly by limiting the voice of the majority from becoming a challenging force.<sup>76</sup> One

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<sup>76</sup> The interview with interviewee number thirty-nine took place in a pre arranged telephone interview on Monday, April, 3<sup>rd</sup>. The interviewee is based in 'undisclosed' (per agreement) location in Europe.

additional feature within the regional constitution of the Benishangul Gumuz is that the constitution explicitly state that the minorities within the region such as the Gumuz, the Benishangul, the Berta and Komo should claim the ‘ownership of the regional state’ despite other groups such as the Oromo and Amhara being the majorities in its boarders<sup>77</sup>.

As we saw earlier, however, regional states that are sort of given to and run by minorities ultimately would not be devoid of ethnic conflicts. Here, it is important to note that in the last two decades in Ethiopia, although ethnic groups within the federation never fought against each other, forced evictions, ‘mysterious’ massacres have always been common. While the regime is mostly directly blamed, sometimes the regime is also observed to have had a slow reaction in restoring calm when conflicts within two or more ethnic groups occur from time to time. Moreover, the fact that when different forms of conflicts arise, the government either ignores them or takes a very slow action that usually comes after the damage is already done, raises more questions on the regime’s intent. The understanding from my field work and readings is that the regime’s absence from taking swift measures or in most times, its slow responses towards ethnic conflicts emanates from the political elites’ desire of empowering the minorities that run such regions or particular districts within regional states.

Even those authors who consider the Ethiopian federal constituents (regional states) to have most powers in comparison with other federation across the world, concur with the limitation of such arrangement, although they fail to directly address the issue of ethnic conflicts or minority’s

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<sup>77</sup> Look at Article Two of the Benishangul Gumuz Regional State’s constitution, the November 1995 version.

oppression in such regions as a result of such weaknesses of the federal setting. Among those for instance, Assefa Fiseha (2006) states that:

“the federal system assumes that every ethnic group is found inhabiting a territorially defined geographical area. Certainly, its is difficult to adopt federalism unless there exists a territorially defined diversity, but a significant number of Ethiopians do not live in the places where the majority of the members of their ethnic group are to be found. They have moved, either voluntarily, in search of better opportunities, or by force, due to the *Dergue’s* policy of resettlement and villagization” (Page 135).

The problems that the author indicated above in fact could be attributed to the overall failure of the ethnic federal arrangement in the country. However, addressing how such chronic problems within the federal setting had contributed to the problems I assessed above must be part of our understanding of how it essentially benefits the regime to stay in power succeeding in their survivalist strategies.

Given the fact that the regime introduced ethnic federal arrangement as a way to regionalize the historically centralized Ethiopian state and promote ethnic rights through fair representation at the central government and to provide opportunities of self-administration, its successes or failures therefore should be evaluated based on how much such arrangement met its predetermined goals. Thus far, we have seen them failing to deliver. Interviewee number-five, whom I asked if he could explain the successes of the federal arrangement, stated that, “no doubt that the ethnic federal arrangement has helped certain ethnic groups to come out of the shadows of purposeful ignorance by the imperial and socialist regimes in the past. However, I consider the federal arrangement to

also have some failure because if the federal arrangement was to be a success, it would have prevented the formation of further ethnic rebellions in the country. As you know, the OLF, since it left the transitional government, returned to the bushes. The Ogadenis (an area in South-Eastern Ethiopia, within the Ethiopian Somali regional state) under the leadership of ONLF (Ogaden National Liberation Front) are fighting the government. The Amharas and other minorities are also fighting the government from their bases in Eritrea. Despite such rebellions have not seen any successes thus far, as a former insider, I can tell you that they have always unsettled the political elite within the EPRDF and especially the TPLF leadership that controls the security and intelligence forces all alone. Therefore, I believe that if the federal experiment considered successful, some groups would not have raised arms to fight the government in any way. But since they still have unanswered questions, and given that the majority of ethnic groups are witnessing the dominance of an ethnic minority, feelings of the old era oppression via new institutional means is very much the case in today's Ethiopia."<sup>78</sup>

Of course, the clear dominance of the TPLF in Ethiopian politics and the resulting reemergence of popular grievances by the majority others is a common knowledge among the citizens in Ethiopia. But it also helps to see interviewee number-five's extended answer from the comparative politics literature's assessment of the onset of civil wars or rebellion for that matter since we now have a clear understanding that the ethnic federal setting has not answered the questions of the raging rebels reverting them back to the bushes. The most debated causes of civil war are mainly attributed to the existence of greed among those who control the political and economic

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<sup>78</sup>The interview with interviewee number-five took place on Tuesday, February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017 in Washington DC. A follow up telephone interview had was also conducted on Monday, March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

power and those who have the grievances from others' unfair domination of the economic as well as the political sphere (Collier and Hoeffler, 2002, 2004; Keen 2012; Stewart, 2000). The issue of how much a country is diverse in its numbers of ethnic groups however, is not considered a contributing factor for the outbreak of civil war at large. The most important factor that could lead a multi-ethnic nation into civil wars, however, emerges when a minority is in control of political power and the majority feels neglected and unfairly represented (Fearon and Laitin, 2003). What we also see in the Ethiopian state starting from the imperial and the socialist military era is that although the rebellions were organized with certain forms of ethnic agenda, they have never declared war against another ethnic group. However, they all fought the regime in control of political power at the center. In their struggle against centralist regimes, in the past, rebel groups formed along diverse ethnic lines were also coordinating with each other to defeat the regimes in power in particular periods given doing so, according to them would lead to the emergence of a new Ethiopia. But in the newly emerged insurgents fighting against the regime, that has changed so much given the new rebel's declared enemies have now become the TPLF and the domination of the Tigrayans, which eventually could pose a difficult challenge to the country's future as a whole.

In that respect, we see that the ethnic federal arrangement introduced in post 1991 Ethiopia with EPRDF's coming to the political scene, has clearly failed among others as it did not prevent insurgencies and rebellions from reemerging. If the ethnic federal setting fails to answer the questions of representation that now remains unanswered, of course questioning such federal institutional solution's success and understating how it failed to deliver its predetermined goals is so important. Here, the federal constitution as well as the regional states' constitutions not only failed

to protect minorities' rights and help the state remain unified amid the challenges it faces, but also most now consider the constitutions as the ruling coalition's ploy to prolong their political survival.

Even when we look beyond the atrocities directed against individuals and minorities in some regional states without the need to dwell on who incites and who perpetrates such acts, we see that the political rights that such minorities and individuals enjoy as citizens when residing in regional states that do not align with their ethnic identities are extremely limited. Despite the fact that the regional constitutions and the federal constitution have clauses that call for safeguarding the rights of these individuals and minorities to live in their preferred localities all across the nation as stated before, they however, fail short of explaining the mechanisms that will aid such minorities and individuals' in having a say in the governance of their localities. According to Endaweke Tsegaw Balkew (2010), who studied the rights of minorities in the regional state of Harari, in particular argues, the Federal Constitution,

“does not recognize these segment of the population (‘the minorities in regional states’<sup>79</sup>), and practically they are placed in a status between citizen and non-citizens of the State for only they can elect persons who are not representative of their ethnic groups because language requirement of the electoral law – which imposes the criterion to speak working languages of the state or one of the local vernaculars of the indigenous groups of

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<sup>79</sup> The sentence, ‘the minorities in regional states’ is not part of the author’s quote. I added it to in reference to, his words, ‘these segment of the population’.

the state. Eventually, since the Constitution has no room for such middle status, they are better deemed to be non-citizens (page 8).<sup>80</sup>

From what we see above in Endaweke Balkew's (2010) work, the problems in the federal structure are too many and what is even more interesting is that individuals with high profile positions within the TPLF led EPRDF coalition do not deny the existence of such peculiar problems while declining from commenting on the measures that should be taken to reform such institutional solutions as my encounter with few officials among the regime's ruling elites in my field work attests to.

In addition, it is also important to look at how the citizens' trust of the coalition in power has been significantly diminishing over time. Terrence Lyons (2006) states that given the electoral maneuvers of the EPRDF were too repressive in many of the national elections held since the regime came to power in 1991, peoples' trust in those democratic procedures has now reached historic low point. Here, from what I have learned in my field work, I can also attest to the fact that most of the interviewees that are former or present EPRDF political elites either in retirement, exile, or still working for the regime in power, all concur with the idea that the people, in general, do not trust the government. And what is more interesting is that the political elites within the EPRDF leadership are openly aware of the people's lack of trust on the coalition they have presided over since 1991. Interviewee number-eight, a former member of the TPLF leadership, for

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<sup>80</sup> For more on Endaweke's work, see his thesis on: <http://etd.aau.edu.et/bitstream/123456789/11765/1/24%20.Endaweke%20Tsegaw.pdf>.

instance, argues that in the annual and at times semi-annual evaluations of the works of the incumbent political coalition, many debates start with questions of assessing the level of trust the regime enjoys at that particular time.<sup>81</sup>

According to the interviewee number-eight, the EPRDF leadership discusses areas where protests of any kind occurred, suggestions or criticisms from the domestic and international press, and outcries from the ever weakened opposition groups. Once the elite receives and analyzes such issues, they start to debate what should the coalition do so it addresses such complaints that come from the spectrum of voices. In such meetings, the coalition emphasizes on the need to get more attractive reviews from the media and facing less criticism from the international human rights organizations must be a renewed goal. According to the interviewee, such evaluations are especially important around the time local or national elections are held. Because, for TPLF dominated EPRDF's political elite, it is clear that the people are always on the side of the opposition and the people are in fact sympathetic with the helpless political parties that dream of ousting the EPRDF political coalition from political power while it's already clear that in the absence of a plain playing field, heightened abuses and arbitrary arrests against their members and leadership, chances that opposition parties could be able to challenge amounts to zero.

In general, from the discussions presented in the chapter thus far, firstly, we see that the democratic opening that was evident at the beginning of the transitional political order, amounted to nothing but just a deception designed to elevate the citizens' enthusiasm from the just concluded regime change and gain international as well as domestic legitimacy. Secondly, we have also witnessed that the institutional solution of ethnic federalism primarily designed to answer the age old

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<sup>81</sup> The interview with interviewee number-eight took place on April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017 in Boston, Massachusetts.

questions of ethnic grievances of inequality did not result in a desired outcome. Instead, such an institutional solution's implementation led to the emergence of a dominant party state that was possible via the ruling coalition's successful creation of a party structure that dominated the state of politics across all levels of the federal setting. In the next chapters, I will further present how that dominant party structure effectively overshadowed the federal setting in a range of topics.

## **6.10 Conclusion**

From the discussions of how the post-1991 Ethiopian politics unfolded, it is apparent that the fact that the ruling coalition's intent on promoting the group rights agenda backfired against minorities in the regional states, led to the emergence of ethnic tensions, and the promises of democratic opening that were evident in the first year of the transitional charter era vanished. However, it is also critical to note that as a newly emerged authoritarian regime, the ruling coalition's mechanisms that it utilizes to assert its rule had to go beyond its creation of an ethnic federal setting that now seems to have balanced ethnic interests as a result of the self administrating rights given to the regional states, at least to their claims. This does not mean however, that such regional states enjoy the political autonomies that are outlined in the federal constitution, as much of the discussion in the chapter indicated. Instead, the regime's efforts in making sure such ethnic interests are represented through the creation of regional states along ethnic and linguistic lines, have led to claims of victory for the regime for it succeeded in bestowing such rights unlike its predecessors and such claims of success have convinced the regime's elites to believe that they have gained the legitimacy to rule. Unfortunately, the regime's political elites seemed content with their introduction such an institutional solution to address the historical grievances while ignoring the political will and governance needed in affirming their efforts to address such questions of inequality.

However, recalling part two of the dissertation's goal is to understand how the ethnic federal setting as an institutional solution has contributed to the political elites' survivalist approach to politics by serving the political elites with a framework to apply the tactical mechanisms of survival. Hence, the focus remains in understanding the tactics of the ruling coalition and how such mechanisms played out in practical terms. I argue that the discussions on the use of evaluations at central government and regional state levels, as managed by the EPRDF member parties that administer the larger regional states are critical to our broader understanding. Those EPRDF coalition member parties that also happen to supervise the EPRDF affiliate political parties across the 'developing' regional states and all the evidences point to how the regime's political elite benefit from the very federal structure they created to ensure their survival ambitions. Henceforth, in the next chapter, we see how the electoral system in the country has also failed the very federal setting of the Ethiopian state in the last two decades given the dominant party structure. Moreover, the next chapter also exposes us in understanding how the relations between the regional states and the federal government evolved, and how the bureaucracy also emerges as a patron to a centralist party structure of EPRDF's ruling coalition.

## **7 CHAPTER SEVEN: ETHNIC FEDERALISM, CENTRALIZED PARTY STRUCTURE AND CO-OPTATION MECHANISMS FOR SURVIVAL**

### **7.1 Introduction**

To recall, in chapter six, I discussed that in the post-1991 Ethiopia, the newly arrived political coalition first outlined a transitional charter, which promised greater rights and freedoms, promised democratic reforms, and introduced the basics of the federal structure along ethnic and linguistic lines. However, I also argued that such a federal setting as it eventually evolved, was

proved to be deficient in so many ways. Such a federal setting's shortcomings in terms of safeguarding minority rights are therefore detailed. We also see that some instances in the relations between the central government and the newly minted regional states became questionable in so many of the examples I presented. By continuing in the path of such a conversation, chapter seven also focuses in explaining the ruling coalitions' manipulations of the electoral mechanisms in place while also providing a broader explanation with regards to the Ethiopian state bureaucracy and the power it maintains vis-à-vis the dominant party structure spread across all levels of government in the country. Moreover, the chapter also addresses how the relations between the regional states and the political elite in charge of the administrative duties in those regions vis-à-vis the TPLF dominated EPRDF coalition in the broader context.

## **7.2 Electoral Mechanisms in Ethiopia's Ethnic Federal Setting**

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed that the initial setbacks that failed the democratic openings in the post 1991 Ethiopia and opened the doors for the unraveling of survivalist strategic interest of the TPLF led EPRDF political elite, and that started with OLF's exit from its partnership with EPRDF in the transitional government. Then, I had also explained that the onslaught that was directed against the newly emerging free-press in that particular period, was quite an example of how the democratic opening occurred only for strategic purposes of legitimizing the new regime's rule from the start, in which the regime's further assault on that sector grew after the EPRDF elite achieved full grip of political power at the end of the political transition. There, I also showed that OLF leadership's understanding of the political dynamics in which it became clear that they could not play a constructive role in serving their constituencies' as well as the nation in a newly arranged

federal setting due to the dominance of TPLF's leadership in the transitional period and its unflinching control of the security apparatus (all playing in its favor) became the basis for their exit from the partnership. Moreover, it is critical to note that I have also mentioned that the opposition groups that were hastily formed by political elites from the old regimes, some intellectuals and civilians, were not able to withstand the repressive tactics of TPLF led EPRDF coalition and even boycotted series of election from 1992 to 1995 nationally as well as regional elections, which would even become a pattern as could be seen later after the advent of the new millennia.

Boycotts of elections in Ethiopia's national elections by the opposition political parties is mostly common. And the complaints among the opposition, the media (of course, the international media, in particular given the domestic media is extremely weekend) and some observers, however, starts with the nature of the National Election Board (hereafter NEB) of the country. Thus far, it is known that in post 1991 Ethiopia, the newly designed institutions and the regime's intent in committing to democracy was discussed. The achievements of the new political elite in factual terms, in fact, cannot be undermined as what happened in the country was quite a departure from what describes the imperial era or the repressive socialist military regime's highly centralized national politics in the decades past. However, it is crucial to recall what remains important to the dissertation is not knowing how the NEB functions, but how the regime effectively manipulates it to succeed in its survivalist agenda will be further explored in detail below.

The reality is that the TPLF leadership that dominates the EPRDF coalition has effectively closed on the idea of democratic reforms that they had openly aspired to build from the beginning of the transitional period, given the democratic opening we witnessed was also short lived. For the regime, it was important to curtail those openings so they could embark on the survivalist political

agenda which they saw as the only option for not only the survival of the coalition but also crucial if the programs they envisioned are made to work. The electoral mechanisms and the institutions that manage such elections in that regard would become highly exploited instruments of the regime from the start. In that respect, the NEB since its founding became no more than an institution that serves the interest of the coalition in power. As one of the interviewees (interviewee number-one) mentions, the officials running the NEB have always been political appointees and their main job is to make sure the EPRDF coalition secures an institutional cover in the management of fraudulent elections. According to the interviewee, “given the NEB is highly controlled by the EPRDF, the governmental authority or ‘institution’ that gives licenses to newly emerging opposition political parties, the ‘institution’ that revokes the licenses of such opposition parties, and who also allocates the public funding of the political parties competing at any given election period is indirectly the EPRDF, which is a political party coalition that manages the electoral framework resulting in the absence of an independent institution for the one that exists is nothing but a fake stand in saving faces.”<sup>82</sup> What the individual stated here is crucially important. As someone who worked for such an institution, what he argues implies that the electoral board that had to project an important level of political independence but has failed tremendously in that regard. Because, from what its actions induce, the institution is there to do nothing but to serves as an institutional cover to the ruling coalition’s survivalist agenda.

According to further explanations by interviewee number-one, expecting the NEB to be impartial and fair is of course very difficult and the fact that the opposition has lost trust of such an institution is not in any way surprising. As Jon Harbeson (1998), who studied the first few

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<sup>82</sup> Interviewee number-one is a former ranking member of OPDO, who currently live in exile. The interview was conducted on May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017 in Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

elections in the post socialist era (post 1991) states, the issue of impartiality was not even a question given how the electoral commission, (which was later renamed as a Board) came into existence in the first place. Harbeson states,

“The National Election Commission came into being in December 1991. It was composed of ten members of the Council of Representatives, representing the major political groups within the council. The commission oversaw all aspects of the 1992 elections. The EPRDF issued Proclamations 9 and 11, establishing the legal and institutional framework for the elections. The commission then issued a comprehensive set of rules for implementing these proclamations (page 119).”

What we see is that the NEB, as opposed to managing the electoral competition in a fair manner and ensuring that the diverse groups in the country will have the opportunity for fair representation, it emerged as another institutional mechanism where the political elite within the TPLF led EPRDF leadership manipulate and co-opt those serving in various institutions within federal Ethiopia in supporting the survivalist agenda, by depriving them of their independence, and by formalizing such co-optation mechanisms effectively. As Harbeson clearly state above, the formation of the NEB was even facilitated after ten individuals were picked from the pool of members in the transitional government’s parliament, which of course completely dominated by the EPRDF and its affiliate parties. Indeed, from what is evident from the what I learned from my discussions with interviewee number-two, a long serving government official, noting that his argument was also concurred by many others, competing against the EPRDF in Ethiopia is like witnessing a very competitive sport with one of the teams also sponsoring and selecting the team

of referees who over see the competition, immediately leading to questions on the integrity of the games to be played.

In post-1991 Ethiopia, when we look at the electoral competitions starting from the transitional period, EPRDF's role in election management was very much clear from the outset. Walle Engdayehu (1993), who also studied the first elections in post 1991 Ethiopia states, if we are to measure the elections and management of elections in the country in the transitional period based on the basic tenets of what a free election should be, the elections in that period would be considered complete failures even if that period to some extent was considered to have had a relatively promising democratic opening. From what Engdayehu stated, it is also clear why despite the initial democratic openings and promises of free and fair elections, the boycott of elections by the opposition groups became common from the start. In the author's explanation of the elections conducted in post 1991 Ethiopia, we find that,

“First, it became clear that the boycott of the elections by the major opposition parties left the ruling EPRDF party in control of the regional administrative bodies. This means that when national elections are held for the federal legislative seats in 1993, the regional units of government will be dominated by supporters of the EPRDF, giving that party an edge for its candidates in most of the election districts throughout the country. Second, although any politically organized groups were free, in principle, to compete openly in the elections, the party in power, that is the EPRDF, had a built-in advantage to influence the participation of those groups that it liked or disliked. This was confirmed particularly in the cases of the COEDF (Coalition of Ethiopian Democratic Forces) and Medhin, both of which were not allowed to operate as legal opposition parties. The two

exiled opposition groups have continued to report that the EPRDF refused to authorize their participation in the political process. Some observers believe that the two have the potential of unseating the EPRDF in free and open democratic elections. They argue that the efforts to democratize the political system would have had a positive meaning for Ethiopia if the opposition groups had been allowed to compete uninhibited by, and free from, the threat of political intimidation and harassment' in all political activities" (page 42).

What we see from the Engdayehu's assessment is that the playing field in electoral competition remained skewed in EPRDF's favor from the beginning and the old traditions of fake elections as a way to gain even meagre amounts of legitimacy has continued to this day where there is no insight of a credible opposition political party that can stand against the EPRDF dominance in any way.

Bringing the extended discussion I had with interviewee number-five back, the interviewee, (important to note the individual had also served the EPRDF government holding various cabinet positions in the central government and at a regional state level), answered to my question focused on the fairness of the electoral competition in the country saying, "I run for parliament three times and only I can assure you that I won outright in the first one since I had no a direct opponent at all as the independently running candidate was forced to decide not to compete against me given the mounting pressure he felt from the security forces. In the second and third time I run for Ethiopian House of Representatives (the Parliament), both times, the internal polling indicated that I would lose my reelection bids in landslide to Oromo National Congress's (ONC) well liked and successful candidates. However, the regime made sure that alternative ballots were pre-pre-

pared and the election results that were announced showed that I garnered more than seventy percent of the votes in both elections leaving me as an outright winner.” To my surprise, the interviewee also mentioned that the election board (NEB) and some officials within the board were very much aware of what actually transpired in my district as well as many others where fraudulent election result were also revealed”. When I pressed the individual in providing examples on how the NEB addresses complaints of the opposition, the individual stated that, “in 2010, one of the officials running the NEB was asked by a foreign journalist if he can prove the election in the district where I ‘won’ was not fraudulent. And the official responded saying that, ‘that district in particular had an extremely free and fair elections and in fact the NEB considers the district as an example of the success of all the elections held during that period.”

From the nature of the type of the electoral system, which I discuss in part-one of the dissertation to some extent, the NEB serving as a stand in elections comptroller, and the ever-increasing presence of the security forces in playing roles of intimidating, arresting and pressuring the opposition parties and their members from challenging the regime in power, we can infer that the TPLF led EPRDF, I reiterate has emerged as a successful survivalist political coalition out of its tactics of exploiting the very institutional frameworks it designed and cooptation mechanism that successfully coopted the regional and local elites.

### **7.3 The EPRDF and the Emergence of a Dominant Party State**

It was during the May 2010 elections in Ethiopia were taking place, and I was watching the Ethiopian public television (commonly known as ETV until it changes its name to EBC, Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation), English news broadcast, when the journalist reading the news referred the EPRDF’s success in winning ‘consecutive elections’ has now led to the coming to

existence of a ‘dominant party state’ in the country. The ‘forty-five’ seconds news item also featured the then Speaker of the House of Representatives (the Ethiopian parliament), Ambassador Teshome Toga. The news, as I fully transcribed it reads as,

“The federal parliamentary speaker, Teshome Toga said, “the dominant party state is taking its roots in Ethiopia as EPRDF has won the national elections consecutively. EPRDF has consequently won the national elections, as the Ambassador said, adding this shows Ethiopia is transforming into the dominant party system. He singled out Japan, Finland and India as living examples where the dominant party system has developed. Though political parties were not able to assume power by winning elections, there is a wider opportunity for them to have their say in issues of national interest and concerns, Teshome said. He noted the dominant party system will not limit multi-party system.”<sup>83</sup>

The existence of dominant political parties that win consecutive election in democratic states is in fact common and it would not take away from the democratic characters of such countries in most ways. The problem with the Ethiopian experience however, is that as opposed to the May 2010 elections, it was the May 2005 national elections that were competitive and during that particular national election, the opposition for the first time was able to galvanize huge popular support and even winning the election until the EPRDF decided otherwise and the then Prime Minister, Mr. Meles Zenawi, declared a curfew and a state of emergency in the next day after the election<sup>84</sup>. Such incidents and their significance will be explained in the other half of this chapter

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<sup>83</sup> The news item could be viewed at the following URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0f-658HYB4>.

<sup>84</sup> To see a video of the declaration of the state of emergency by the prime minister, watch: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V\\_elADiMt\\_M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V_elADiMt_M).

as I broadly discuss the most pivotal times in the evolution of Ethiopia's federalism and the EPRDF's success in its survivalist strategies. Nevertheless, after most of those opposition politicians decisively won the 2005 election but instead were sent to prison signified the end of the meagre democratic opening during that era (second time after the the other relative opening during the transitional period in early nineties), the regime's political elite learned their lessons and the May 2010 national elections would emerge as the most boycotted of all since the EPRDF was able to win 99.6 % of the election, confirming the speaker of the house's assumption of the emergence of a dominant party state.

In fact, it was in the aftermath of that particular election in 2010 that the then Speaker of the House, Ambassador Teshome Toga was able to proudly state the emergence of 'a dominant party state' in the country. Even recently, a top EPRDF leader and the most important player within the TPLF and the longest serving minister of the Ministry of Federal Affairs, Mr. Abay Tsehaye, even suggested that if EPRDF is to lose political power, and with most of the opposition complaining about the ethnic background of those who are in power, (given most of the political power is in the hands of the TPLF and thus ethnic Tigrayans), the fate of the country could even resemble that of what happened in Rwanda. According to his interview given in Amharic language, he is heard saying, "the number of the major ethnic groups in Rwanda is just two. But imagine that happens in our country where over eighty ethnic groups live together, and the results would be catastrophic."<sup>85</sup> The TPLF leadership's mentioning of the Rwanda genocide is quite common and even at a certain point in the 2005 election campaigns, the ruling elite had often recalled 'the notorious interhamwe' group in Rwanda and used it to describe the Ethiopian opposition and what

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<sup>85</sup> To see Mr. Abay Tsehaye, who served as an advisor to the PM as well as minister of Federal Affairs, making such remarks, watch, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJuQbLTAYw0>.

they would do if chances of seizing political power arrives<sup>86</sup>. In claiming so, not only it became so clear that the EPRDF coalition aspires to assert its dominance, but also indicated that they will not have open ears for the opposition that constantly demands fairness on issues of representation, wealth distribution and democratic rights.

In general, as Kjetil Tronvoll (2010) also stated in a clear summary of what the EPRDF was able to accomplish in stifling the voice of the opposition and setting the tone for the public that without their leadership, Ethiopia would proceed into ruins and thus the ultimate option left is nothing but to back the regime, prior to the election in May 2010, the author states that,

“By ratifying new restrictive legislation and adopting new policies aimed at curbing dissent, the government consciously developed a complex and multi-layered strategy to prevent the political opposition from consolidating and making further political and electoral advances. In the aftermath of the 2005 electoral shock, the EPRDF leadership, and notably the chief ideologist Prime Minister Meles Zenawi himself, authored a number of booklets used to reinvigorate and re-ideologize the party apparatus and to inspire and guide cadres in fulfilling the power ambitions of the party. For instance, in a booklet called Democracy and Democratic Unity used in the massive, countrywide teacher training ideology seminars conducted in early 2006 to ‘explain’ the 2005 election result and the following crackdown, and make corrections for the future, it is explicitly stated that the Ethiopian people has a ‘clear choice between dependency and anti-democracy forces (utilizing tools

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<sup>86</sup> Dr. Yacob Haile Mariam, a famous international lawyer, a United Nations and international criminal court’s prosecutor against the perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide, who was also one of Ethiopian opposition leaders in 2005 national elections, had famously said, “it is very sad to label us, the opposition ‘inter-hamwes’ while they are very much aware that I was even one who was prosecuting those who committed the genocide in the aftermath of what happened in that country in the nineties.

of chauvinism and narrow nationalism) and revolutionary democracy (peace and developmentalism) .... No Ethiopian can stand on middle ground or be neutral.’ During the massive re-ideologization campaign undertaken after the 2005 elections (commonly referred to as ‘capacity-building’ seminars and supported through donor basket funding), the EPRDF and the Prime Minister deliberately employed an alarmist language, aiming to polarize the political landscape and to convince the people that, without EPRDF in power, Ethiopia would turn into chaos” (page 3-4).

What Tronvoll argues in fact is also what confirms what the political elite in particular interviews that they provided and I cited, had clearly explained boasting of their cementing of the ruling party’s dominance by either in sharing their warnings against the opposition or their extended use of the scare tactics against the peoples’ quest for fairness in elections. Now that I have explained how the EPRDF coalition emerged dominant and made sure such dominance could not be challenged, it is also vital to look at how the EPRDF is able to dominate the political spectrum and achieve the trust of its members (party cadres all over the country) in both at the central government and the regional states at large. From the discussions presented as to EPRDF’s manipulation of the electoral system, it is crucial to note that the national elections in 2005 and 2010 and what subsequently happened point to the further consolidation of the dominant party state.

#### **7.4 The Makeup of the Ruling Coalition: Patron-Client Relations in Ethiopia’s Ethnic Federal Setting**

As discussed in the literature review’s segment in part-one of the dissertation on what leads certain authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes to rule longer, what mostly surfaces is that how the regime under a leadership of a certain political party succeeds in survivalist approaches is by

primarily amassing support among the party members that are available in various leadership positions within the party structure as well as on duties of administering local governments. In the case of the PRI, in Mexico, we saw that the party made sure the rents are somewhat distributed along the party lines and the lower position cadres had their share of benefits, which is explained in the outcome of not much challenge coming against the elites with higher party positions. (Magonaloni, 2006). In cases of some Middle Eastern monarchies, we see that the role of family and relatives who control the most important positions of the state led to outcomes of stability in ruling regimes (Herb, 1999). In general terms, however, as I argued in part one of the dissertation, finding an argument that explains most cases, especially the ones in Sub-Saharan Africa is difficult to come by. In most single or multi-case studies of African states as well as comparative cross-case studies, however, one important explanation looms most than others and that is the issue of institutions and institutional settings.

Jennifer Gandhi and Adam Przeworski's (2007) seminal argument for instance, states that the ruling elites' enclosure of potential challengers in their coalition make up and legislative assemblies across the political spectrum could lead to an outcome of regime survival. Taking this and applying to various cases of parliamentary systems where the need for coalitions is the only and ultimate option in creating a fifty plus one voting block in semi-authoritarian states where we get periodic quasi competitive elections could in fact show that the authors' argument suffices in its attempt to explain such cases. Nonetheless, applying to Ethiopia, it still falls short given the dominant party apparatus of the EPRDF coalition is no where near to appeasing or incorporating oppositions in its executive or legislative setting as this ruling coalition despite known as a coalition, basically functions as a single political party that is very much unwelcome of unwanted guests, i.e. the opposition. While that indeed is the case, the authors, consistent with most who

argue the existence of clientelistic relations (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997) also argue that, “co-opting by distributing spoils and co-opting by making policy concessions entail different institutional mechanisms” that help such regimes survive longer).<sup>87</sup> Such an argument, indeed show that institutions and how such institutions are designed play equally a huge role to our understanding of survivalist strategies of political elites on top of authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes. I have so far showed how the ethnic federal setting starting from the constitution to the the design of regional states and the results we saw from decreasing nationalism and the emergence of ethnic conflicts contributed to the EPRDF coalition’s emergence as a sole care taker of the Ethiopian state. Questions on how the institutional setting within federal Ethiopia shaped the clientelistic nature of regional state-federal relations therefore must be further examined. In doing so, I hereby attempt to dwell more on the co-optation mechanisms in play within that center-regional state relationship.

The Ethiopian Somali Regional State is a region in Ethiopia that had its share of suffering due to Somalia’s invasion of Ethiopia during the imperial as well as the military socialist regime’s era for their irredentist agendas of creating the greater Somalia nation causing unprecedented proportions of violence and suffering in this region. Moreover, the Ethiopian Somalis have also suffered under low levels of representation in previous regimes and the introduction of ethnic federal arrangement in post 1991 Ethiopia, which bestowed the opportunity of self-administration on Somali citizens had aroused quite an enormous level of enthusiasm and hope among that part of the country. Understanding how that particular regional state is administered, identifying the powers

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<sup>87</sup> See page 1282.

and autonomy of the regional state's elites within that region however, displays a different outcome.

One of the extended interviews I conducted in my field research was with an Ethiopian Somali who had served within the regional state as well as lived most of his life as businessman in the city of *Jijiga*, the capital of the regional state. According to interviewee number forty-one, in his long experience of working in the region and for the regional state, he has never witnessed the Ethiopian Somali regional state enjoying the autonomy that the federal constitution had given to the newly created regional states. Not that the other regional states enjoyed such rights as well, but we find that the Ethiopian Somalis' regional state appears to have different outcomes even in comparison to other regions. First of all, the interviewee argues, "the region and its people, as we all know were one of the most forgotten regions by previous regimes and the fact that the federal arrangement took place and created wider sets of openings for the emergence of regional elites that would take advantage of the opportunity, (which led to a competition among those who wanted to show their capabilities as poised and experienced leaders) by appearing in front of those who come from the central government to help the Ethiopian Somalis make that transition of administering their own region, was quite intense. The problem however, was that the political elite from the center wanted to make sure that they elect not individuals according to their educational qualifications or expertise, but 'who is trusted more' became the rationale in that decision making process of organizing and establishing a properly functioning Ethiopian-Somali regional state."<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> The interview with interviewee number forty-one, was conducted on Sunday, July 2<sup>nd</sup> in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

Due to tensions across the Ethiopian-Somali boarder and the presence of armed rebellion whereby the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) constantly fighting the regime's military at all times since the past decades, the presence of the Ethiopian defense forces in the region in huge numbers is easier to witness. The Ethiopian military, as one of the highly dominated institutions of the state by the TPLF political leadership and their former rebel commanders now turned generals and higher military officials, however, has led to its role in the region to also grow by not only overseeing the regional elites in this particular region, but also it even has the necessary legitimate authority to dismiss and appoint the regional state's leaders as it wishes.

To provide a further extended example, according to Abdullahi Hussen, an individual who had worked for the regional state as a personal advisor to the regional state's president and close confident, and who gave an interview to an Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT) based in Washington D.C., after he left the country to exile, the individual explains that the regional state's president receives his orders directly from the military general based in the regional state. According to the individual, "General Abraham, not only receives reports and gives orders in any administrative issue that ranges from budgetary issues to security matters, but also I believe that he is the one who is indirectly administering the state."<sup>89</sup> When pressed by the journalist about how that actually happens in reality and what are the benefits of administering such a big regional state, Mr. Abdullahi responds by saying that the regime has convinced that the only way that the Ethiopian Somalis were able to now claim their won regional state and enjoy the 'self-administrative rights' is because of the sacrifices the TPLF leadership and its former rebel soldiers paid in the armed struggle that ousted the military regime. Therefore, as a way to build the administrative capacity of the

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<sup>89</sup> The interview Mr. Abdullahi Hussen provided to Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT), in Amharic language, can be watched at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeLINNwBE4Q>.

regional state, close supervision of the state by central elites, mainly those elites within TPLF is important.

What I argue is mind blowing in that interview is however, the footage of a secretive meeting that the regional state president had conducted with Ethiopian Somali clan leaders, provided to the media outlets by Mr. Abdullahi, where the regional state's president is heard and watched explaining how for the ethnic Somalis to keep their interests and grow their capacity and have greater say in the country's politics could only be possible by working closely with the Tigrayan elites. In that interview, the regional state's president, Mr. Abdi Mohamoud Omar claims as he speaks in Somali language and the excerpts taken from the subtitles of the television network, Ethiopian Satellite Television, ESAT,

“Today, the Tigrayans like the Somalis more than any ethnic group in the country. The problem is however, we the Ogadenis,<sup>90</sup> are the ones that are causing the regime problems while the truth is that what the Tigrayans aspire is to arm us, strengthen us and lead the nation together with us. The Tigrayns do not want to see only one thing, that is the Amharas being able to control the Ethiopian state ever again. We Somalis consider the Oromos, the Gurages and the Tigres and others as if they are all Amharas. Because, we are backward and we cannot even distinguish among all these groups. That has been the problem that kept us from developing and growing. Unless we are now able to learn and differentiate among such groups, they all can work together and rule over us like before. Make no mistake, when an Ethiopian Somali goes to Addis Ababa, he immediately works with the Tigrayans who are extremely dominant at the central government. And know that all

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<sup>90</sup> The people of Ogaden are ethnic Somalis who have also raised arms against the regime.

other major ethnic groups are so divided that chances they can all cooperate and work together is slim. Therefore, we have to take advantage of that.”<sup>91</sup>

What we see in the Ethiopian ethnic federal arrangement in general of course, is that the political elite within the TPLF that are the dominant force ruling the EPRDF coalition and the mind behind such an institutional design of ethnic federal setting, have made sure that what the such a setting serves for is nothing but producing political elites that are conducive for their manipulation strategies and co-optation mechanisms that are in play for realizing their survivalist strategies. In that respect, finding honest and sincere ‘confessions’ by the co-opted elites themselves, as President Omar of Ethiopian Somali’s region could be the best example, is more telling of such institutional schemes of survival than anything else.

Tobias Hagmann (2005), who conducted extensive field research in the Ethiopian Somali Regional State and identified the mechanism in which the the regional state’s elites are co-opted also argues that that region in particular could be explained in terms of the traces of “neo-patrimonialism, institutional instability, and patronage relations”.<sup>92</sup> Consistent with the arguments from my findings in my field research and other information I presented on how the regional state is ‘indirectly’ run by the TPLF, Hagmann also broadly states the phenomenon in Ethiopian Somali regional state as:

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<sup>91</sup> The footage secretly taken and made public by Mr. Abdulahi Hussen after he left for exile, can also be watched on the same interview he provided to ESAT and could be watched from minute 29.30 onwards at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zeLINNwBE4Q>.

<sup>92</sup> See page, 509.

“Generally, the insecurity of state institutions and agents engenders systematic instability. Ever since 1991, instability has been omnipresent within the executive branch of the Somali region. Under the EPRDF regime, regional presidents have become ‘perishable commodities. No former president lasted for more than three years, and for half of this period they were subject to federal investigation. The first three presidents were charged with corruption, abuse of authority, and other crimes, and their successors usually met a similar fate. The ruling party’s central committee dismisses large parts of the regional cabinet each year, usually at the start of the new budget year (July). In addition, it is common for government officials to circulate between the regional bureaus, seldom maintaining their position longer than one year. This has led to a situation in which the people never ask themselves ‘How does the regional government perform?’, but rather ‘How long are they going to stay in power?’.”<sup>93</sup>

The underlying reality in this particular region is that it likely because of what the author explained above that between 1992 and 2010, there were 12 presidents of the Ethiopian Somali Regional State, who barely escaped with their lives or removed from their position of power or detained. As we see from Haggmann’s close observations of the state and given earlier explanation in how the so called ‘developing states’ like the Ethiopian Somali region are governed through co-optation, EPRDF’s affiliate parties that are running regional governments would have to be content with ever increasing control by the central government’s elites if they are to remain in power. The nature of the patronage system thus relies on the elites at regional governments accepting that they would be staying put enjoying relatively low levels of rents from corruption. And that will not put

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<sup>93</sup> See page, 517

them under the federal elite's scrutiny as long as they are not suspected of conspiring to 'increase their region's level of political autonomy' and start to ask questions. In return, such levels of purposeful ignorance of the TPLF elites' maneuvers of the regional states, presents them the legitimacy in the eyes of the TPLF leadership and ensure longevity to their rule of such regions. Next, I also provide a highlight of a couple of other regional states and how the center-periphery relations under the ethnic federal setting in Ethiopia further unraveled in favor of the survivalist ambition of the EPRDF coalition and its dominant elites from the TPLF.

In a further effort to show how the federal setting that was promoted and implemented as response to the age long calls for reforms that would correct the political and economic inequality across ethnic groups in the Ethiopian state, although I have argued that it has become an utter failure, I would first discuss another highly marginalized state both in past and present times, the Regional state of Gambella, and then corroborate other broader cases where I assessed with sets of discussions with my respondents in the intensive field work as well as use of the secondary literature on the topic at hand.

The Gambella regional state, like the Ethiopian Somali region also went through various political and economic misfortunes. The region, which is located in South-Western part of the country, due to its geographical proximity to the South Sudan, which had its share of civil wars had also served as a base to the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Front (SPLA). The region remains highly populated by the southern Sudanese refugees that avoided the grueling civil war that still characterizes their new nation. Moreover, the ethnic groups in Gambella had also suffered from under representation in previous Ethiopian regimes and its demographic make up had always been shifting, sometimes in dramatic ways, due to the settlement programs of the military regime that

brought many highlanders (mostly Amharas and to some extent Oromos) to the region (Feyissa 2006). The post 1991 Ethiopian ethnic federal arrangement thus had brought new optimism as it was perceived as a solution that would alleviate the region and those ethnic groups in the area from the problems of prolonged history of inequality that they suffered under.

The problem with in the Gambella regional state however is two dimensional, which is quite different in comparison with other regional states. The regions that I discussed earlier such as the Harari regional state and the Bannishagul-Gumuz regional state have usually one dimensional in a sense that those who control the administrative apparatus of the regional state usually are found to have oppressed minority rights and as a result, they receive their share of blessings from the central government that either acts oblivious to what happens against such minorities and individuals or takes slow responses when under pressure. The same is true in the Ethiopian Somali regional state where various forms of oppressions could be seen on clan and tribal lines but mostly the regime's military generals are in control of the political climate in the region therefore most of the blame in the atrocities committed against what are considered minorities could be attributed to the regime's dictating of terms in the region. In Gambella however, the problems are two dimensional because the people to people relations and the conflicts that are prevalent in the region are mostly witnessed in the conflict amongst the native ethnic groups themselves as well as the natives versus the settlers who came due to the so called villagization programs from the previous regimes (Feyissa 2006; Kurimoto 1997).

The federal setting starting from its implementation in 1991 had therefore attempted to address such issues in different ways. The two ways that I argue stand out are however, firstly the

regime effectively empowered the natives, especially the *Nuer*, which the political elites had considered an ally given their suspicion that the majority ethnic group within the region, the *Annuak* had been collaborators of the old regimes therefore were not trusted to be empowered with political powers. Secondly, the EPRDF elite, with the region's fertile land and untapped resources in mind, had militarized the regional state and empowered its military leaders in also interfering in regional administrative affairs thus weakening the autonomy of the newly created regional state of Gambella. EPRDF's use of the TPLF dominated military in the so called 'developing states' indeed was also clearly evident from what the role of the military generals that I discussed with regards to their part in administrative decision making processes in the Ethiopian-Somali regional state. I argue that the unleashing of the military emanates from the regime's fears of such regions climatic features that are considered to be potential safe heavens of anti-regime armed resistances. Recalling what I discussed with respect to ethnic conflicts and the gross human rights violations, especially perpetrated against the *Annuak*, what I argued above makes even more sense. As interview number twenty-eight, who is an ethnic Oromo but lived all his life in the Gambella region corroborated, "the TPLF led regime understands that an effective control of the Gambella regional state implies a creation of a security zone that prevents a potential rebellion from breaching in the region's conducive terrains and rain forest that is challenging to control. Secondly, the region is economically so important means that any problems that potentially arise from the natives, especially the *Annuak* majority had to be kept in check."<sup>94</sup> According to the individual, the *Annuak*'s suffering in the region, which had always garnered international attention due to headlines of massacres and even genocide in the area, had always remained the ruling elites' headache. Thus, making sure the regional elites' become highly controlled patrons of the central elites based in Addis

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<sup>94</sup> The interview with interviewee number twenty-eight took place in June 2<sup>nd</sup>, in Washington DC.

Ababa was the only option. Any challenges that come from the regional elites in Gambella therefore has led to arrests of the leaders that includes one of the region's former presidents who still remain in jail with bogus charges although his main crime, most believe is that he attributed the killings of the Annuak to the regime's military in the region<sup>95</sup>.

Looking at the Literature written assessing the regional autonomy of Gambella regional state and how the federal setting failed from its initial promises, Dereje Feyissa (2006) states that instead of correcting the historical failures, what the regime introduced is nothing but a "renewed interactions of dominance" between the central and regionally empowered elites. The author further states that:

"The primary reason why the federal experiment is faltering is that the post-1991 political order has produced new and insecure political minorities, and the political actors have failed to strike a political bargain and articulate a regional interest. Instead, they have sought to capture fragments of the regional state and its institutions. In the event, they have increasingly recognized and exploited the rationality of violence in the politics of group entitlement" (page 215).

In actuality, the above argument captures the notion of a failing federal experiment in well articulated fashion. However, as I stated time earlier, I reiterate that what is evident in Gambella is a pattern of using a certain region's political peculiarities to the federal level political elites' benefits of nothing but political survival as we clearly saw in cases of other regional states from

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<sup>95</sup> In Oakland institute's page, we see a letter from the son of the jailed president appealing to American authorities to help free his son: <https://www.oaklandinstitute.org/obama-letter-ethiopian-american-son>.

Bennishangul Gumuz to Ethiopian Somali and from Harari regional state to others. As Feyissa also further elaborates by bringing into fold the issue of individual rights and group rights, he states that, “the problematics of group rights are also acted out amongst the locals, making the issue of entitlement and ownership ever more contestable” (page 217). This in fact is a challenge in addition to the fact that under-represented highlanders, that mostly arrived from areas in Amhara and Oromia communities, and now considered minorities within that regional state, are left with reality of encountering a two-ended sword of oppression by both the regional elites in the region in addition to the central government ruling coalition which indirectly control the political proceedings in the said state that never addresses such grievances that come from minorities in those regional states like Gambella.

I believe that the general explanations presented in this segment of the chapter with regards to the existence of political clientelism and the mechanisms of manipulation, as exhibited from the cases we have seen thus far should suffice the goal of the project, which among others looks at identifying patron-client relations and thus the mechanisms of elite co-optation at the regional state levels that aid the survivalist ambitions of those controlling political power. Overall, as the dissertation’s main contribution is explaining how such a federal ethnic setting enabled the political elites at the center (mainly the TPLF leadership and their allies within the coalition), understanding how such federal experiment also unraveled in the bigger and influential regional states that are being administered by the member parties of the EPRDF coalition is essential. In my field research whereby I extensively attempted to collect the most information with regards to how the ruling coalition actually operates, the central explanation I found most is that the federal elites at the center that are mostly composed of the four member parties (TPLF, ANDM, OPDO, and SEPDM) control the proceedings from Addis Ababa and the regional elites in these four regional states of

Tigray, Amhara, Oromia and Southern regions implement the directives that come from their particular party's bosses at the center.

The Tigray Regional State, in the post 1991 political transformation in Ethiopia, although located in the northern periphery of the country, served as the political epicenter of the TPLF led EPRDF era. The TPLF and its leadership that had orchestrated such a federal setting, organized and created the member parties that would join and create a formidable EPRDF coalition, had installed its strongman, Mr. Meles Zenawi first as the federation's president in the transitional government and then as Prime Minister until his death in the summer of 2012. The TPLF's core leadership, one based in the Tigray regional state's capital, Mekelle, and the other in the capital of the government in Addis Ababa had controlled the politics of the coalition and thus the proceedings in each of the four regional states in a seamless fashion with some challenges getting corrected in the TPLF way. Bringing back my discussions with interviewee number-five, a longest serving and once a powerful individual on top of various cabinet portfolios that span almost two decades, the EPRDF, although is known as a political coalition, truly functions as a single party and its cadres on both federal and regional levels operate with strict party discipline<sup>96</sup>. According to the interviewee, the EPRDF coalition basically runs as 'one party' and shapes its election manifestos each national cycle. Therefore, the regional states' that are controlled by the EPRDF member parties have to implement such election programs in each five-year cycle and a given regional state's performance in its implementation of EPRDF's programs will be evaluated each year as well. Based on the reports signaling the successes' and failures' of each region to the coalition's leadership, the policy makers at the EPRDF headquarter in Addis Ababa either reward regional elites for

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<sup>96</sup> The interview with interviewee number-five took place on Tuesday, February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017 in Washington DC. A follow up telephone interview had was also conducted on Monday, March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

their better performances or interfere in regional affairs so that certain failures are corrected. In agreement of what I described thus far in the anatomy of center-regional state relations, Lovise Aalen (2002), who captured such asymmetric relations in the federal setting explains that:

“Ethiopia is today ruled by a coalition party composed of several regionally based ethnic parties. At first sight, this appears to be a party structure which enhances a federal division of power, because the central government appear to be run by an organization with regional, rather than central bases of power. But practically, the EPRDF is controlling all the regional state governments in the Ethiopian federation, either directly through the member parties or indirectly through affiliate parties. These largely centralized party structures appear to contradict with the devolved power strictures of federal system” (page 81-82).

As the author articulated it above, the Ethiopian federal setting is of course, clearly characterized as an authoritarian party centralism that overshadows the bureaucratic setting of the country’s institutions at large. Thus, it essentially invalidates the regime’s claim of a well functioning ethnic federal arrangement. Indeed, given the discussions and evidences presented, we could also claim that the regime is attempting to fool everyone. However, I take the ethnic federal setting as it is presented by the regime because it is such ethnically arranged structural setting that ensured the effective manipulation of the system, providing the political elites the platform for their mechanisms of political survival. Hence, I argue that in absence of the federal setting, the regime would have faced a huge difficulty to create such survivalist mechanisms in comparison to what they have achieved through their manipulation of the federal setting. Within that respect, as one of my extended interviews with interviewee number-seventeen, who corroborates the argu-

ments stated above by saying that not only the country is directly run by EPRDF, which is dominated by TPLF's agenda, but also, there exists what is known as the "government line and the party line". The interviewee states that, "the regional states perform effectively better when directions arrive within the lines of the government's bureaucratic setting that are mostly about implementing political and economic programs via policy execution mechanisms. However, at any minute a directive or memorandum that comes from a party headquarter can nullify anything that is being done at both federal and state levels."<sup>97</sup>

As another interviewee, (interviewee number-nine) who had served as a EPRDF's youth league leader in Addis Ababa but later joined an opposition political party and now live in exile stated, "not only the EPRDF headquarter that is filled with individuals considered policy wonks of the TPLF, provides routine directives to all four of the regions that are under the control of EPRDF member parties as well as party affiliates in developing regional sates. But also, the party offices located in the regional states also must receive routine reports from state capitals, which they would report back to the EPRDF headquarter in Addis Ababa."<sup>98</sup>

The individual even shared with me an interesting example in which, at a time he served as a youth league leader of the Addis Ababa's EPRDF office, he was even able to receive daily reports from the care taker mayor of Addis Ababa immediately after the 2005 national elections. The story, according to him, was that the 2005 national elections led to a stunning defeat of the

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<sup>97</sup> The interviewee resides in Ethiopia but granted me the interview opportunity while in work visit in Washington DC in the month of April. The date will not be specified given agreement with the interview participant.

<sup>98</sup> The interview with interviewee number-nine took place in Atlanta, United States on Saturday, April 15<sup>th</sup> 2017.

EPRDF coalition at the hands of an opposition coalition of parties. After the then fragile looking political coalition known as the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) won all of Addis Ababa's parliamentary as well as regional council's seats, and EPRDF leaders eventual decision to arrest of the leaders of the opposition materialized, the city of Addis Ababa had to be run by hastily organized 'independent' care taker committee that will control administrative matters of the city. However, what the individual witnessed was that the care taker administration of the city immediately was ordered to report its daily activities to the already defeated mayor of Addis Ababa, Mr. Arkebe Equbay, who remains one of the strongmen within the TPLF leadership. Moreover, the interviewee also mentioned that besides Mr. Arkebe, as a EPRDF youth leader of Addis Ababa, he was able to receive and read such reports from the Addis Ababa's care taker administration. According to him, such cases are very consistent with how EPRDF directly and indirectly runs the federally constituted regional states as well as the two city administrations that fall under the federal government's jurisdiction, i.e. City Administration of Dire Dawa and Addis Ababa.

From what I presented above, although Addis Ababa is directly controlled territory of the federal government and a seat of the government, which legitimizes the federal government's administration of the city, two takeaways remain crystal clear. Firstly, it is not the government that controls administrative issues rather the party apparatus that is highly dominated by the EPRDF. And such political dominance is what is visible when looking at the ruling coalition's administration of a city of more than five million, even immediately after it its candidates were defeated by those same citizens. Secondly, such an instance looking at the city of Addis Ababa's administration also provides us a further example on how other regional states in the Ethiopian state are also administratively co-opted and indirectly ruled. What we see here is that the EPRDF, although composed of the four political parties that directly administer the four bigger regions, its powers

outweigh the constitutional frameworks of the federal setting and signifies that the Ethiopian state is indeed under the yoke of a centralist party structure that has just one goal of survival and assert its rule for now and forever.

In general terms, it is also vital to note that such a centralist party structure which overshadows the constitutional rule books of the state and installs the EPRDF coalition above everything else however, is constructed through a carefully studied and implemented co-optation mechanisms that even travel beyond the confines of party offices and representatives in regional states. In that regard, we also see that the bureaucracy at both the federal and regional state levels is the victim of such a scheme.

### **7.5 The EPRDF and Cooptation mechanism over Ethiopian State Bureaucracy**

As Mengistu and Vogel (2006), who study the bureaucracy's independence under Ethiopia's Ethnic federalism explain, the trouble is deeper than that as it also exposes the federal constitution's deficiencies and ambiguities from the start. The authors argue that:

“For Ethiopia and its ethnic-based government, the character, function and capacity of bureaucracy pose unique questions in terms of achieving bureaucratic neutrality. The requisite pre-conditions for bureaucratic neutrality and the authenticity of civil service ‘reform’ in such an environment are problematic. For any ethnic federalism, a crucial obstacle to achieving bureaucratic neutrality is that by definition, ethnic implies separatism while federalism assures that each ethnicity maintains a significant degree of autonomy with less collective accountability for its actions” (page 6).

Leaving aside problematic nature of the constitution in terms of how it addresses the bureaucracy for now, according to Mengistu and Vogel's account that indeed captures the main issue however, it is crucial that we closely look at how the patronage system eventually became the main feature of the Ethiopian bureaucracy across the federal setting. I argue that in post-1991 Ethiopia, as it is before, the country's bureaucracy is never made to enjoy the level of independence that it should have and we see that in EPRDF's Ethiopia it is very much by design. From the information collected throughout my field work, the process that challenged as well as tarnished the 'independent nature' of the bureaucracy is found to be the selection and recruitment mechanisms that propel someone to work for the federal or regional state bureaucracy at the initial stage. Such mechanisms that I hereby discuss with regards to the bureaucracy could also explain the very mechanisms employed by the party structure in its recruitment efforts to fill political positions. In the later stages, the professional bureaucracy that joined the work force across various departments, regardless of how good it wants to perform with respect to the rule books of the state, will struggle to evade the party structure that made sure that those professionals feel that they are there until the party wants them, which also entails that failing to abide by the rules of the ruling coalition mean jeopardizing their jobs and the livelihoods of their families. Simply put, what we see in EPRDF's Ethiopia is that the government and its bureaucracy administrative efforts across many issues face the constant threat of their works and decisions overridden by the party structure.

One important feature in the evolution of the the bureaucracy in the EPRDF led regime is that the party in power introduced series of civil service reforms and capacity building programs across ranges of departments and issue areas starting from the transitional period in post-1991 Ethiopia (Watson and Yohannes, 2005; Mengistu and Vogel 2006). The very objective of these

civil service reform strategies was to make sure that the professionals across all levels of the bureaucracy are well acquainted with the ruling coalition's political and economic programs. Thus, to baptize any new recruits to join the bureaucracy with the party's expectations was one of the most important priorities in the civil service reform packages. A former state Auditor in the Southern Nations and Nationalities and Peoples Region, interviewee number forty-two, who attended series of trainings aimed at the above mentioned goals of the regime explains that the those who oversee the training programs are not only members of the EPRDF coalition's member parties but also urge every trainee at the start of the training sessions to also register for party membership. In facilitating such a mechanism, the instructors first identify who came from which regional state and divide all the recruits along ethnic lines. Once that is achieved, and every one becomes a member of one of the parties within the coalition, the first phase of the training program starts focusing on how the previous political regimes used the bureaucracy and limited its growth by completely utilizing its whole purpose for their strict implementation of prior regimes' political agenda. The irony, according to interviewee number forty-two however, is that "after the instructors exhausted the trainees with what they refer as 'the awful past' history of the civil service, they commence to familiarize all of us with what EPRDF would do differently, which is basically nothing unique to appreciate."<sup>99</sup>

As I argued earlier, as well, EPRDF's plans from the start were focused on the need to reestablish a bureaucratic system that is subservient to the coalition's agenda. In doing so, the training system makes sure that the professionals running wide spectrum of departments are well

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<sup>99</sup> The interview with interviewee number forty-two took place in Atlanta, Georgia. The first interview was conducted on Wednesday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017. And a second follow up interview was also completed few days later on, Saturday, March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

aware of the ruling coalition's agenda and takes away methods in which they can use to effectively implement such party programs on the lower levels of bureaucracy across all levels of government structure. According to my discussions with interviewee number forty-two, the establishment of such a bureaucratic setting is also structured in a way that aligns with the party's line of hierarchical structure. The trainees will be told that the main purpose of the training programs as seen from propaganda pieces in the training manuals all point to EPRDF's commitment in empowering ethnic groups and promoting group rights, while it is evident that what matters most is the survivalist party structure and program. As such, the professionals within the bureaucracy at both the federal and regional settings, just as much of the political operation of the EPRDF, will also be recruited, trained along ethnic lines. In showing how the ruling coalition politicize and ethnicise the bureaucratic apparatus, Arreola and Terrence (2016) also argue that:

“Not only has the EPRDF provided opportunities for the country's various ethnic communities in national power structures, it has also granted them a degree of autonomy. Although the constituent and affiliated parties that govern the regional states still rely on the center for resources and security, they also control their own substantial bureaucracies and budgets. It is not the EPRDF as a national coalition that controls the regional institutions and resources, but rather its constituent and affiliated ethnically defined parties. The regional states are more than mere conveyor belts that transmit the wishes of the center; they have well-developed political infrastructures and are the day-to-day face of the state for most rural Ethiopians” (page 77).

While the authors' acknowledgement of EPRDF's goal of enriching diverse ethnic groups opportunities in participating in the management of the bureaucracies in their respective regions

and districts is certainly the reality per EPRDF's goals and thus true and not a problem in its own, few challenges however, become further evident. Firstly, the process in which the bureaucracy is organized from the recruitment process to the point it is operational shows that the ruling coalition has successfully achieved the creation of new clients that are out there for the purpose of implementation of the party agenda that leads to strengthening the coalition's position in its survival ambitions. Moreover, the notion that the bureaucracy is also designed carrying the promotion of group rights as its main purpose also poses the same challenges that I presented in discussing the federal settings across the so called developing regions and others. In such regions, ethnic minorities and individuals were made to be exposed for various methods of oppressive policies and actions by the regional and lower level elites, whose actions are not checked by the ruling party coalition at the center. Leonardo Arriola et al's (2016) work on identifying the chains in the regime's management of the bureaucracy however, effectively captures what I was able to learn in my field work experience<sup>100</sup>.

**Table 7.1 Patterns of Co-optation in EPRDF's Political Reign post-1991**

<p>The federal Government and the EPRDF Party Structure → Directly controls the federal bureaucracy and party members within the structure → The federal bureaucracy and the party bosses → directly control the regional state bureaucracy and its party member administrators → the regional state bureaucracy and party members then → directly control the bureaucracy at Zonal and District level administrations.</p>
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<sup>100</sup> Terrence Lyons, Leonardo Arriola, Seife Ayalew and Josef Woldense's (2016) work entitled 'The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front: Authoritarian Resilience and Intra-Party Dynamics' is not published yet. I would like to thank Terrence Lyons for sharing with me their work and permitting me to use it.

For instance, in my field work, among the very interesting encounters I had with a former Deputy Minister and a policy researcher at the EPRDF headquarters in Addis Ababa, interviewee number thirty-six, explained that, “in the policy implementation process after series of the civil service reform programs and capacity building trainings, (which still continue periodically, given the party’s adoptions of evolving changes) the ruling party’s ambitions of reforming the bureaucracy at all levels by empowering ethnic group representatives at different levels of the federal bureaucratic setting backfired immediately against among others, the notion of democratizing the bureaucracy.” The individual adds that, “the first thing that happened was that the newly appointed department directors and individuals within the wider setting of the bureaucracy signed on the terminations of professionals for the reasons such as declining party membership, for being considered anti-development and anti-reform when they voiced concerns on certain policy matters, and mostly also for being ‘suspected’ as former regime remnants.”<sup>101</sup> What is important to note however, is also that what I presented above is mostly relevant to explaining how the professional bureaucracy that joins the government workforce on expertise basis is co-opted via EPRDF’s centralist party structure. But when it comes to my studies of the more political offices across all levels of the federal setting that has to be filled with elected candidates, via periodic national elections, the EPRDF coalition member parties and its affiliate parties in so called developing regions have unparalleled levels of ever-present capacity to keep their dominance over such offices because of the leverage they enjoy from the design of the bureaucracy’s structure that is highly manipulated and co-opted. As a result, what should exist as a line separating the party structure from what

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<sup>101</sup> The interview with interviewee number thirty-six was conducted in Silver Spring, Maryland on Thursday, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

should be the government's bureaucracy, in the case of Ethiopia is non-existent or blurred (Lee 2001).<sup>102</sup>

I reiterate that it is important to note that what we witness in the problems within the state bureaucracy and the mechanisms employed by the ruling coalition are found to be exemplified across all ministries, departments, authorities, and directorates. Even to mention an instance of how the legal bureaucracy and the court system operates in Ethiopia, from the information I collected in the field work, we see that the legal bureaucracy is also not immune from the civil service reform and capacity building trainings. For someone to work as a judge, government prosecutor in the legal bureaucracy, party membership becomes the foremost criterion. Thus, showing how the legal bureaucracy operates depends on the EPRDF party structure.

Interviewee number forty-seven, an individual who had taken most of the training to assume a role of judgeship in the Amhara regional state shared with me his experience, through our email exchanges explains history in a detailed manner. The individual states,

“I graduated with L.L.B (Law) degree. However, it became very difficult to get a job due to the fact that I was not a member of the ruling party. After enormous effort and help from

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<sup>102</sup> In his study of the bureaucracy and decentralization policies of the Ethiopian regime across Woreda (District) levels, Jin-Sang Lee (2001) mentions the challenges he faced saying, “The main problem noted here is the blurring of lines between elected and appointed personnel. At the Woreda level, those who run sector offices are both elected and appointed officials” (page 8).

someone in the government, I received the chance to join the Amhara Region Justice Reform Program as candidate judge in 2010. During the judicial training, the officers and tutors of the training began to recruit candidates for the ruling party membership. I believed that such a move was unconstitutional since a judge should not be a member of any political party and must be impartial. I immediately rejected the move, citing the relevant provisions of the law and began to be outspoken about the issue. Most of the candidates although feared so much, eventually began to support my idea. Eventually, we decided to collectively urge the tutors and officers of the training center about the illegal nature of recruiting candidate judges for political party membership. On the other hand, the Judicial training was conducted under the follow up of the Justice Bureau. However, I disagreed with them since Justice Bureau is an executive organ to overlook the would be Judges' training and my argument was the appropriate organ to follow up the training was the Supreme court. We asked the immediate officials of the training center to give a response to our legitimate claim. But, they failed to do so. Finally, I organized a committee to make a peaceful demonstration. Once we have had our committee organized, we went to the streets of the Bahir Dar City to protest and express our concern. Hours in advance, I informed one of the then widely circulated newspaper, Awramba Times, about the demonstration and its purpose. After we walked a mile away from our training center, a truck loaded with a huge number of security police arrived and started to beat us and fire a tear gas towards us. The crowd would be dispersed and we run away from the area where we were protesting. On the next day, the newspaper made the demonstration and its cause as a front page cover. What then followed was that all my three friends and I would again be arrested on our way to flee the country fearing arrest and persecution. They detained us in a town called *Humera* for two

days and took us to Aksum detention center, located in the Tigray Regional State. During my stay in Aksum, I was interrogated, harassed, and beaten by multiple security personnel numerous times. After four days of stay in the *Aksum* detention center, they moved all the prisoners including me to the capital city, Addis Ababa. When we arrived in Addis Ababa, security officers blindfolded me and would be taken to a place which I do not have any idea where it is until today. Keep in mind that all of this happened because we demonstrated mainly against ideas requiring judges to accept party membership requests and for our call of judicial independence.”<sup>103</sup>

The above information as broad it is and as it is directly taken from an email exchange with the individual, speaks volumes about the nature of the ruling coalition’s strict party structure that is so rampantly organized at all levels of the bureaucracy. The legal-rational system of the bureaucracy, as dominated by the party structure and as it is manifested through the EPRDF leaderships’ strategic interests, also shows us that disagreeing to be clients to the party leaders and their survivalist undemocratic programs could even be punishable by arbitrary imprisonment, tortures and other forms of human rights violations.

In part-one of the dissertation, as I discussed the persistence of the political culture in the Ethiopian state and how its impact on democratic development and or the elites’ propensity to adopt survivalist strategies, we have seen that the patrimonial nature of the first few political re-

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<sup>103</sup> The extended discussion with interviewee number forty-seven, took place on multiple interaction over the phone and email between April 26<sup>th</sup> and May 7<sup>th</sup>. I would like to also thank the individual for emailing me the quoted explanation about the state of the legal bureaucracy in present day Ethiopia based on his personal experience.

gimes in the modern political history of the country gave way to the emergence of a neo-patrimonial regime type. Such a neo-patrimonial clientelistic regime now effectively utilizes the regimes' political elites' and their dominant party structure's co-opting mechanisms with regards to submitting the newly emerging bureaucracy as one of the ways of succeeding in their political survival strategies. As the definition of neo-patrimonial clientelism indicates, identifying the bureaucratic setting separately from the political setting, given the blurred nature of the relationship in this type of regime type, is difficult.

What I also showed above in terms of the post-1991 emergence of Ethiopian bureaucracy and the co-optation mechanisms employed in submitting the said institutions at all levels to the party agenda, the explanation follows the path of both the continuity of the political culture as well as the elites' implementations of survivalist approaches to politics in broader terms. Hence, the discussion of such survivalist approaches shows the ruling elites' mastery of the technicalities required of submitting the institutional framework all at once. Moreover, such approaches clearly indicated that despite TPLF-EPRDF's elites' admittance of the need for democratic development, they are fully aware that attempting to open up the political space would not only leave them politically vulnerable but also could end the coalition's stability at the core. Looking at Jean Nicolas Bach's (2011) article that fully captured the ways EPRDF's manipulates the state for its survivalist programs and how democracy is practiced in the ruling elites' camp, he states that:

“The EPRDF has clearly chosen and maintained a democratization from above. The state, not distinguished from the ruling party (EPRDF) nor from the government, creates organizations, leaders, and vanguard elites who all spread and impose the party's ideology. EPRDF's top-down policy is presented to both domestic and international audiences as

democratic and revolutionary. In order to publicize its democratic credentials and achievements, the EPRDF has to educate people through the intermediary of its own elites who are at the same time party members. In this configuration the public administration has little independence, nor have the civil servants. The latter are regularly required to attend lengthy meetings in the federated regions, in which the party “educates” them about issues such as “globalization” or “development”, which have a touch of indoctrination” (page 648).

Bach’s argument, in addition to supporting the many points I made with regards to the emergence of party centralism that crippled the federal arrangement, which negatively impacted the autonomy of the regional states, his argument also concurs with the overall explanation of EPRDF’s model of authoritarian survival strategies. In summary, as I explained in part-one of this project early on, our understanding of the political discourse in the Ethiopian state, old or new, will only be better served by our analysis of the three approaches such as: cultural, institutional as well as the strategic interests of the political elite that remain focused on cementing their rule by the very cooptation mechanisms they employed through the institutional settings they devise. Furthermore, given what we see within the secondary literature I highlighted and most importantly from the interviews I conducted throughout my field work, it is very clear that the lines that distinguish the bureaucracy from the party structure in Ethiopia’s federal setting are very much vague. Thus, drawing a conclusion from the patronage system that is exhibited within the bureaucracy vis-à-vis the coalition’s centralist structure, I argue that such a patron-client relationship detailed above represents one of the mechanisms utilized by the EPRDF coalition in advancing their survivalist agenda is not extraordinary.

## 7.6 Conclusion

From what I presented in the discussions thus far, the question of ‘who leads’ and who controls every aspect of politics in contemporary Ethiopian state, I believe is clearly addressed thus far. Given the discussions thus far, the questions on whether or not the party leads the state or the state leads the party could not remain ambiguous. In that regard, we have seen that from the ways the federal and regional constitutions were devised, and our observations of deep problems of interpretation exist, I argue is by design. Of course, constitutions are there to be amended, changed and or reinforced in different ways. But the fact that the EPRDF leadership do not even agree with discussions of constitutional amendments unless certainly when the coalition needed them for its benefits, also shows that they are in fact made to be the ‘eternal’ rule books of the state, which is so telling of the political leaderships’ interests of nothing but political survival. The fact that what the discussions show is that constitutional-institutional solutions are proven to have failed the very goals that were attributed to them to achieve is indeed a testament to my argument with regards to political survival. Because, the success of the ethnic federal setting in post-1991 Ethiopia is that it mostly ensured the political elite survival interests as they presided over the country’s politics for well over twenty-six years, and materialized those survivalist strategies. Moreover, my discussions of the failure of the group rights promotion agenda as it curtailed minority rights across the board, the mechanisms employed by the ruling coalition’s leadership in their electoral maneuverings of the elite, and the patron-client relations witnessed in the relations among the center-regional states relations as well as the bureaucracy, as co-opted by the EPRDF coalition’s party structure all point to such survivalist approaches of the political elite.

In addition to our understanding of how the ethnic federal setting is in fact overshadowed by the centralist structure that effectively stripped regional states' elites from the autonomy of administering themselves across spectrum of issues and levels. From what I presented so far, it therefore remains essential that we also look closely on how the TPLF led EPRDF's leadership is able to survive the crucial challenges it faced throughout the evolution of post-1991 Ethiopian ethnic federalism. In the next chapter, such critical junctures I discuss by drawing from the last two decades and half of the Ethiopian state under the leadership of the EPRDF coalition further provide us crucial insights on how the survivalist political approaches of the role players within the EPRDF leadership survived certain pivotal challenges that occurred even within the party structure and by coping well against other pressures outside of their political comfort zones.

## **8 CHAPTER EIGHT: CRITICAL JUNCTURES IN THE EVOLUTION OF THE SURVIVALIST AND DOMINANT EPRDF COALITION IN POST-1991 FEDERAL ETHIOPIA**

### **8.1 Introduction:**

Besides explaining the role of the political parties within the EPRDF coalition and beyond, this chapter of the dissertation pays special attention towards the most important critical junctures in the evolution of a strategic interest of the political elite and the survivalist agenda and how the ruling coalition survived the very existential challenges it faced by relying the mechanisms that are now apparent in the federal system. In general, in part-two of the dissertation, by relying on the efforts in identifying such pivotal time periods within the broader context in the unraveling of federal Ethiopia, I will attempt to explain that the federal model in the country indeed serves the survivalist agenda and not the promotion of democratic ideals based on group rights.

The TPLF dominated EPRDF coalition's efforts in devising a constitutional framework that effectively helped in introducing and implementing ethnic federalism as an institutional design that promotes group rights was quite a 'success'. Such a success however, is limited to the achievement of the political elite presiding over the coalition in prolonging their political reign despite the fact that the two dominant and majority ethnic groups in the country, the Oromo and the Amhara, are devoid of any political power due to the dominance of the TPLF political machine whose mechanisms of manipulation extend from controlling the political discourse in the federal government's capital in Addis Ababa to effectively co-opting political elites presiding over the regional states across the board. Today, I believe that TPLF led EPRDF's strength, from the party structure that successfully engulfed the bureaucracy to its control of the security and intelligence community whose leadership across all levels are extremely dominated by ethnic Tigrayans and TPLF members, chances of keeping its grip on political power seems formidable.

Various levels of post-election violence and turmoil in different cities (especially in the capital, Addis Ababa) throughout the last decade that some within the ever weakened political opposition as well as neutral observers hoped will challenge the incumbents' dominance of political power did not accomplish anything. Instead, periodic political unrests led to hundreds of civilian deaths and detentions of tens of thousands. The first of its kind 'nation wide' (mostly happened in Amhara and Oromia Regional states) protests in the summer of 2016, that many observers of Ethiopian politics had even considered unprecedented in terms of the size and magnitude of the movement, has been effectively controlled. Given this project's scope is limited to until the earlier periods of 2016, I will not therefore include the 2016 'nation-wide' protests as part of my discussion in identifying the critical points that would have been considered existential threats against the ruling coalition. However, in this part of the chapter, I present the Ethiopian-Eritrean war that

broke out in 1998 and claimed hundreds of thousands of lives from both sides and the very interesting episode of a break-up within TPLF core leadership, the 2005 national election and the developments that followed and lastly the death of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi as the three most critical points in the life of the TPLF-led EPRDF rule of the Ethiopian state since the coming into being of the coalition onto the political scene after the overthrow of the *Dergue's* military regime in 1991.

Such critical junctures are not only events that tested the coalition and the regime it rules but also represent the resilience of the coalition's leadership in surviving these existential challenges. I argue that such pivotal points in Ethiopia's contemporary political discourse are not only marked as very crucial events that challenged the EPRDF's rule, but also they influenced the regime's sweeping changes in the way the leadership operates. The discussion of such events, however, will be also mostly parallel to the changes in the evolution of Ethiopia's ethnic federal arrangement and how the ruling coalition ambitions and efforts of survival coped with such semi-systemic changes in the past two decades. Moreover, as can be recalled from my discussion of what I referred to as the initial setbacks that the EPRDF leadership had to cope with, the coalition indeed has successfully mastered the art of political survival through its well crafted mechanisms of submitting a very complex, heterogeneous and highly populated country.

## **8.2 Critical Juncture One: The War with Eritrea and A Fractured Coalition Leading a Fractured Nation: Repercussions' for Survivalist EPRDF**

### ***Background:***

Eritrea was once part of the Ethiopian state enjoying a slightly higher level of political autonomy in comparison with other regions all across the country. The roots for the complex and tenuous history between Eritrea and Ethiopia however, dates back to the era of Emperor Menelik II. As already stated in part one of the dissertation, one of Emperor Menelik's foremost legacies that Pan-Ethiopian nationalists recall is of course the emperor's leadership that galvanized the country's mostly primitive societies, mostly farmers, in picking up arms (mostly shields, swords as well as small percentages of modern armaments) to fight a highly modern European army from Italy. In fact, Ethiopia's victory over Italy, the then new comer to the colonial scene and its effect on the conundrum of partition of Africa remains the most important historical episode in the continent's struggle against colonialism in addition to its significance to the study of international relations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The problem however was that Menelik's victorious army, after defeating the Italians, did not advance beyond what is known as Mereb River, today's border between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Eritreans see such a decision by Menelik II as a historic mistake that has evolved into making the Eritreans feel that they were in fact not desired by the Ethiopian empire as Menelik II's betrayal in their view, exposed them to decades of colonial rule under Italy.

After the Italian colonial rule for more almost half of the twentieth century, the Eritreans returned to join the Ethiopian state under the leadership of Emperor Haile Selassie I in 1951 after the United Nations resolution federated Eritrea with the motherland, while granting Eritrea the

autonomy, which includes among others, its own constitution, parliament, flag as a federated region of the empire of Ethiopia. However, Eritrea's federation with Ethiopia was short lived as Emperor Haile Sellassie's regime slowly dissolved Eritrea's federal arrangement in 1961<sup>104</sup>.

As we recall from earlier discussions, it was around the same period that the unification of Eritrea with the rest of the Ethiopian empire became completed that most anti-regime rebellions representing ethnic grievances for lack of political and economic inequality emerged across the country. Again, it was also during that same period that Eritrean rebels against the Ethiopian empire also came into existence. The Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF), was the strongest amongst both other Eritrean rebel groups as well as rebellion armies of other groups in the Ethiopian state. Among all such rebels at a time engaged in fighting against the Ethiopian state, the TPLF and the EPLF were the ones with the closest relationships and levels of cooperation. In my view, such a strong relationship between the two liberation fronts occurred for two important reasons. Firstly, the fact that both despised what they referred as 'the Amhara domination' of the Ethiopian state and the fact that both groups called for a struggle for independence of their respective groups (Tigray and Eritrea) from that political domination was one of their major commonalities. Second, and most importantly however, was that both the TPLF and the EPLF represented Tigrinya speaking groups thus making their military cooperation relatively easier. Most also credit that the EPLF was the political force that trained, mostly armed and organized the TPLF to become the dominant force they became in the era of struggle against the Socialist regime and eventually

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<sup>104</sup> See the UN resolution in Ethio-Eritrea Unification here: "The Ethiopian-Eritrean Federation." *Middle East Journal* 5, no. 1 (1951): 89-91.

the force that they became by creating and manipulating the EPRDF coalition in today's state of Ethiopia, that is formally known as, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

After the defeat of the Dergue military socialist regime in 1991 by the TPLF, EPLF and other armed forces that I discussed in the earlier chapters of the dissertation and the eventual declaration of EPLF to secede from the Ethiopian state, the differences between the TPLF that now dominates the Ethiopian ruling coalition and the EPLF that is the only legal party running government in Eritrea grew significantly and the relations between the two groups became sour. Without dwelling more on the historical development of such formerly allied rebel movements and now political parties ruling over two different countries however, it is very important to elucidate how the soured relations between the two led to the fracturing of the EPRDF coalition in general and how I argue that that should be considered a critical test in TPLF led EPRDF coalition's quest for political survival since their coming to power in 1991.

### **8.2.1 Developments Leading to the Emergence of a New Challenge: How EPRDF Survived?**

Leaving aside the major and immediate causes to the outbreak of inter-state war between Ethiopia and Eritrea that was started when the later invaded a small town known as Badme in 1998, much of the discussion thus gives more emphasis on the conclusion of the war that ended with a clear victory of the Ethiopian forces that had not only returned the invaded territories but also had advanced much closer to Eritrean capital, Asmara until an internationally brokered cease-fire stopped the destructive hostilities. The war however, was a complete disaster for both nations and their poor economy. At the end of the war, the post war atmosphere also looked like a lose-

lose scenario partly because of the hundreds of thousands of lives lost on both sides and the overwhelmingly strained economy the war left behind loomed large. As Richard Reid (2003), who wrote extensively on the anatomy of the war explained about the fighting that occurred between Tigrayans and Eritreans (thus, considering the inter-state war as a war between TPLF and EPLF) tense relations and the characters of the two leaders of the fighting countries, the author explains:

“These were two bald men fighting over a comb; two poverty-stricken African nations (the 'hostile tribes' concept was lurking just below the surface) fighting for pride at the expense of the material dignity of their populations; two ignorant governments engaging in brutal and bloody 'First World War tactics' for pieces of insignificant land. When Africans fight, the world tuts disapprovingly, which is one thing, and condescendingly, which is another. But in looking at the nature of Eritrean-Tigrayan relations over time and space, one thing is clear in the first instance: the war itself, while it took most (including the author) by surprise when it first came to public attention, was not a tragic but isolated interruption of the normal course” (page 374).

Regardless of that important explanation on the war's effects nonetheless, during and after the war with Eritrea, severe divisions among the core leadership of the TPLF emerged. Such divisions within the TPLF leadership focused on issues of both the management of the war as well as on the questions of the most important decisions that are to be made in post war crisis management (Gudina 2003; Reid 2003; Clapham 2009).

The management of the war, and other post war decisions that were mostly made by then Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and his supporting cast of leaders mostly within the TPLF would encounter challenges by other strong leaders within the TPLF. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and

his supporting faction within the TPLF, hence, faced the daunting task of convincing a faction led by former Defense Minister Mr. Seye Abraha and his supporting faction on the anatomy of the decisions that were made in the war against Eritrea and the political proceedings that followed. The Seye Abraha faction, among others even accuses the Zenawi's leadership of the war as aiding Eritrea, which invoked the family ties that the Prime Minister has with that country given his mother was an Eritrean. What is interesting here is however, given the magnitude of the deep dominance of the TPLF of the EPRDF ruling coalition, the problem within such a dominant member of the ruling coalition would become the problem of the EPRDF at large and the country as a whole.

As a consequence, what followed was that an unprecedented level of political crisis engulfed the EPRDF ruling coalition discussions of uncertainties became common. Discussing such problems of governance that occurred within the Ethiopian government, in his article entitled, 'Post-War Ethiopia: The Trajectories of Crisis', Christopher Clapham (2009) states that,

“The crises that beset the ruling political coalition (the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, EPRDF) of Meles Zenawi in Ethiopia, after the apparently triumphant conclusion to its border war against Eritrea in May 2000, were only partially of its own making. This is not the place to delve into deeply contested histories, but it is at least necessary to place the developments that led to the impasse so apparent by the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century in their broader context. This impasse was not merely the outcome of failed democratization, or human rights abuse, or even indeed poverty, but was, rather, the latest expression of much deeper problems that derive from the

inherent contradictions of state creation and maintenance in a perennially violent corner of Africa (page 181)".

What we see from Clapham's explanation indeed is that despite the ramifications of the war dominating the reasons for the emergence of crisis within the TPLF (and thus, the nation), concerns of maintaining the political order in a highly divided Ethiopia and careful balancing of the changing political atmosphere with the regime's ubiquitous priority of survival was very essential. Here, it is important to identify what really saved the ruling coalition that was challenged by the magnitude of the division within the TPLF leadership. As former member of the Oromo Peoples Democratic Organization (OPDO) leadership, which is one of the political parties that makes up the EPRDF coalition, interviewee number twenty-nine stated that, "the crisis within the TPLF during the post war period, mostly in the years between 2002 and 2004, became a huge concern for the rest of the political parties that make up the ruling coalition. Especially, leaders of the political parties within the coalition, mainly ANDM and OPDO also became divided on where to side when the TPLF leadership became a fractured group. Such parties started to mediate between the two factions of the TPLF knowing that any failure would lead to emergence and development of existential threats to the EPRDF as a coalition. What was also crucial is that within the ANDM and OPDO camp, we knew that given the military and intelligence apparatus has been highly dominated by the TPLF, such divisions could imply a further fracturing of the army and the security forces at large, which then opens up for other serious challenges to emerge. But the fact that such arduous mediations failed mean that for ANDM, OPDO as well as the relatively weak

SEPDM, their party leadership had to step in and stand on the side of the TPLF faction led by the Prime Minister Meles Zenawi.”<sup>105</sup>

In my field work that spanned more than half a year from January to July 2017, what astounded me the most in the answers I receive for the majority of my questions was that most respondents’ admiration for political gamesmanship of the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi is very much amusing. Most applaud Mr. Zenawi for his negotiating skills and his intellectual prowess that assist him in drafting most of the EPRDF’s political strategies at times in just a night of work. Especially, some state that how he maneuvers the political elite’s mindset within the ruling coalition and how he convinces the leadership to perform the duties that he singlehandedly assigns to them are a testament to his skills. The opinions expressed by interviewee number twenty-nine are also not different from those others who I interviewed. In general, interviewee number twenty-nine states that the political backing that Mr. Zenawi received from the other political leadership members of the EPRDF, was in part due to the mistaken or foolish assumptions of ANDM and OPDO officials who thought that a more balanced EPRDF could emerge given their thinking that the break-up within TPLF leadership showed that the domination of a single party of any coalition is not sustainable thus reforming the balance of power within the coalition was desirable. However, the individual added that, “Zenawi was extremely skillful and articulate in convincing both the members of his faction within the TPLF and the Oromo and Amhara political elites by promising them greater roles in his cabinet shake-ups and persuading them to work with him with promises of the emergence of a more balanced EPRDF and even stating his deceiving commitment to even being open about discussion of leadership succession. Of course, as it is clearly evident in today’s

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<sup>105</sup> The extended interview with interviewee number twenty-nine took place in March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017 in the city of Atlanta, Georgia and a subsequent telephone interview had also taken place on April 12<sup>th</sup> 2017.

Ethiopia, the TPLF, even after the fracturing of the political leadership, has redeemed itself and Zenawi's political skills in artfully deceiving his EPRDF colleagues effectively paved the way for his own party's (TPLF's) political redemption.”

The political debacle within the TPLF leadership, that emerged as a result of the post war crisis would soon be solved after Prime Minister Zenawi's faction overcame the challenge with the aid of the political elites from EPRDF member political parties such as ANDM and OPDO. Moreover, the regime would also accuse some strongmen within the opposing faction of the former TPLF leadership of corruption charges and some less threatening ones would also become discharged from their administrative duties and start leading civilian lives. How the EPRDF leadership with its strongman, Zenawi took effective control of such a development was also extremely interesting. Especially, how the then Prime Minister first charged and then threw out Mr. Seye Abraha, the former Defense Minister, who was also the main leader behind the break-up within TPLF, to a six-years of imprisonment was particularly well documented. Assefa Fiseha (2016), who discussed 'legislative-judicial relations' in the country, shows how the regime even made unexpected changes to the law to make sure that the accused, Mr. Seye Abraha, remains in prison without the opportunity of any bail that constitution would have guaranteed him to receive. Therefore, in the absence of any constitutional rule that would deny the individual bail, Fiseha explains the actions of Mr. Zenawi and his coalition by stating that:

“Following a split within the ruling party in 2001, Siye Abraha, a former defense minister, was accused of grand corruption and brought before a court. When the lower courts ruled that the accused should be released on bail, which is a constitutional right by virtue of article 19(6), security officers prevented the accused on bail, parliament hastily

convened to enact an law that deprived all persons accused of corruption of the right to bail. Following this development, the press nicknamed the law ‘Siye Abraha’s law’. This was not the end of the story. Several years later and after the new law had served its function, parliament amended the law reinstating the right to bail to persons accused of corruption where the charge entailed a potential sentence not exceeding ten years’ imprisonment” (page 276).

As we see from the regime’s maneuver of the legislative assembly, first in terms of how its security forces superseded the court’s ruling to release Mr. Abraha by providing him constitutional bail and then how the leaders of the coalition made sure that constitutional amendments will emerge making sure that the individual who posed a threat to the TPLF and hence to the coalition’s political dominance, remain in jail, we learn that the EPRDF of course, would do anything to enact bogus laws that help keep the coalition in power.

Going back to my discussion of how the Oromo and Amhara political elite within the EPRDF came to the rescue of the Zenawi’s TPLF camp, we also see that their decision was an easier one to make. And that was, in not so small part, due to the political turmoil that occurred in 2003, in the capital, Addis Ababa. In that particular period, Addis Ababa University students were uprising mostly protesting the issue of lack of academic freedom and demanded for changes to restore that. However, such protests led to a significant level of unrest in the capital that led to lootings of jewelry shops and businesses that were owned by ethnic Tigrayans. Such kinds of violence that was considered unusual for over a decade of rule of the EPRDF coalition signified that unless there is a strong unity within the ruling political elite in asserting their control of the political environment, such types of unrest could lead to nation-wide violence that could even

escalate up to eruption of ethnic tensions and conflicts. Such events I discussed and the fears that aroused within non-TPLF political elites within the PERDF are important in further solidifying the rationale behind the coalition's efforts in coming together to the rescue of the regime from the critical test it faced as a result of the Ethiopian-Eritrean interstate war.

Furthermore, what we also see in the trajectory of such a challenge that tested the EPRDF coalition and how its leadership came out of such a situation goes with much of my discussion on how the ethnic federal arrangement in the country has evolved parallel to the ruling coalition's effective control of the political environment and its co-optation mechanisms in place. In fact, we have seen that the TPLF, despite its dominance of Ethiopian politics in the last twenty-six years at the national level, its political base of the Tigrayan regional state and its supporters' minority status in Ethiopia's demographic make-up mean that their political survival ambitions and programs require them to rely on the co-optation mechanisms that they effectively devised in a way of assurance of such ambitions of keeping their grip on political power.

Recapping the first major pivotal event that challenged the EPRDF and that I discussed earlier, the event shows that the regime successfully coped with the unrest within the TPLF that led to the departure or retirement of some and the imprisonment of others. But the EPRDF coalition, still dominated by the TPLF, (given that the promise of the balancing of power among the EPRDF leadership did not come into fruition), reemerged in its very much stronger position. Such levels of lack of balanced power sharing even within the coalition however, do not even happen to cause the political leadership any questions and the EPRDF ship continue to sail without eminent challenges of any political waves. After surviving the first major political test that the regime faced in its first decade of political rule, in post inter-state war against Eritrea, and after regaining the

clam it so needed, the coalition would rather act a bit democratic, which aroused quite a bizarre feeling among the populace, according to most of my interviewees with regards to questions of the 2005 national election also concur.

### **8.3 Critical Juncture Two: The 2005 National Elections and Challenges that Tested the EPRDF Coalition and the ‘We are Here to Stay’ Politics**

As we have seen it until this point, the political regime in Ethiopia led by the EPRDF coalition, in power since 1991, has faced many existential challenges. The coalition however, successfully coped with all of such tests to their own satisfaction. Even after what I already discussed earlier, much time did not pass before EPRDF reclaimed its command of the political climate, that re-commenced the usual proceedings in its favor. The exit of OLF from the initial partnership, which I also discussed early on could also be considered one of such pivotal moments or first tests in the coalition’s evolution to become the strongest political party in the country’s modern history given its effectiveness in creating a dominant party-state and a political play ground only conducive to the EPRDF family. Here, it is also critical to note that the OLF’s exit from its partnership with the EPRDF at the transitional period, although significant, like many other small challenges is not included in this part of my discussion of the critical junctures given its overall impact in shaping the ruling coalition’s survivalist politics was quite minimal.

As seen in what I described as the first major pivotal moment in the coalition’s survivalist political reign, the EPRDF mastered the political solutions by manipulating the courts, and the legislative assembly in asserting its power for the next few years after the political tension in the period 2001 and 2002 in the post Ethiopian-Eritrean inter-state battles. In doing so, the coalition

basically acquired the most needed time in reforming the way of doing things at its coalition member parties as well as in putting all of the members of such parties in taking courses and seminars that are nothing but efforts in reequipping the political elite across all federal and regional state administrative levels with the new course of direction and mechanisms of propaganda that the coalition would be relying as it attempts to make adjustments after the political upheavals that it faced from within.

Moreover, the periodic evaluations that the front conducts across the year also come in handy in helping the coalition identify dissent of any kind and magnitude among its members. And such evaluations have been the party's 'strength' as it tightly focuses on its survivalist ambitions by instituting corrective measures even against its own cadres, who appear to challenge the ruling coalition's bosses. Jean Nicolas Bach (2011) who carefully observed the importance of evaluations (or *gimgema* in Amharic) for EPRDF states that:

“Democratic centralism reveals above all the rigid and hierarchical structure of the EPRDF coalition and is, among others, illustrated by the gem gema. These “polico-administrative evaluations (. . .) allow the appointment and discharge of civil servants and government officials to be manipulated and subverted”. “Criticism” and “self-criticism” procedure is thus presented as “an instrument used to reprimand defects and mistakes in members”. This practice inherited from the TPLF internal organization during the struggle is now at the center of the administrative system in which the ruling party finds a powerful way of controlling the affiliated party members” (page 647).

Apart from the values such TPLF's cultures of evaluations bring into the needed stability of the coalition's efforts in also understanding the differing ideas that appear within their members,

had also helped them to come out of the challenges they face even stronger than that they had been in previous periods. EPRDF's strength among others, of course is its successful mechanisms of pacing its elites to face against their challenges in unison amid the recurrent problems they face from time to time.

About five years after the conclusion of the war with Eritrea, however, reforms in the EPRDF dominated Ethiopia's political scene started to be witnessed. That is of course irrespective of the fact that the lingering TPLF dominance remains in the shadow of each and every political development. Such small but important levels of reforms led to the opening of the political climate for the first time since the first year of EPRDF's hold of political power in the country. Although unexperienced and mostly unorganized, the political opposition seized such a political opportunity with open hands and the fact that the 2005 national elections were also approaching became an added bonus. Opposition figures who returned from exile, renowned intellectuals and some entrepreneurs within the business community arrived at the political scene by either joining the already existing but weaker opposition parties and or by coming together in forming one, did not waste time before they delved deep into the electoral scene to prepare, compete, and challenge the EPRDF coalition's dominance. Hence, as the 2005 national elections approached, the electoral atmosphere became nothing short of impressive (Samatar 2005; Arriola 2005; Lyons 2006; Lovise and Tronvoll 2009). Moreover, the EPRDF regime not only showed its sudden 'democratic' intentions by easing its repressive tactics against the opposition, but also, the regime declared that the elections would be free and fair and the necessary state sponsored electoral funds would be provided to opposition parties.

The pre-election debates in the prior months and weeks before the 2005 general elections were too many to count and most EPRDF elites that either served as advisors and ideologues to the coalition in power or in hold of ministerial cabinet positions openly debated against the most articulate and intellectual leaders of the opposition in open and surprisingly direct debates, even at times trading direct jabs and criticisms against each other. The debates, which were broadcast live on state owned radio stations and the state television, created quite a thrilling democratic climate that kept everyone in the country surprised and questioning how the regime could all of a sudden open up the media sphere and even how it could be possible for the the regime's leaders to sit down with opposition figures who openly criticize and embarrass them become the talk of the nation. In a country plagued with authoritarian political culture and no history of democracy, these were in fact legitimate surprises. Two opposition coalitions such as United Ethiopian Democratic Front (UEDF or simply *Hibret* in Amharic, meaning 'union') and the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD, simply *Kinjif* in Amharic, meaning 'coalition' or 'coordination') consolidated their positions as opposition political coalitions, not for the sake of just coalition making as seen from examples in the make-up of opposition parties in the past, but they immediately would be considered real contenders.

The time arrived and the May 2005 national elections took place with unprecedented and highly celebrated electoral turnout and proceeded in relatively peaceful manner. Notwithstanding of relatively calm elections however, leaders of the political opposition continued registering their complaints on the election's irregularities that range from harassment of voters to regime's introduction of fake and pre-arranged ballots that the opposition contended were designed to undermine the electoral outcome. Given the citizens, opposition parties, and independent observers under-

standing of such issues, it seemed clear to all that EPRDF's perceived commitment towards electoral openings were not so genuine as its old ways of maneuvering the political process eventually reemerged. The opposition, which at the conclusion of the election, had won almost fifty percent of the elections per officially released electoral records, left with nothing but their old ways of bickering and complaints. Suddenly, all the hope of democratic consolidation vanished and EPRDF's survivalist political tactics of repression would remain to be the norm.

Unlike past regimes, the fact that EPRDF was even taking a shot at a democratic attempt could be commendable. The problem, however, is that for the Ethiopian public, it became clear that the EPRDF would pursue its survivalist politics while playing with the minds of the society by at times fooling them to believe democratization could be a possibility. Unfortunately, the 2005 national election, was not only marred by complaints of fraudulent elections and calls for recount, which had happened to later come back with even worse results. But also, it created a feeling among the citizens that the closest shot at the prospects of democratization of the country as well as for EPRDF to redeem itself as a coalition of reforms was that of the 2005 elections, which of course happened to be a very bad outcome. As Jon Abbink (2006), clearly stated:

“The elections were a step forward but did not signify a decisive, non-reversible move towards democracy because of the uncertainty about the counting procedures, the real results, and the controversial government response. Not only Ethiopian public, but also donor countries, and development partners, who invested a lot in the 'Ethiopian example', were greatly disillusioned. The 2005 elections and their aftermath thus revealed major constraints in Ethiopia's political system, underlining that after the regimes of Emperor Haile

Sellassie (1930-74) and the military leader Mengistu (1974-91), centralist authoritarianism is not gone but perhaps is being reinvented in a new form” (page 174).

Abbink’s explanations indeed are valid and certain in that despite the rising expectations of the public from the 2005 national elections were quite higher but as the author mentioned, most students of Ethiopian politics also clearly understood that EPRDF can reverse its course at any given time for a simple reason that, since its inception, the coalition’s political moves indicated of survivalist political approaches coming first and all matters of service to the nation did not and still does not count. Moreover, although Abbink’s explanation that invokes of the similarities of EPRDF Coalition’s authoritarian tendencies and its centralist ruling regime with that of the old regimes is valid, even from my extended discussion of how the ethnic federal institutionalization played out, it is evident that the regime not only effectively used its patrons from the bureaucracy, and the party structure all over the Ethiopian state in its successful maneuvers of the electoral outcome. But also, the coalition and its leaders, led by the dictator, Meles Zenawi, immediately enacted different measures that range from the declaration of state of emergency that stripped of the public’s right to peaceful demonstration to the imprisonment of political leaders from the opposition that were still contesting the results of the election. As Berhanu Abegaz (2005) stated, “Ethiopia finds itself once again at the crossroads. The May 2005 national elections have presented the country with a clear-cut choice between a functional multiparty democratic system or a patrimonial state-party system” (page 33). Indeed, what appears to have emerged would be the latter. Hence, the national elections of that year showed EPRDF opened the doors of democratic electoral competition and it immediately closed them after defeat would become the eventual outcome. Because, for EPRDF, failing to address such an existential challenge signals nothing but putting its survivalist political approaches to bed.

As we recall from my earlier discussion on how the EPRDF mechanisms of co-optation work in making sure the regime keeps its upper hand in electoral processes as well as outcomes, what had also transpired from the 2005 national elections was that the regime's success in devising a political framework via its ethnic federal arrangement helped its political leadership keep the question of ethnicity in the political discourse and used it as a way to stifle the opposition's political voice while the patron-client relations serving those supporting and working for the regime to further receive rewards after every political storm that threatens the regime's grip on political power passes by. The spending of donor funds to strengthen the party structure, the use of food aid in buying votes and electoral support in general and the deployment of security forces in urban and semi-urban areas of the country in creating uneasy political atmosphere, were just some that I explained early in the chapter as well. Some of such measures by the regime, as seen by Alemayehu Gebre Mariam (2010-2011), who interviewed opposition leaders in post 2010 elections that the regime dominated at large, but are very much relevant to our understanding of the pre and post national elections of 2005, the author states:

“The security network is so sophisticated that it has Stalinesque quasi- directorates consisting of party and security organizations working together to maintain around-the-clock surveillance of citizens and generate and distribute real time intelligence on individual households through an established chain of command. According to Dr. Negasso<sup>106</sup>, the local commissariats have expansive powers of investigation, arrest, interrogation and detention. They maintain a network of anonymous informants and agents who provide tips

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<sup>106</sup> Dr. Negasso Gidada, was the first president of federal Ethiopia after replacing Meles Zenawi, who had served as the president of the provisional government and later would become the head of the state in a parliamentary and federal Ethiopia.

for the identification, investigation and arrest of local individuals suspected of disloyalty to the regime. They control and regulate the flow of information and visitors in and out of the town. Apparently, they even have the power to deport anyone considered *persona non grata* from the town. In general, there is little question that the commissariats and the interlocking quasi-directorates engage in repression and widespread human rights abuses against the local population” (page 31).

The regime, which had boasted about formally introducing democracy in a fundamental way during that electoral period, of course eventually perceived the national elections of 2005 as a learning curve and refocused its agenda of appealing to the masses, saying ‘the EPRDF is your only choice and the opposition are here to distract us from our development strategies that help end poverty that we have been suffering under. In my field work, I had also the opportunity to discuss the regime’s response to that particular election’s outcomes with two individual members of the EPRDF coalition’s member parties. One is a member of ANDM and the other a member of SEPDM. In a candid discussion I had with such individuals, (interviewees number fifty-two) about how the regime’s leadership first acted in a democratic way and later curtailed such deceptively democratic proceedings finding out that that in any ways is not play out in its favor, they stated that the EPRDF leadership, internally had always discussed that the country was not ready for democratization and the only reasons in which the regime decided to proceed the open democratic climate that it had suddenly introduced was mainly because what the coalition’s leadership termed as ‘testing the waters’.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> The discussions I conducted with the two individuals, (interviewees number fifty-two) took place in May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017, in Atlanta Georgia, United States.

According to such individuals, EPRDF really believed that rural Ethiopia, which comprise more than eighty percent of the total population of eth country would be voting and supporting the regime and that the only difficulty they will be facing would be limited to the urban centers, that they had considered opposition strongholds. But such initial guesses by the leadership came out as utter miscalculations, which therefore had to be corrected. Such corrective measures, unfortunately, also included the killing of hundreds of protesters by the regime's security forces as a result of the post electoral violence mainly in the capital Addis Ababa<sup>108</sup>. While one of the opposition coalition, called *Hibret* (UEDF) decided to join the parliament, the CUD leaders who decided against entering parliament would be jailed and most would end up spending up to two years and some more than that.<sup>109</sup> Based on the views that interviewee number thirty-two, an individual who was elected member of the House of Representatives, (although he declined to enter) who had also served as one of the most influential leaders of CUD who spent almost two years as a political prisoner shared with me, the EPRDF not only jailed all the majority of the leaders of the coalition and turned CUD into political irrelevance. But also, the regime successfully managed to further divide these imprisoned political leaders by using game tactics that are designed to create animosity amongst each other.<sup>110</sup> Such tactics, according to the interviewee, are mainly revealed through what the investigators of those jailed opposition leaders would inform a certain opposition leader information that they claimed heard from another jailed colleague, which led to a situation whereby one opposition leader could not trust the other even after they left the prisons. In fact, one certain

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<sup>108</sup> See Human Rights Watch country report of Ethiopia in 2005: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2006/country-chapters/Ethiopia>.

<sup>109</sup> See U.S. State Department's report for that year: <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78734.htm>.

<sup>110</sup> The interview with interviewee number thirty-two occurred in Washington D.C. United states on April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

feature that was witnessed after those jailed leaders were released from TPLF's notorious prisons was that the magnitude and camaraderie that had characterized the leaders of the CUD was completely replaced by political antagonism amongst each other. Witnessing political bickering amongst those leaders became quite common as the post-prison period unraveled. One of the leaders would be giving an interview that he uses to criticize and attack a former colleague within CUD or one would even publish a book that paints his contributions in gold colors while using the same publication to blame 'others' who the individual considered traitors and collaborators with the '*woyane*'<sup>111</sup>, resulting in CUD's downfall.

What such political developments in the post 2005 national elections more or less show is that the EPRDF firstly, learned that it does not have popular support except the massive support it enjoys in the Tigray regional state and ethnic Tigrayans and secondly, they also learned that taking corrective measures against the flourishing opposition and its mass support was the only way to restore the calm that they need so much to advance reforms and consolidate their grip in political power. In doing so, the structures that they have in place, in terms of the ethnic federal institutional solutions would definitely come in handy to further rescue the challenges the regime faces from time to time.

In general, as we see from the discussions I presented on how the 2005 national elections played out, and how the regime coped against the challenging developments in aftermath, the

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<sup>111</sup> Woyane is word in the Tigrinya language that is commonly used in Ethiopian politics to describe those leaders and supporters of the TPLF.

EPRDF not only made sure it now restored 'calm' within the coalition's leadership and among its massive patrons spread across the Ethiopian federal arrangement, which is now understood parallel to the centralist authoritarian party structure in place. But it also publicly comes out as a reformed agent of developmental programs and the elites would add the acronym 'developmental' to every possible position available within the ruling party structure. Further more, the issue of democracy, according to their open propaganda items, would become something they will only consider once after the country embarks on the success of the coalition's renewed efforts that target economic growth and eradication of unemployment that has been a major problem especially with what they considered a raging youth.

Thus, the 2005 elections, for the EPRDF regime, signaled that for the political elite to stay with their dominance of political power, democracy and democratic questions are not questions that they would have to answer. The conclusion they arrived at the end was that EPRDF's leadership must continue to rule only by reforming itself from time to time and addressing the political and economic challenges as they go. Moreover, the regime also understood that despite its massive work and relative success in creating the necessary environment of patronage and established success in installing strong party structure, expanding its base of supporters by amassing new members, by millions, and having those members as agents of their new programs are the only options left. Thus, the regime decided that the only option left is to come up with strategies for successful implementation of such goals as the mode of operation of the EPRDF.

#### **8.4 Critical Juncture Three: The Death of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and the Emergence of EPRDF's 'Collective Leadership'**

The 2005 national elections, which I discussed as one of the most pivotal events in the country's contemporary politics as well as in the evolution of the TPLF led EPRDF coalition's ruling regime had come and gone. The end result of such a critical juncture, as already discussed, was of course the emergence of the ruling coalition as more dominant than it was before. The strongman, who presided over two decades of the TPLF-EPRDF rule of the state, Mr. Meles Zenawi, had also seen his power rise and consolidate even further to the level that the country's politics was even considered by many in the public arena as a one-man theatrical play. In every political juncture that students of Ethiopian politics refer as a defining moment, Mr. Zenawi comes out stronger than he was ever before as well. Medhane Taddese (2012), in his assessment of Zenawi's political rise irrespective of the challenges that the coalition that he leads encounters from time to time, by focusing on how he survived and thrived in the aftermath of the post war breakup within the TPLF, states that:

“The rise of Meles to a dominant and undisputed position in the Ethiopian state had far reaching political implications. It weakened the rest of the political forces within and outside the ruling party, decimated other centers of power and influence and immobilized the TPLF, the most organized political force in the post-1991 Ethiopian landscape. There is no doubt that the removal of the rather well-entrenched and adamant party leaders would give him the opportunity to seize the full reins of power and make a clean start in the affairs of the state. He tried hard to relocate his power base from Tigray and the TPLF to the Center and the EPRDF with some success. Thus the progressive political ascendancy of

Meles was paralleled by growing political strength at the Center. He created a centralized government and a party leader unified with the state making the party, the government of the day and the state one and the same. He promoted loyal bureaucrats than party loyalists which served to reinforce a clearly identifiable power pyramid. In doing this he created a power base independent of all the members of the ruling party” (page 1).

Tadesse has in fact a point in that Mr. Zenawi had successfully seized the trust and loyalty of the non-TPLF members of the ruling coalition while I disagree with the author’s assertion about the relocation of the center of power from the TPLF elites in Tigray to the EPRDF headquarters in Addis Ababa given we do not have credible evidence in showing the growth of political power whether in ANDM, OPDO or SEPDM’s leadership. Nonetheless, Tadesse’s piece shows that the Prime Minister who led the country and the EPRDF coalition with iron fist for the first two decades was indeed a tactical genius in asserting his political power and in destroying opposition that come against his ways of doing things from within his party or from outside.

In the aftermath of the 2005 national elections, Zenawi had also already come to the conclusion that if EPRDF continues without a massive support base, the coalition would struggle in its ambitions of staying in hold of political power. Thus, the ruling coalition, according to him, had to come prepared with a new strategy of recruiting millions of new members and each political party within the coalition as well as the affiliated parties spread across the so called ‘developing regional states’ would be tasked with expanding their support bases. According to interviewee number twenty-seven, an individual who had worked in the EPRDF headquarters in Addis Ababa and a longtime member of ANDM, the new memorandum distributed was scary to say the least. The individual states that, “Mr. Meles Zenawi and his advisors debated what the new strategy

of expanding our member base should be. After a long debate they decided that constituting new youth associations and creating pilot job fairs and opportunities with loan programs would be able to attract the unemployed youth that we at the EPRDF had considered ‘the main support of the opposition’. Such strategies targeted all urban centers and while mainly focused on regional state capitals and Addis Ababa. The success was quick and each group of youth associations would be given a day or two of lectures about the new and improved programs of EPRDF and then would be ‘invited’ to become party members in line with their ethnic origins.” The interviewee continues, “this rapid success would be immediately followed by what is famously known as the ‘*anid le’amist*’<sup>112</sup> phenomenon that even further created millions of new patrons to the system that the ruling coalition created.”<sup>113</sup> As we recall from the discussion of how the EPRDF’s successful system of patronage resulted in its domination of the ethnic federal setting and thus any potential electoral challenges, the new structure known as *anid le’amist* even further reinforced that already functioning mechanism of survivalist EPRDF’s manipulation of the federal arrangement and the patronage system spread across all levels of the government. In the earlier discussions of the electoral manipulations by EPRDF, we have also clearly seen that the 2010 national elections led to a sweeping ‘victory’ of the ruling coalition of the country’s 99.6 percent of parliamentary seats. Given such levels of the successes of the coalition and a rising power of its leader, the regime would once continue its grip on political power and its supporters would be assured that as long as

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<sup>112</sup> Anid le’amist is an Amharic phrase that explains that one individual member of the ruling coalition would be tasked to spy and report about five civilians whether they themselves are party members or not. This created a huge challenge to the general public as no one now trusts anyone even in simple political conversations.

<sup>113</sup> Interview with respondent number twenty-seven was conducted on email exchange as well as telephone conversations in dates February 29<sup>th</sup> and March 4<sup>th</sup> of 2017.

EPRDF stays in power they would continue to enjoy the rights that EPRDF has given to them from the hands of the chauvinists and the sympathizers of the old regimes.

A unique problem however arrived in the middle of year 2012 when the health of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was recognized to be deteriorating as a result of health complications that still remain an EPRDF secret and a mystery to the rest of the Ethiopian public. After series of unsubstantiated rumors in the social media sphere and the regime's unsuccessful attempts to calm the situation about the whereabouts and health conditions of Mr. Zenawi, an opposition media known as ESAT broke the news about the death of the Prime Minister who ruled the country for over twenty-one years on July 30, 2017.<sup>114</sup> The ruling coalition, visibly confused and devoid of effective media strategy, restrained from admitting their leader's death until August 21<sup>st</sup> 2012, when the state television's early morning broadcast declared the passing away of the 'dear' leader by a sudden death while also confirming that the leader was indeed battling an unnamed sickness for over two years.<sup>115</sup> The issue of political succession, the fate of the country and problems that face the ruling coalition created a new political juncture that stand to redefine the course of the country afresh.

The political leadership of the regime, deeply mourning the death of the dear leader, and discussing nothing about the future of the state rather the legacies of the departed leader, eventually started tackling one of the most challenging times in the history of the EPRDF's rule. The issue of political succession that should have been normally handled given the constitutional rule book's

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<sup>114</sup> The report of Zenawi's death from ESAT's radio can be accessed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bBflmpEG7v0>.

<sup>115</sup> The state TV report of Prime Minister Zenawi: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8b1H78rz3Y>.

explanation of the deputy prime minister assuming the position, the EPRDF and its leadership stayed silent about it and the country would remain without a head of state until the Deputy Prime Minister Mr. Haile Mariam Desalegn was sworn in as the second Prime Minister of the country since 1995 on September 21<sup>st</sup> 2012<sup>116</sup> in an emergency meeting called by the parliament. With the arrival of the newly sworn in Prime Minister onto the political scene filling the big shoe left by the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's death, the ruling elite started its propaganda of the emergence of collective leadership with the appointment of nine deputy prime ministers who now serve as advisors of the new Prime Minister while also managing certain cabinet portfolios. Seven of those deputy prime ministers are top TPLF leaders.

As a leadership member of the OPDO and formerly a youth political association leader, who is interviewee number forty-nine, in my field interviews explained to me, “the Prime Minister, not only is usually bypassed, in most of the administrative issues that the EPRDF encounters, but most within the party leadership in Addis Ababa and across the regional states believe that he does not even receive intelligence briefings and vital reports from certain ministerial offices and state controlled enterprises.”<sup>117</sup> The individual adds that most of such tasks are overseen by those who deputize Mr. Haile Mariam Desalegn. Moreover, posters of the late prime minister would be visible across the country and EPRDF's programs become nothing but implementing the visions of the late prime minister. As one unnamed reporter of *The Economist*, in a small article that was entitled, ‘Long live the king’, once stated, “His party is trying to wring as much legitimacy as

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<sup>116</sup> the new prime minister was official sworn on September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VDQO00Vij4g>.

<sup>117</sup> The interview was conducted on May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017 in Silver Spring, Maryland and telephone conversation the next day on 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 2017.

possible from his legacy. It may be too early to speak of a post-Meles era—even in death he is the country’s most visible politician.”<sup>118</sup> In that respect, I also argue that Prime Minister Desalegn and his comrades not only declared their intentions to lead the nation keeping the legacies and visions of the late leader intact, but also the fact that they emerged out of the crisis as one, depicted their usual success in coming out of any crisis stronger. And that, from what we already seen in the discussions of the first two critical junctures, has become part of the political culture within the ruling coalition. Many of the respondents to the questions I extended in my field work also echoed that such a strength is attributed to EPRDF’s strong party discipline across all levels of the party structure.

Ultimately, the death of Zenawi never led to the breakout of any protests and or unrest across the country and the EPRDF’s resolve in capitalizing the ‘vision of the late leader’ as a new source for legitimacy reinforced their efforts in the ideals they refer to as ‘collective leadership’ and thus resulting effective control of the state. The Ethiopian public in general, that was confused and limited to following the new developments from television windows and radio waves, also understood that in the absence of a formidable political alternative thanks to EPRDF’s effective obliteration of the opposition, observing how the post-Zenawi era unfolds in the country and hoping of a calming political atmosphere were the only hope and option available.

Interestingly however, the TPLF, which dominated the EPRDF for over two decades had to hastily reassure its dominance by making certain political moves that further strengthened its

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<sup>118</sup> Economist’s piece can be accessed at: <https://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21571936-ethiopias-new-leadership-practising-hero-worship-long-live-king>.

control. Even before the new Prime Minister was sworn in on September 21<sup>st</sup> of 2012, the TPLF, that has always controlled the security apparatus that ranges from the military to the intelligence forces and the federal police, appointed thirty-seven new military generals all on same day.<sup>119</sup> Thirty six of those generals were individuals of Tigrayan origin. According to interviewee number forty-nine, the TPLF had already understood that relying on the EPRDF party structure and elites at the regional level through the patron-client relations spread across the ethnic federal arrangement may not be sustainable for so long. Therefore, strengthening their grip on the military would become an alternative option. Some of these developments, especially with regards to the military's involvement in the economic spheres of the country, will be briefly assessed in the next chapter. However, what is essential to our understanding is that throughout TPLF-EPRDF's tenure on top of the political power in the country, the ruling elite, seemingly diverse but highly controlled by the TPLF, have effectively survived the challenges that they have faced through their control of the military and security apparatus, coupled by abiding by the party discipline and their sheer desire in succeeding with their survivalist approaches.

The passing of Mr. Zenawi and the vulnerable political climate that he left behind is now long gone. The basic concerns of the general populace in terms of lack of prospects of democratization and what would come out of the ruling coalition however, lingers. The 2015 national elections, would also arrive and the EPRDF 'improves' its control of the legislative assembly from what the regime had claimed to have won in 2010 (99.6 %) to now winning hundred percent of

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<sup>119</sup> The TPLF leadership's decision to promote its lower level military leadership, mostly ethnic Tigrayan, before even the new prime minister sworn in, as explained in party affiliated news cite: <http://hornaf-fairs.com/2012/09/12/ethiopian-army-37-general-officers-promoted-full-list/>.

the seats in the parliament. As I indicated above, the fears of the TPLF in considering the ethnic federal arrangement as unsustainable also became a reality when the question of identity of certain groups who wanted to reclaim their Amhara identity and reunite with the Amhara regional state from the north became a new challenge and the youth of the Oromo, an ethnic group arguable considered the largest in the country, also demanded fairness and equality in the economic and political spheres of the Ethiopian state.

Such questions that emerged from the two most populous regions and ethnic groups led to a breakout of massive unrest across the two largest regional states of Amhara and Oromia. The majority of the political elite from the two political parties that administer Oromia and Amhara regional states (OPDO and ANDM, respectively) also, in the eyes of many observers and students of Ethiopian politics, for the first time ever in the history of the EPRDF, sided with the people's demands in their respective states, which now is considered a new challenge for the TPLF led EPRDF regime. The state of emergency that was declared by Prime Minister Desalegn's government and the deployment of massive troops across the country seemed to have now quelled the rampant violence that dominated the Ethiopian political scene in much of 2016. Given this research project's scope focuses until the end of 2016, I restrain from discussing the further ramifications of such popular protests to the future of the Ethiopian state in general and the ruling coalition in particular. However, further discussion in how such events unfolded and what also triggered them cannot be explained here. Instead, in the following chapter, I focus on Ethiopia's state sponsored economic paradigms in an ethnic federal setting, in the next chapter.

## 8.5 Conclusion

From the three critical junctures that I discussed in this chapter that show how the EPRDF coalition managed to survive the existential challenges it faced, we see that such a success enjoyed by the ruling elite did not happen out of sheer luck. Instead, we see that the dominant party state structure in place in Ethiopia, the mechanisms for political survival manifested through the patron-client relations, the co-opted political elites across all levels of the federal structure, and the fact that the security apparatus of the state is fully controlled by the TPLF and the coalition it created, which is still in power, all have come through in defense of the regime's vulnerabilities. Indeed, such mechanism could still continue to support the regime's survivalist agenda. However, as explained in this chapter and throughout the discussions presented overall, how reliable such survival tactics would remain could be an open ended question in light of the new developments I mentioned. Thus, in understanding the further evolution of EPRDF's rule requires to await those new developments and analyze them. Regardless of that however, as we saw the political elites' maneuver of the institutional solution of ethnic federalism to their survival ambitions, understanding how the regime's economic programs also played out in the ruling coalition's efforts to assert its power remain very much essential. Therefore, in the next chapter, I discuss the economic paradigms designed for implementation in the ethnic federal setting. In that regard, and my further analysis of authoritarian survival mechanisms from the economic perspective and further assessment of how such mechanisms also played out with regards to people's rights and the federal setting itself will be further addressed.

## **9 CHAPTER NINE: ETHIOPIA'S ETHNIC FEDERALISM AND STATE-CENTERED ECONOMIC PARADIGMS: A FURTHER ANALYSIS ON THE ANATOMY OF SURVIVALIST PARTY-STATE**

### **9.1 Introduction:**

In the last chapters of this dissertation, I have attempted to explain what Ethiopian politics is all about with depth and clarity. In doing so, I indicated that both in historical narratives as well as in assessment of the current reality, I argued that those political actors who presided over the country's politics at one time or another could be characterized as what I call survivalist political elites. Such political elites put the notion of political survival above and beyond the ideals of public service and political legacy. Here, it is also critical to note that in any democratic or authoritarian setting, political elites' priorities and efforts in public service or political activities could primarily center around longevity of their political reigns or opportunities of extending the time-span of the offices and official capacities they hold. However, I believe that while those political elites' efforts in democratic states focus on appeasing to their political base i.e., in the large part to their constituents and to some extent the party hierarchy, those in authoritarian countries in the large part focus on appeasing the party bosses and the party structure. Therefore, in the question of the Ethiopian political elite, I am of opinion that no matter how much they achieve in their leadership of development programs in all aspects, the tenacious efforts they put and the mechanisms they employ in their quest to prolong their political reign stand out more than their accomplishments in serving the nation.

In that respect, studying Ethiopia's authoritarian regimes, past or present, entails a careful understanding of their political as well as economic programs. Identifying the successes as well as

failures of such programs and finally making sure to comprehend the why and how of the emergence of such programs as well as their implementations becomes crucial. In doing so, closer attention must also be given to party documents that outline such programs, critic their shortcomings. Thus, in broader terms, I have attempted to explain the patrimonial and neo-patrimonial past and the persistent nature of political culture in shaping the behavior of the political elite in the country. Moreover, I have also extensively addressed how the ethnic federal setting as an institutional solution has helped the TPLF/EPRDF regime in its survivalist ambitions.

Moreover, I have showed that Ethiopia's political elites, old or new, are rational actors that focus in maximizing their strategic interests via their effective control of the state, resources and their efforts towards defeating the challenges they face against their political fortunes. In the last few substantive chapters for instance, I have presented the 'why' of ethnic federalism from the individual versus group rights perspective, and explained the 'how' of its implementations from the electoral politics, the minority rights' protection, absence of genuine relations between the regional states and the central government, and the creation of a patron-bureaucracy to the centralist party structure.

Furthermore, in the last section of the chapter, I have also indicated that the fact that new testing challenges are emerging, from the issue of questions of identity to popular demands for political and economic equality, are forcing the TPLF led EPRDF elite to vie for new approaches that will ensure continuity and survival of their political power. I argue that one major aspect in that respect is the economic sphere and how the TPLF led EPRDF shaped its economic agenda from time to time. Hence, in this chapter, I first present how the group economic rights promotion

agenda was also crafted in post-1991 Ethiopia along the lines of the introduction of Ethnic federalism so as to achieve considerable levels of reduction in economic inequality in compassion with the failures of the past regimes. Note that the discussion in the development of such economic programs and EPRDF's efforts in that regard, did not happen in reaction to recent political developments that I cited as new challenges. Because, they were there from the beginning of the post-1991 political era. However, the fact that the ruling coalition's hold of the economic sphere is even more stronger than the political sphere has now influenced the tactically gifted TPLF leadership to give more emphasis in strengthening the coalition's grip on the economy as further reinforcement to their dominance. In doing so, I primarily focus on the TPLF led EPRDF's land policy, agricultural economic programs, as well as the ruling coalition's evolving ideological foundations by categorizing them in two time frames, i.e. the first and second decades.<sup>120</sup> Here, I present the successes as well as the ambiguities in the economic approaches the regime relied in attempting to meet its predetermined goals by discussing the literary foundations for the economic ideologies EPRDF picked up on in its time as a ruling coalition, i.e., the revolutionary democracy political and economic paradigm and the developmental state economic growth and development strategy, which were put into practice in line with the time frames I mentioned.

Secondly, chapter seven also presents how the ruling coalition's centralist party structure across all levels of government is also in control of the economic sphere where the parties are witnessed the most important economic actors and the nation's economic bosses. In that regard, I discuss the ever-growing endowments that the TPLF/EPRDF member parties established and transformed the ruling elites as leading economic forces in the country while again effectively

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<sup>120</sup> Such times frames although indicated as 'first and second decades', in actuality could cover more than twenty years.

transforming those same political parties as economic bosses of the country's vital economic engines. Moreover, throughout the discussion, it will also be evident that the illiberal economic approaches have essentially kept the country in state of mixed-economy and left the TPLF led EPRDF ruling coalition in command of the state enterprises, which are cash cows that serve the survivalist ambitions of those in power. Essentially, the chapter presents how the state enterprises are in control of the EPRDF coalition's party structure while each member party of this coalition is also overseeing the management of endowments. In that regard, I elucidate the 'lost accountability' in the management of such enterprises. Moreover, while explaining the anatomy Ethiopia's political economy from various perspectives and across time frames, further analyses of the economic paradigms and programs and how they played out in the ethnic federal setting will be further detailed.

In that regard, I believe that at the end of the chapter we will be able to understand how a rational ruling elite as shaped by continuous authoritarian political culture, absence of needed institutional strength designed and implemented solutions that secure their survivalist political interests. Here, it is also important to note that despite the dissertation focuses on contributing to the literature on authoritarian survival in general, it will also pay attention to the successes of some of the policies implemented in the Ethiopia's economy in post-1991 political era. Because, some successes should not also be ignored. In achieving such objectives of the chapter, I will rely on my analysis of the critical events that transformed federal Ethiopia's economy in the last twenty-five years, for better or worse, according to the time frames I outlined. The interview data I collected in my field work, through interviewing policy makers, bureaucrats, and party officials to entrepreneurs and business owners will be also presented. Moreover, secondary resources that help explain

the Ethiopian phenomenon and support or oppose the primary data I relied on will be presented as well.

## **9.2 Ideological Foundations of the TPLF-EPRDF Economy: The Literature**

In this section, I discuss two ideological beliefs that the EPRDF ruling coalition had utilized in pretty much every aspect of political and economic programs that it has employed thus far, i.e. revolutionary democracy and developmental state model for economic growth and strategy. While the revolutionary democracy ideology was the song of the regime in every aspect of political and economic programs it envisioned and implemented in much of the first half of the TPLF-EPRDF rule, developmental state economic paradigm came to the Ethiopian political scene in the advent of the new millennia and remains the main ideological basis of the regime, which at times changes the meanings of what developmental state means to its liking as we will see in the later stages of this chapter. One central question of course, remains not only what do we mean by such ideological beliefs and how do they differ. Henceforth, I explain how such paradigms emerged and played out from the literary perspective.

## **9.3 Revolutionary (Abyotawi) Democracy as an Economic Paradigm in EPRDF's First Decade**

The TPLF, which orchestrated the formation of the EPRDF coalition, and one that remains the most dominant of the coalition's member parties is also one credited with the adaptation and implementation of such ideologies. I will not dwell much into the literature on revolutionary democracy in detail. However, it is also critical to present how the TPLF and then the EPRDF have

come to use it the first major ideological foundation for their hold on political power. The revolutionary democracy ideology, essentially a leftist ideological framework of governance, was not an ideology picked up by accident. The TPLF, all along had been a leftist movement. One of its founders, Aregawi Berhe (2008), who now lives in exile, in his dissertation that focuses on the TPLF as a political movement, explains that:

“Initially, the TPLF considered itself an organization within the broad spectrum of Marxist movements of the Ethiopian left. With the rapidly growing number of peasant and nationalist members in the Front in the late 1970s, the left-wing elements saw the need to organize themselves to lead the Front in the direction they believed would realize the interests of the ‘poor and exploited masses’, and in which the right to self determination of Tigrayans would be respected. At the beginning of 1978, a Marxist Leninist group was uniting around this notion within the TPLF - as a network of revolutionary fighters who believed in socialism as a just and fair system for all” (Page 208).

Of course, no credible source could be available more than the founder of the movement himself. And according to Berhe’s assessment of the ideological foundation of the TPLF, we see that TPLF indeed organized itself as a leftist rebellion that wages an armed struggle against a leftist regime, i.e. the Dergue. In fact, the considerations that the TPLF leadership used as a basis to join new political partnerships in a fight against the Dergue were based on whether such groups had embraced similar leftist ideologies in addition to their commitment in overthrowing the socialist regime in place in much of the seventies and eighties. What is also vital to discuss is that the mentions of peasants, and and the “poor and exploited masses”, in the above quote, stresses the

adoption of a revolutionary democracy ideology which is a byproduct of eastern left-wing ideologies was quite needed. According to interviewee number-two, who has served the regime from the beginning, the term ‘revolutionary’ symbolizes EPRDF’s commitment to group rights and the term ‘democracy’ to their commitment in embarking on democratic reforms according to the group rights promotion agenda. In that regard, achieving both, according to him, was possible through institutionalizing the state in a new federal setting which guarantees equal distribution of wealth while empowering the regional states towards implementing such centrally driven economic strategies in a way that benefits the economic groups within their respective states.<sup>121</sup>

Notwithstanding the explanation of interviewee number-two on what he means revolutionary democracy, a look at a seminal contribution by Jean-Nicolas Bach (2011), who not only helped with a brief description of the meaning of the concept but also analyzed it from the perspective of the terms used by TPLF and then EPRDF, revolutionary democracy actually means further than that. According to Bach,

“The democratic project through revolutionary means partly emerged from a Leninist interpretation of Marx’s Proletariat Dictatorship thesis. The notion of revolutionary democracy came from an opposition to capitalist liberal ideology, and Lenin’s revolutionary project. Quite demarcating himself from his Marxian heritage and inspired by the writings of the utopian socialist Tchernychevski, Lenin stressed the necessity for the “enlighten” elites to lead the unconscious masses to the revolution. Lenin’s revolutionary strategy and goals were mainly presented in his famous *What Is To Be Done?* and at the occasion of the First Communist International in March 1919. “Proletariat dictatorship”

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<sup>121</sup> The interview with interviewee number-two was conducted in March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017, in Washington D.C.

was considered the antithesis of “parliamentary bourgeois democracy” and the social revolution was expected to be led by a vanguard party in a “democratic centralism” that would not allow any internal factionalism. Thus, revolutionary democracy has been interpreted as a bridge between pre-capitalist and socialist societies” (page 641).

Of course, as the above quote puts eloquently, the Ethiopian societies that the liberation fronts including the TPLF were attempting to liberate could be described “pre-capitalist” and socialist societies. For one, in the economic systems in modern Ethiopian history and to this day, we see that the free market economy was either non-existent or limited to a higher degree by the government policies in previous regimes. And for the rest, of course, it is clear that for most of the seventeen years or so that such rebel groups were fighting the military socialist regime, the economic system was constructed along the same leftist anti-liberalism economic principles that most importantly could be described in terms of the socialist regime’s deep ties with the former Soviet Union and its partners. Hence, for TPLF, adopting and understanding such ideological foundations in guiding its political and economic principles was important as what it aspired to help through such revolutionary struggle was to free the exploited masses that suffered under the lingering economic and political inequality rampant in previous political regimes.

TPLF kept such a leftist political and economic ideology throughout the period of struggle and after it assumed political power with its formation of the EPRDF coalition in post-1991 Ethiopia. However, such an ideology was not kept as is by the TPLF. Certain changes have always been introduced by its ideologues throughout. In indicating some of the fundamental changes, Bach adds that:

“In its 1976 Manifesto, the movement initially called for the independence of Tigray, thus defending Tigrayan nationalism on the basis of the national oppression thesis. In the course of the 1970s, the TPLF progressively adopted a broader Ethiopian agenda in which Tigray would gain autonomy. Under the influence of the Tigrayan intellectuals and their Marxist-Leninist inclination, one can consider TPLF was as an NDR movement in the 1970s, i.e. at the time of the Manifesto. However, during the struggle, facing the necessity to adapt its strategy in a rural Tigray environment and following the USSR friendship with the Derg regime, the TPLF adopted the Maoist model, thus entering the RPDR (or New Democratic Revolution) at the end of the 1970. In the 1980s, the tactical alliance between Maoism and bourgeoisie was rejected by TPLF thinkers who eventually shifted to the Albanian model which appeared less “revisionist” to them” (page 642)<sup>122</sup>.

Bach also explains the ideological changes and re-adaptation of the Marxist-Leninist belief in the TPLF camp, through the establishment of the Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray, which he described as “a party within a party.”<sup>123</sup> However, with sweeping changes in the international climate with the fall of the soviet union, the spread of liberal economic agenda in most ex-soviet states, the fall of the Dergue that put the TPLF at the helm of political power in the country, another changes had to happen in an attempt to appease the western world and show readiness for political as well as economic reforms. Hence, liberal free market policies would be introduced and the

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<sup>122</sup> While the NDR model (national democratic revolution) is a Marxist-Leninist ideology, the RPDR model (National Popular Democratic Revolution) is a Stalinist-Maoist (Albanian-Chinese) ideology that the TPLF had to seize upon realizing the socialist regime that they were fighting against, at the time was of course just like them, i.e., Marxist-Leninist. This explanation is taken from Bach’s description of the changes in page 642.

<sup>123</sup> Page 642.

private sector would be encouraged with the establishment of the first of its kind agency that facilitates the process of privatization in the country (Bach 2011). However, the TPLF tenaciously keep its revolutionary (*Abyotawi* in Amharic) democracy ideology in tact even amid the liberal economic policies being introduced. Quoting the speech of the late Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, where he asserted such an ideology's importance in helping the country's future, saying it "had to be firmly grasped if Ethiopia was to embark on sustainable economic development", Bach further states that, "Despite the adoption of a multi-party system and liberal economic policies, Meles paradoxically reaffirmed the ideological line rejecting parliamentary democracy and defending democratic centralism based on a vanguard party" (page 643). Indeed, what we see here is that the TPLF-EPRDF leadership saw in revolutionary democracy the only option in transforming the Ethiopian state in terms of its promotion of the group rights agenda, the vision they had for the establishment of a strong centralist party structure and eventually the realization of their survivalist political programs.

Bringing how the ethnic federal agenda could also be explained according to such a revolutionary democracy ideology is hence, very essential. Of course, the economic reforms through the revolutionary democracy framework had to occur throughout the newly constituted members of the federation. Among the first questions, for instance, is how is the state revenues are collected and shared. According to E J Keller (2002), the regime, in its attempt to satisfy donor countries and organizations standards echoed the regional states' autonomy in economic management, which according to the author, the World Bank had acknowledged in its 1999 report by stating, "Ethiopia has embarked on a bold and thoughtful process of decentralization, which has been supported by a widely shared consensus over both the development strategy and objectives, and very large transfers of untied resources from the federal government to the regions. At this point, the

system is unquestionably working well.”<sup>124</sup> Here, I would like to note that the author did not mention the revolutionary democracy economic paradigm per se. However, given such economic policies that range from revenue sharing to other economic notions and strategies were designed according to such a paradigm, inferring such a concept would not be an understatement. Nonetheless, E J Keller (2002) counters the World Bank’s report by arguing that:

“By the standards of public administration, this would seem to be the case. However, there is a political dimension that organizations like the World Bank and other international development agencies seem to ignore or simply downplay. Ethnic federalism has not resulted in a widespread consensus in the general population of Ethiopia. There are some in the public at large, particularly among the Amhara and other *amharized* ethnicities, who contend that by definition a development strategy involving ethnic federalism is fatally flawed<sup>125</sup> ..... Despite such concerns, the EPRDF government has forged ahead with its plans, justifying this approach based on the fact that its first priority is the removal of social inequalities based on ethnicity” (page 22).

I believe that the author’s explanations above serve two important purposes to the discussions of the chapter. Firstly, it shows that the ruling coalition’s liberalization of the economy,

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<sup>124</sup> Keller’s quote of the World Bank can be found on: Ethiopia: Regionalization study. Report No. 18898-ET (February 3, 1999). Page 1.

<sup>125</sup> Keller’s mentioning of the Amhara and Amharized societies, although in part, true, the author’s argument seem incomplete. Because, firstly, not only Amharas, but most Ethiopians today believe the flaws in the federal setting are too many. Secondly, it fails short of explaining despite the ruling coalition’s interests in embarking on such reforms through the empowering of ethnicities, the ethnically formed regional states are not endowed with the level of autonomy in doing so.

although occurred to some degree, was mostly done in appeasing the donor countries and organizations. Secondly, it also shows that the ideals of revolutionary democracy with a EPRDF's intentions of its promotions of the group rights agenda, is in full practice as we saw in much of its political agenda. Nevertheless, the main point in the discussion of what the concept of revolutionary democracy is about and how it evolved within TPLF and then TPLF led EPRDF coalition is to show that such an economic paradigm had been the main ideological foundation that guided the new post-1991 Ethiopia's economy. That continued until the revolutionary democracy paradigm became replaced with the developmental state economic paradigm at the turn of the century.

#### **9.4 The Developmental State Economic Paradigm: The Second Decade in EPRDF's**

##### **Economy**

Chalmers Johnson (1982), who studied the rapid economic growth of Japan in post war era by focusing on the performance of Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), was the first to use the concept of developmental state. Johnson argues that the term represents the extraordinary economic success that the Japanese state apparatus helped create for a long time. The Japanese experience then becomes an example of economic success and would be copied by many South East Asian states, which even leads to the eventual association of the theory of developmental state with that region's economic transformation. According to Chalmers Johnson, Japanese efforts in setting consistent economic priorities, its focus on prioritizing economic development, its government's heavy intervention in the economy, its extensive consideration of the developmental state economic thesis as its foundation for growth, its effectiveness in establishing a functioning bureaucracy and the kind of institutions or "pilot organizations" that it established (such as MITI) all indicate the generally accepted characters of a developmental state.

When we see beyond Johnson's explanations of what the theory entails based on Japan's historical past, Evans (1995) argues, "only when embeddedness and autonomy are joined together can a state be called developmental" (p.12). According to Evans, embedded autonomy is what offers the fundamental basis for effective intervention in the economy, for a state that aspires rapid industrialization. Furthermore, he also argues that the developmental state and its prime example, Japan fits the "Weberian hypothesis", which points to the need for a strong state apparatus, which is crucial to creation of effective bureaucracy (p. 48). Assuming the South East Asian success in rapid economic growth and development was achieved by developmental state economic model, the question becomes how other states could also adopt such a growth strategy to emulate such success stories from Asia. In that regard, Atul Kohli (2004) argues that those most effective developmental states' characteristics have existed long before the states even adopted this state-centric economic model. According to him, history of the state (for instance, what form of colonial history preceded the state's independence), the state's bureaucratic strength, the state's ability to levy taxes and spend the collected tax in public development programs, and the state's ability to create a "disciplined labor force" is very much paramount to its successes (p.10).

Kohli, who extensively discusses various types of developmental states, however, argues that the level of success the developmental states achieved in their industrialization programs had also its costs. In his discussion of South Korea economic success for instance, he argues:

"The successes, however, came at a high cost. Rapid industrialization occurred within the framework of a highly authoritarian state characterized by overtones of fascism, a state that I have labeled cohesive-capitalist. Political dissent was not tolerated. Many

opposing the regime were repressed, and labor was corporatized and state-controlled. Income, wealth, and power inequalities in the society also became more skewed, especially starting in the 1970s, as the government deliberately encouraged economic concentration in the hands of the big chaebols (p. 122”.<sup>126</sup>

As we could see from Kohli’s argument, despite witnessing changes in economic lives of citizens of a developmental state and unprecedented economic growth, such a model did not encourage democratization from the start, at least in the case of South Korea. Here, Kohli’s argument also begs questions like whether we can argue the developmental state economic model is incompatible with democracy or it is just that it helps survivalist ambitions of ruling elites as we have seen thus far with EPRDF’s mechanisms of manipulating the institutional solutions it devised for the sake of its survival.

According to Chalmers Johnson (1986) another seminal contribution on the topic, the claims that connect developmental states with authoritarian forms of government are not valid. However, he also stresses that “authoritarianism can sometimes inadvertently solve the main political problem of economic development using important players in the economy such as some market- forces’ efforts in mobilizing the overwhelming majority of the population to work and sacrifice for developmental projects”<sup>127</sup>. For Johnson, what matters most for a developmental

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<sup>126</sup> Chaebols refer to big businesses and conglomerates.

<sup>127</sup> See page 52 on, Johnson, Chalmers A. *MITI and the Japanese miracle: the growth of industrial policy: 1925-1975*. Stanford University Press, 1982.

state's government is a level of legitimacy from the masses and its approval of the development projects. Here, we can see that in both the revolutionary democratic economic paradigm's implementation process and also in the adaptation and implementation of the developmental state model, the EPRDF in fact has successfully managed to use its heavy handed intervention in the economy and state sponsored economic programs (especially in infrastructure development), to seek and gain some levels of political legitimacy. However, although infrastructure development as a strategy to gain legitimacy could be one example in the case of Ethiopia's regime, the problem is that Johnson did not explicitly indicate what further techniques could the state utilizes for the purpose of achieving legitimacy from the public, as factors for gaining such legitimacy could be very much broader than that. Hence, I find Johnson's claims contradictory with each other although his argument in terms of the role of the market forces in such economic paradigms remains vital to explore. In fact, this chapter pays considerable attention in what we even could refer to as 'market forces' in the case of Ethiopia and witnessing party owned businesses, endowments and state enterprises that directly report to party headquarters will not be surprising.

As we could further see from Han Sung-Ju's (1974) historical account of the period of high economic-success in South Korean example, its is clear that such economic progress was in fact marred by high forms of state repression. For instance, Sung-Ju explains more broadly about how the Korean state was oppressive amid its rapid economic transformations. The author, among others, mentions the brutality of the police, that had similar responsibilities at times even with the bureaucracy. And the fact that, according to him, how much useful it was for the Korean repressive state apparatus to use such security institutions of the state against political opposition was indeed very much important to note. Here again, in light of the previous discussions about the existence

of a patron-bureaucracy that I discussed and the domination of the TPLF-EPRDF government of the security apparatus, we see that important parallels are there to further explore.

In his assessment of the state-centric theories, Peter Hall (1986) explains that such theories prioritize the autonomy of the state more than the societal interest.<sup>128</sup> Consistent with Hall's claim, Peter Evans (1995) also argues that at least as it was evident in President Rhee's regime of Developmental State of South Korea, the bureaucracy was highly repressed, promotions and dismissals within the civil service were entirely political and the state was highly clientelistic with "rent-seeking behavior rampant and systematic".<sup>129</sup> Of course, as we could learn from Evans's implication in his explanation of 'embedded autonomy,' the state in fact gets legitimacy based on some forms of interaction with its citizens that might not align with the generally accepted expectations of democracy. That I believe indicates that the coercive apparatus of the state could be essential to the regime's ambitions of success as a developmental state.

In EPRDF's case, that would be attributed to its survivalist political and economic approaches. Hence, the autonomy that the state enjoys in its heavy handed management of the economy might not be what its citizens pledged or agreed to voluntarily, rather an imposed party-centered economic agenda that aligns with the party's political interests of survival. I argue that in both Evans and Johnson's description of the developmental state, we see that a form of semi-authoritarian behavior (or soft-authoritarianism) could be tolerated as long as the state is following

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<sup>128</sup> See page 15 on, Hall, Peter A. 1986. "Governing the economy: The politics of state intervention in Britain and France." Oxford University Press.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, page 52.

such an active state-centric economic model, which I will further discuss the economic policies, the implementation strategies and how it played out in practice.

Nevertheless, debates on the compatibility of a certain state's adoption of developmental state theory as its guiding principle and the ideals of democracy has led to a new effort that attempts to make the connection between developmental state and democracy. Because, for a regime like the TPLF-EPRDF's, despite the lack of clear commitment to democracy and its authoritarian tendencies, keeping the term 'democracy' as part of any ideological belief is very much important as a further attempt to gain more legitimacy. This attempt, as in Mark Robinson and Gordon White (1998), is what is referred to as democratic developmental state, and that happens to be the case in what we see the Ethiopian regime use of the term in its programs and the ruling coalition's propaganda pieces, mainly as 'democratic developmentalism'. In formality, the Ethiopian regime had also debated and clarified the terms in terms of what labels uses for such an economic model, from calling their model 'developmental state' originally to claiming later, it is democratic developmental state. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, who was the chief ideologue in the importation, adaptation and supervision of the country's transitions from a command economic model to a revolutionary democratic and semi-liberalist economic ideologies and then to developmental state, seemed to had been aware of the unbearable cost that could emerge with the adoption of South East Asian model of developmental state. In what seems an inspiration from such a concern, Meles Zenawi (2006) argued for democratic developmentalism, by stating that:

“Development is a political process first and economic and social process later. It is the creation of a political set-up that is conducive to accelerated development that sets the ball of development rolling. Only when there is a state that has the characteristics of a

developmental state can one meaningfully discuss the elimination of rent seeking behavior. In its absence rent seeking will be rampant no matter what the size of the state might be. Only in the context of such a political environment can one debate about development policy in a meaningful manner. In its absence all government policy and action however limited and timid it might be will be riddled with rent-seeking behavior and this particularly so in developing countries as these countries will be coming out of a social and political environment where vertical, patron-client networks are pervasive.”<sup>130</sup>

What we see from Zenawi’s argument implies that economic policies cannot be disentangled from political concerns. Hence, in his subsequent arguments, he calls for a state that is committed towards both political and economic concerns of the society. Ironically, however, the Prime Minister’s mentions of rent-seeking patterns and the patron-client relations, indicate that while he fully knows that the Ethiopian bureaucracy is effectively overshadowed with his ruling coalition’s highly centralized party structure across all levels of the federation, he advocates for a ‘strong government actions and policy’ that are crucial to success of the country’s developmental state characters. But whether strong government means the empowering of the coercive powers of the state in the management of the economy could be open to interpretation. I however, argue that given the growing involvement of the military in owning and establishing corporations in the country’s growing economy, the Prime Minister and his ruling coalition might have given economic role to the loyal military chiefs and commanders, in a way ensuring the success of the economic

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<sup>130</sup> Excerpts from Zenawi’s writings can be found, [http://africanidea.org/m\\_zenawi\\_aug\\_9\\_2006.pdf](http://africanidea.org/m_zenawi_aug_9_2006.pdf)

program in one hand and the ruling coalition's survivalist ambitions on the other hand. On a different note, it is also important to mention that the concept of democratic developmentalism, although highly used in line with the developmental state economic paradigm, the regime had also been using the same concept along the lines of the revolutionary democratic economic plans.

Of course, all in all, Ethiopia's adoption of such an economic model seemed to have led to rapid economic growth despite its imperfections and acknowledging some levels of economic progress is essential. However, despite such economic success in the last decade and half, the regime's commitment towards democracy has quickly dwindled to oblivion. In the same time frame (that I referred as the second decade), where EPRDF's democratic developmentalism, is put into practice, the ruling coalition's hold of the political power grew tremendously to the level of dominating the people's parliamentary seats hundred percent. Moreover, we have also seen from the literature on this form of economic model that the role institutions play in realizing the potential of developmental paradigms is extremely important. But this leads to the question that in the case of Ethiopia, where are the such institutions that are critically needed if developmental states are to succeed? Of course, they are either non-existent or new and pre-mature to handle the requirements of the demands of such a model, which requires that such a void must be filled in one way or another.

Interestingly, however, here is what comes the role of the party endowments of the EPRDF, the growing transformation in the state economic enterprises in their role in the economy, contradicting the party's initial commitment towards liberalization primarily through privatization. Moreover, the growing role of the military in the economy, as indicated above, could eventually become one of our explanations to our answers for the question, 'where are such institutions'. Such topics will therefore have to be addressed in more detail. However, in the next section, I present

how the revolutionary democracy and developmental state paradigms played out via the economic policies of the regime in the first and second decades and assess their impact on the group rights promotion agenda of the ruling coalition as they played out in the country's new federal setting.

### **9.5 EPRDF Coalition's Economic policies, Programs and Ethnic Federalism in the First and Second Decades**

As we discuss the first decade in EPRDF's economic policies that the coalition adopted and implemented, let's recall that the political elites' predetermined goal was focused in delivering the needed policies that would change the lives of citizens that were part of the neglected masses by the previous regimes. Hence, raising the level of economic equality was the primary issue and part and parcel of the group rights agenda that gave extended emphasis on ethnicity. The next episode in realizing such an agenda was to create the ethnic federal arrangement, and make the newly created regional states the center of the ruling coalition's vision for economic success. As I indicated in my discussion of the TPLF's leftist past and revolutionary democratic economic agenda, however, it is critical that we see what segments of the Ethiopian society the regime targeted to help with the realization of its economic programs. In that regard, we find that the peasantry and rural Ethiopia in general become the focus of the ruling coalition. Hence, the first of the major eye opening laws would be directed on the issue of land. And the major economic policy directions would also focus on agriculture led economy and ways of improving agricultural outputs of the peasantry while working on making the lives of people in this sector better than before and working to ensure the most important goal of 'food sufficiency' that would help combat the recurrent famine that usually impacted the rural areas.

The first of the economic policies to be introduced along the lines of the revolutionary democratic paradigm was the ‘Agricultural Development Led Industrialization’ economic policy that emerged immediately after the unveiling of the transitional government in 1991. Such economic policy, which EPRDF’s party program states as:

“To ensure that development is centered on the agricultural sector in recognition of the pivotal role of human capital in rapid and sustainable development, as most of the population is rural, and in further recognition of the fact that it is in agriculture that limited investment yields great returns in development. To ensure rapid development through land-use policy whereby farmers have sufficient farming land and that this resource would be put to optimal use with a view of protecting and preserving the environment”<sup>131</sup>

And the ruling coalition’s presentation of such views that ultimately pushed the introduction of their land and agricultural policy into fruition seemed convincing even for those who opposed rural centered programs, instead opting for industrialization focused economic programs that will both support the agricultural sector as well as the growth of manufacturing. Regardless of that however, such programs ensued and would be put in place by erasing Dergue’s land policy that many had considered an upgrade from the imperial era’s land related policies that had proclaimed land as the possession of the state whereby the aristocracy had much say in its use and distribution. Therefore, the military regime efforts of land distribution and easing of restriction on the land use as a response to the famed ‘land to the tiller’ slogan of the student movement that helped oust the imperial regime were given deserved credits.

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<sup>131</sup> For more see EPRDF’s party program on page 11. The program can be accessed on: <https://zelalemkibret.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/eprdf-program.pdf>.

To the contrary, The EPRDF regime declared that land now would be re-nationalized (Harbeson 2005). And the rationale in declaring so, according to EPRDF would be to protect the peasantry was that, the farmers are too illiterate and too ill-trained of the land market, that protection of such a wealth must be the ultimate responsibility of the government, therefore the EPRDF. One way to protect the farmers therefore would be to focus on improving the yields that come out of small holding agriculture which is the case in the country.<sup>132</sup> Moreover, EPRDF also declares that land cannot be sold or exchanged with a minor exception where the Prime Minister at the time, Meles Zenawi, who had stated that while those in the north are owners of the land although not allowed to sell or exchange it, those in the south would not be considered owners of the land although they can retain it indefinitely.<sup>133</sup>

An economist by profession and a long serving bureaucrat in Ethiopia's Ministry of Agriculture, interviewee number-thirteen, however, states that, "the EPRDF and its leaders' intention from the beginning when it comes to the renationalization of land was mainly for the purpose of its political agenda of benefiting those ethnicities that they had considered the victims of the old land policies from previous administrators that they considered had allegedly helped the Amhara farmers although that was not the case. Hence, for EPRDF land nationalization serves to important goals. One is that it helps the ruling coalition to reward the loyalists and its patrons across the new regional states that are now formed along ethnic lines. Secondly, it effectively serves the purpose of punishing those whom the regime thinks had benefited a lot during their ownership of land

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<sup>132</sup> Meles Zenawi's speech: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HIT\\_jgROiXw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HIT_jgROiXw).

<sup>133</sup> Such views of the PM Meles Zenawi can also be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDrZpaSMCPE>.

during the Dergue era.”<sup>134</sup> In fact, as the individual indicated in the interview, the regime had first embarked upon the redistribution of land in the North, mainly in Amhara populated rural areas where the land would be first taken from a given household that had been considered wealthy, in Ethiopia’s rural standards and its possessions would be distributed to another household that was considered to have owned less of it. According to an individual whose family relied on their farming practices, interviewee number-eleven, stated to me that, “my family who had owned about thirty acres of farming land were deprived of their land possessions and left with only twelve acres, because they were fortunate since any member of the family were not found to be a member of the Dergue’s worker’s party. However, those who were found to be former members of a ruling class would be only left with four acres of land for being ‘old regime bureaucrats’ a name that was given to those farmers who were perceived to support the old regime or served in any capacity in one of those farmers’ associations of old.”<sup>135</sup>

As we could see from the personal accounts of a former EPRDF civil servant and an individual descended from a family of farmers, in fact the ruling coalition had used the land policy to create new winners and losers, which seems the way the TPLF led EPRDF operates in much of its political practices. Although the notion of empowering group rights as a basis for most of its agenda, the practicality of the policies and implementation strategies align with much of the deception of the political elite that use the institutions they designed to create new patrons and sup-

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<sup>134</sup> The interview with interviewee number-thirteen occurred on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017, over telephone conversation and the location is withheld per agreement.

<sup>135</sup> The interview with interviewee number-eleven occurred in Atlanta GA, USA, in June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2017.

porters and punish others. The issue of land management in urban centers after decree that nationalized land emerged was also not any different from any of the rural area. In an email exchange with one of my interviewee respondents, interviewee number-ten, the individual stated that:

“In one of the week days in October 1998, a government cadre, who is of a Tigrayan origin, came to my textile shop in *Merkato*<sup>136</sup> and asked me if I can sell one of the compartments in my store. I told the individual that I have never advertised to sell any part of my shop and would not consider selling for any value. In the next week, three government officers came and put a ‘*tashigual*’ (closed) sign on one of my shops. I immediately went to the municipality, and asked for any explanation. But they were clueless as just as I was. After many trials in court, I was only scheduled to appeal after two years and in the meantime a section of my store would be occupied with someone who would start to wholesale the same products I was selling. I was hurt to the extreme and did not know what to do. Eventually, the court date arrived and I was asked by the presiding judge ‘for how long I had owned or occupied the store and I replied for over twenty-two years and indicated that it was also owned by my father before that for a longtime. The judge replied that, ‘well, if you had used the store for all this time, what would be the problem if others also try to use it for some years’. And he decided that I would lose the battle before the ‘court’ of law and I am left crying for all those years since then.”<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> *Merkato* is a large open market located in the heart of Addis Ababa, and it is considered the largest open market in Africa.

<sup>137</sup> The email exchange with interviewee number-ten occurred from June 17<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> of 2017.

As we could see from the individual's personal account above, the ruling coalition even treated the buildings as possessions of their particular owners while the land such buildings are erected as the government's. In general, the implementation of such policies would have far reaching consequences of creating new winners and losers in the EPRDF era. However, the impact of the policies at a greater level in the economy had also improved agricultural yields although that would not be substitute for the suffering that had also come to exist as a result of those same policies.

Here, it is important to note that what I attempted to show in the discussion above was that the regime's intentions of promotion of group rights came at a cost of violations directed against individuals' rights. Moreover, keeping the notion of what has strengthened EPRDF's chances of survival in mind, the regime's owning of the land provided a situation where the political elite who are on top of party owned businesses and on board of directors of state enterprises ease of using state owned land for expanding such ventures to their liking. Regardless of that however, coming back to analyzing the successes of the economic policies in EPRDF's revolutionary democracy era, we see that agricultural yield improved and investment on agriculture grew substantially at the back of a relative political stability in the first decade. Nonetheless, two contradictory evaluations of the agricultural led policy is discussed.

The first perspective is that such a policy had not faced problems because its logics were profoundly consistent with the leaders' ambitions and hard work and that had helped the country to transform itself from the old rent-seeking culture of economic development paradigms (Ohno 2009). And the other perspective counters that despite meagre level of success in productivity and development of capacity building programs that could better serve the long term economic agenda,

the policies have come short of their predetermined goals such as food-sufficiency and that the fact that the growth in productivity were immediately followed by abrupt decreases should alarm that the policies should not be recognized as overall successes (Zewdie 2015). These two diverging insights however, agree in principle, that the notion that agricultural policies that had focused on small-holding farmers was the right plot and that greater levels of lack of technological and institutional capacities were to blame for most of the failures.

Here, I argue that the main shortcoming of the assessments of such scholarly works that focused on the Agriculture Led Industrialization scheme is that the authors failed to consider the political climate and conduciveness for such programs to succeed. And that the assessments also took the political leaders' speeches as well as party programs and writing pieces on face value. Here, I would like to stress that my attempt is not to discredit such assessments in any way. Rather, as interviewee number-thirteen stated, "the regime's successes in certain measurable areas are attributed to the level of certain autonomy that few regional states had enjoyed in the implementation of such policies. In certain regions, where the ruling coalition had heavy handedly interfered, the results were utter failures. The level of decline in agricultural productivity that was seen in later years of the ADLI era was also a good example of the result of a growing party structure that effectively overshadowed the Ministry of Agriculture's bureaucracy at all levels and the growing involvement of party endowments that started to sell farmers fertilizers and scientifically improved seeds in exaggerated prices resulting in dissatisfaction and low motivations in the part of farmers."<sup>138</sup> Of course, in the later sections of the chapter, I will explain the role of party owned en-

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<sup>138</sup> The interview with interviewee number-thirteen occurred on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017, over telephone conversation and the location is withheld per agreement.

dowments' businesses in the country's economy, but as the primary information from the individual interviewee indicated when the interference of party officials and the party structure is significantly less, the policy implementation process yields better results and when the interferences are to the contrary, results show different outcomes.

In that regard, I reiterate that the political climate in general matters most and the magnitude of EPRDF dominance in the economic sphere shows that each and every aspect of policy formulation and implementation process starts with the ruling coalition and ends within itself. In that respect, the scenario in which the federal structure that comprises the four regional states that are administered by four member parties of the EPRDF coalition, along side what I refer as the 'so called developing states' that are run by the ruling coalition's affiliate parties' bureaucracies are growingly dominated by the party structure are important to consider. Because, bureaucratic patrons of the regime serving the interests of such a centralist party organization, have led to EPRDF's dominance of the economic sphere just as the political one in a more efficient fashion resulting in the ruling elites' increasing success in the creation of a conducive and solid ground for their survivalist ambitions.

In the advent of the new millennia, much of the ruling coalition's rhetoric and propaganda in selling the ideals of revolutionary democracy and its successive policies that were based on the original ADLI economic scheme slowed down. Much of the successive economic plans that one after another by building from each other's successes and lessons of their failures had to be transformed. Prime Minister Zenawi, who was the chief ideologue, propagandist in chief and strong and well respected and feared leader of the ruling coalition, started to make rounds about the need

to transform the country's economy and the lives of its citizens via the adaptation of the developmental state economic growth and development paradigm. Recalling the earlier interview that I presented of (interviewee number-two) from my field work, the transition from revolutionary democracy towards developmental stateness was seamless because nothing significant actually evolved in terms of EPRDF's economic ideology.

Interviewee number-two has a point in that the successive programs under ADLI had also prepared the regime to move towards its plan of adopting developmental state economic goals that are more demanding of the government's interference in all aspects of the economic sector. To mention the most notable of the policies that followed the ADLI strategy, the Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program (SDPRP) that served as the first five year plan and the **Plan for Accelerated and Sustainable Development to End Poverty (PASDEP)** which was then set out by the EPRDF to meet the donor nations' demands according to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were partly successful in driving the country's economy towards double digit economic growth.<sup>139</sup> However, in fairness to my assessment of the ruling coalition's new economic master plan that the political elite would eventually refer as Growth and Transformation Plans (GTPs), the new economic direction comes calling for increased spending in infrastructural development and expansion of industrialization schemes via the formation of new industrial villages and dry ports across the main trade routes of the nation, to mention few of the examples. Hence, such new economic directions while led to the emergence of mega projects mainly in the

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<sup>139</sup> EPRDF's as well as international Organizations' (Mainly WB and IMF) touting of double digit growth have also been met different alternative facts that put the whole growth into question. However, as most of the MDGs' indicators have shown, the growth in the economic sphere cannot be debated regardless of the failures on predetermined goals such as, 'ending poverty'?

energy sector, the rehabilitation of rail roads, increase in thousands of kilometers of road construction, and the construction and real estate sector, they also led to new and critical challenges that put in to further questions of the growing role of the party apparatus in further growing the party endowments, the military's arrival in the economic sector by taking responsibility of managing some of the state enterprises. Moreover, the further strengthening of clientelistic relations as well as emergence of corporatist elements that have now seized greater influence as they embarked on working with the government with the creation of joint ventures. What is also essential to bear in mind is however, the regime's declared commitment towards democratic development though such developmental state paradigm that they mostly refer as democratic developmentalism.

In the first of the GTP that the government announced, the plan states that:

“The country's long term vision, achievements of PASDEP and lessons drawn from its implementation are the bases for conceiving the next five-year Growth and Transformation Plan. The plan has also been prepared considering growth constraining factors that emerged in the course of implementation and external shocks. Ethiopia's long-term vision is “to become a country where democratic rule, good-governance and social justice reigns, upon the involvement and free will of its peoples; and once extricating itself from poverty and becomes a middle-income economy.” Its vision in the economic sector is “to build an economy which has a modern and productive agricultural sector with enhanced technology

and an industrial sector that plays a leading role in the economy; to sustain economic development and secure social justice; and, increase per capita income of citizens so that it reaches at the level of those in middle-income countries” (page 7).<sup>140</sup>

As clearly indicated in the mission and vision of the country’s policy direction, the regime still discusses the need of building the necessary ingredients for democratic development while as I stated earlier, the coalition is freely roaming with its domination of the country’s politics with a highly strained and incapable opposition offering no challenge whatsoever. Regardless of that, the regime kept its focus on agriculture as a driving force behind the new industrialization scheme and the country would sustain its registration of double digit economic growth for continuing years. With its explanations of the lessons drawn from the implementation of GTP-1, the regime further declares why the government needs to increase its commitment to devote public resources in owning and spending on the infrastructures of the state thereby owning the economy and coming in against the liberalization of the economic sector that was promised in the first decade. In explaining the GTP-2, the government’s documents states that:

“The positive achievements of GTP I and lesson drawn from its implementation have been taken as input in the formulation of the Second Growth and Transformation Plan (GTPII). The national vision; existing national and sectoral policies, strategies and programs; performance under GTPI; commitment to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and regional and international economic collaboration initiatives were the basis for the formulation the Second Growth and Transformation Plan (GTPII) through high level political leadership, public participation & ownership. The formulation of the GTPII has also passed

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<sup>140</sup> The first GTP is available at: [http://www.ethiopians.com/Ethiopia\\_GTP\\_2015.pdf](http://www.ethiopians.com/Ethiopia_GTP_2015.pdf).

through broad based consultation processes with relevant stakeholders at both regional & federal levels to enrich its content & forge national ownership of the Plan. Subsequently, the final version of the plan was approved by the council of ministers endorsed the Parliament to guide development endeavors in the country during the next five years, 2015/16-2019/20. The major objective of GTP II is to serve as a spring board towards realizing the national vision of becoming a low middle-income country by 2025, through sustaining the rapid, broad based and inclusive economic growth, which accelerates economic transformation and the journey towards the country's renaissance" (page ix).<sup>141</sup>

While GTP-2 decreased expectations in terms of reaching levels of middle income countries, by stating now that "reaching low middle-income country level by 2025", as I indicated earlier, the deficiencies, per the chapter's goals, of such programs impact as transpired in the implementation process, must be addressed. In that regard the next section of the chapter focuses on three important issues. Firstly, I address how such programs impacted the rights issues in the country. Secondly, I assess how the growing involvement of the state in the economy could be explained in terms of the party endowments ever-growing dominance of the economy. And lastly, I present the issue and challenges of management of state enterprises and growing corporatist pressure. All in all, such points will at the end serve the same purposes, i.e., a further assessment of the federal arrangement and economic relations between various sectors and how such aggregated factors weigh in the explanations of authoritarian survival in broad terms.

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<sup>141</sup> The GTP-2 plan can be accessed at: [http://dagethiopia.org/new/images/DAG\\_DOCS/GTP2\\_English\\_Translation\\_Final\\_June\\_21\\_2016.pdf](http://dagethiopia.org/new/images/DAG_DOCS/GTP2_English_Translation_Final_June_21_2016.pdf).

## 9.6 EPRDF's Economic Programs and their impact on People' Rights

From much of my discussions thus far in part-two of the dissertation, and goals of assessing how the institutional design of ethnic federalism and its practical unveiling over time assisted the success of survivalist programs of the regime, I have attempted to show that all of such programs of the TPLF-EPRDF regime start with their declared goals of the promotion of group rights. What is puzzling however, is that we see such promotions of group rights agenda not only fail to materialize in practical terms, but also witnessed that the rights agenda seems to have been purposely used by the regime to curtail opposing interests that are perceived as threats against the ruling coalition. According to interviewee number-seven, who works in one of the state-owned printing presses, the ruling coalition arranges series of panels for journalists who work for state owned medias, training sessions that are primarily designed to indoctrinate them with the ruling coalition's political and economic programs while simultaneously instructing them that critics of such programs should be considered anti-development. For instance, when I pressed the individual, about the reactions of the fellow journalists that work for the state media agencies, the interviewee responds that, "the regime in general and the party-member bureaucrats who manage such media institutions in particular, praise those individuals who keenly accept the 'reform' training and consider them developmental-journalists. However, at the same time, they look at those who question the importance of such training sessions conducted by the regime as restriction of press freedom, as potential enemies that must be replaced or fired at some point after the training sessions."<sup>142</sup> The individual's account in fact aligns with what I had discussed in chapter seven where I detailed the methods of the ruling coalition that are used in subverting the bureaucracy's independence

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<sup>142</sup> The conversation with interviewee number-seven took place in Amsterdam, the Netherlands in July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

while turning the bureaucrats into regime patrons. The methods of rewards used and the threats indicated with regards to those who work for the state media agencies also fall along the lines that we saw in the discussion of EPRDF's manipulation of the state bureaucracy.

I believe that the above explanation in terms of how the regime uses the government owned media, which is administered by key party leaders, via effective manipulation of the journalists is very essential to our understandings of the party programs' impact on the issue of rights in general. Because, my understanding of how such rights violations across the board are suppressed and hence not addressed mainly starts with either the lack of reporting of such violations or the under-reporting of them. The news production in the state owned and party administered Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), according to interviewee number-seven's further account, we could see that rights violations by the regime would remain unknown unless and otherwise reported by independent journalists, opposition media outlets and the international media. In that regard, interviewee number seven states that, "every news item that we prepare must pass through extreme levels of censorship and approved by politicians of the ruling coalition. Even at times, someone from EPRDF leadership would actually call the news desk and demands for news broadcast readers to read over the prepared news items over the telephone and the politician further instructs the reader to make final corrections to the news item, which might also include an order to cancel the broadcasting of a certain news or two altogether. This mainly happens when the international media or opposition media discuss rights violations that mostly appear when the government violently evicts minority ethnic groups from their habitats. And again, at times, when such indigenous locals resist the government's instructions of vacating the areas that are needed for certain development projects, the military would burn villages and commits massacres. Hence, the regime's ruling elites' make sure that the state owned media agencies across all print or digital

platforms, provide coordinated responses that not only attempt to legitimize the regime's actions but also in ensuring such reports paint those who resisted orders as partners of anti-peace and development elements."<sup>143</sup> The overall implication of the above interview respondent's account, I argue, is that the EPRDF sets certain political and economic programs or policies, implements them the EPRDF way by co-opting the regional state and federal bureaucracies, and the successes and failures of any of such programs will be prepared and announced by the EPRDF propaganda machines in a way that only portray the successes of the regime.

Listing the regime's rights violations here would not serve much to the goals of the chapter as the mere fact that such violations exist could suffice. However, most of the types of violations of the regime against the group and individuals' rights, occur in two most important ways, among possible many others. The first challenges as a result of these new economic programs mostly in the second decade resulted in forced evictions of many citizens without any prior consultations or agreements and at times even without notice. Many small ethnic groups have lost their entire livelihoods as a result. Small holding farmers who lived nearby urban centers were also forced to leave their homes and farm lands without proper compensation or at times when they ask questions, they will be thrown out to jails or face the fortunes of exile and extreme poverty. The second challenge, while similar in its impact is however, unique and that concerns the phenomenon of land grab, which deprived many groups' rights to farm lands, restricted investment opportunities for the citizenry, considerable environmental impact and again resulted in many forced evictions. As indicated above, those organizations and organized societies that question such state sponsored programs are extremely suppressed. As David Turton (?), who studied the state owned projects of

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<sup>143</sup> The conversation with interviewee number-seven took place in Amsterdam, the Netherlands in July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017.

hydro-electric dams in the Lower Omo Valley of Southern Ethiopia and the impacts of such projects on groups of ethnicities in the area states, such projects, despite look well intentioned, are understated and their ecological and societal impacts are extremely damaging.<sup>144</sup> By also relying, in part on the seminal arguments by James Scott (1984), Turton captures the general picture of such development programs in his elaborated statement that reads:

“There is no doubt that the leaders of the Ethiopian state are sincere believers in the ‘civilizational discourse’ of state expansion: they genuinely believe that their plans for river basin development in the lower Omo will improve the human condition of its residents. It therefore becomes relevant to ask, as Scott does in *Seeing like a state*, why ‘so many well-intended schemes to improve the human condition have gone so tragically awry’ (1998: 4). His answer is that ‘the most tragic episodes of state initiated social engineering’ have resulted from a combination of four elements, two of which are present in all modern nation-states: the ‘administrative ordering of nature and society’ and a belief that the growing satisfaction of human needs can be achieved through scientific and technological progress.... The two crucial additional elements are, first ‘an authoritarian state that is willing and able to use the full weight of its coercive power’ and, second, ‘a prostrate civil society’. It is not difficult to recognize the presence of both these elements in the history of Ethiopian state-building in the southwest, from the first incursions of Abyssinian armies at the end of the nineteenth century, to the present government’s efforts to curb the activity of civil society organizations in the areas of social justice and human rights (page 12).

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<sup>144</sup> See page 12 of Turton’s article on: [http://www.coolground.org/data%20for%20archive/In the Shadow of Leviathan.pdf](http://www.coolground.org/data%20for%20archive/In%20the%20Shadow%20of%20Leviathan.pdf).

What Turton eloquently described above, in my view, serves two important purposes in our overall understanding of the Ethiopian state. Firstly, the author indicates that such groups in Southern Ethiopia, that are impacted by the development programs of the EPRDF coalition under its developmental state paradigm, had also experienced similar situations even going back hundreds of years ago when Menelik II's army invaded the area through his expansionist policy in his state-building agenda. I argue that despite the EPRDF's political and economic programs calling for the promotion of group rights, their actions in practical terms however, tell a different story. This in effect makes the ruling elite not any different from the previous regimes. Secondly, the author's argument also concurs what I had already described above in terms of the regime's suppression of those who either flat out protest or demand explanations. Such rights' violations as a result of the economic development programs of the ruling coalition are too many to list here. As Turton mentioned above, I cannot also deny that the regime's actions could also emanate from their very desire of embarking on the successes of the programs they envisioned and implemented. However, the fact that we see the regime avoids its commitment towards the rights issues for the sake of such programs without consulting the locals, or when they do, without addressing the demands of the people remains very much a problem.

Here, it is also vital to bring back the discussions of how the EPRDF effectively uses the federal ethnic setting in terms of the development programs stated in its grandiose visions in the GTP-I and GTP-II. The EPRDF led government, mostly controls the developmental programs using the regional state bureaucracy's capacities for the implementation of such programs. For instance, the Ministry of Agriculture would disseminate guidelines in the implementation of certain programs to each of the Departments of Agriculture of the regional states. Of course, different circumstances across many of the regional states might require different guidelines. For the

EPRDF, however, that matters less than its successes in development ambitions resulting in regional states' implementation of such programs. In that respect, successes of such programs happen to vary from a regional state to another.

In that regard, according to interviewee number-six, who worked for the Oromia Regional State and traveled across many regional states for work, “the level of political autonomy that the regional states enjoy within the post-1991 federal setting does not in any way resemble to how it was supposed to look per what is written in the federal constitution. We have always been aware of the discrepancies of what the rules say and how they are practiced and had remained content with it. The problem however, is that the government’s Growth and Transformation Plan and its implementation strategies had further stripped the powers of the regional states in the economic schemes the country.”<sup>145</sup> As it is appropriate, one might ask, ‘why the regime fails to abide by the its own rule books?’, and the explanation, to my understanding remains simple. Because, as I stated time and again, I reiterate that the regime’s political elites are fixated on the need to acquire further legitimacy from the populace by showcasing the successes of their economic development programs regardless of at what costs were such achievements become realities.

I have also asked my interviewee about the regional political elites’ views of the violations of the rights of groups in their respective regional administrations. Interviewee number-six states that, “in the world of EPRDF, one major rule stands above everything and that is what they refer as party-discipline. Keep in mind that whatever economic programs and guidelines are distributed to the regional states, the messages are not considered as if they are arriving from the federal

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<sup>145</sup> My interview with interviewee number-six was conducted on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017 in Atlanta, GA, United States and a follow-up interview was also conducted on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

government. Instead, given the party structure is deeply rooted across all levels of government, we all understand that such messages are coming from EPRDF's headquarters in Addis Ababa. Therefore, not abiding by such guidelines, regardless of the questions we have on how some of the programs would impact our citizens, is out of the question."<sup>146</sup> What we see from the individual's account indeed shows that regardless of the consequences of the programs on the people's rights or the varying circumstances under which such programs had to be implemented across regions, the regional elites and the bureaucracies they oversee are there to only to serve the party interest.

Thus far, my discussions on how the EPRDF's economic programs evolved in spite of the fact that they are marred by rights violations could also be consistently seen with regards to what I earlier described as the other challenge, i.e., the issue of land grab. The overall impact of such a challenge across both the rights issues as well as in further diminishing the role of the regional states that are the owners of the land within their respective states is quite massive. The federal government, effectively controlled by the ruling coalition has asserted its rights of using any land at any regional state for the purposes of federally initiated economic development programs. In other words, that also indicates that when the EPRDF decides to provide investment land for a foreign or domestic economic partner, it can do so without any restrictions given its rights of claiming any land for development purposes. Interviewee number-two, who has worked for the regime for over two decades and provided me with extensive interview however, do not see any problem as such. In that regard, the individual agrees with the frequently mentioned reasoning for the EPRDF's unrestricted use of regional state resources. The interviewee states that, "the areas that the federal government had already indicated for development projects are mostly located

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<sup>146</sup> My interview with interviewee number-six was conducted on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2017 in Atlanta, GA, United States and a follow-up interview was also conducted on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

within the territories of under-developed regions where the administrative capacities of their respective bureaucracy are limited. Therefore, the government perceives that since the federal government has such a capacity it becomes the regime's responsibility to make sure such areas are not left far behind the development schemes mainly in comparison with other regional states where their bureaucracies are well established."<sup>147</sup> To the contrary, interviewee number-six disagrees by saying that, "even in the Oromia Regional State, where I worked for many years, the EPRDF's approach in processes of the implementation of its programs is very much similar." Of course, despite such differing opinions from both of the interviews, reaching a certain conclusion would not be challenging given where much of the discussion presented leads us to.

In general, the take away remains that despite how much the economic development programs based on EPRDF's economic paradigms are well intentioned, the regime's successes in its interests, in terms of gaining the positive acknowledgment of the public on the accomplishments of such programs is not to be debated. The level of legitimacy acquired through the development programs and implemented through the effective utilization of the party structure across all levels of the federal setting therefore undoubtedly has put the EPRDF in much better position for political survival. Henceforth, in the next section, I present how the EPRDF coalition's member political parties emerged as major forces in the economy via their management of the party endowments. Moreover, I also assess the role the state enterprises play in the economy and the ruling coalition's management of the said enterprises that further continue to put the incumbent political elite dominating both the political and economic spheres.

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<sup>147</sup> The interview with interviewee number-two was conducted in March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017, in Washington D.C.

## 9.7 EPRDF's Party-Endowments and State Enterprises: The New Challenges

Whether through the economic policies that made agricultural productivity a central focus, or the economic programs designed to attract foreign investors to increase food production, which is now considered nothing but 'land-grab', the ruling coalition has failed to meet its predetermined goals (Lavers 2012). At the center of everything however, as I clearly indicated early on, the country's land policy and the fact that it is nationalized leaves the property of land as the sole possession of the regime. And this fact remains the greater challenge in impacting the farmers' productivity mainly due to insecurity in property rights. If property rights are considered part of the group rights promotion package, as one should, we could definitely use that in the larger narrative of that the dissertation tackles. On a flip side however, the regime's land policy has created an opportunity of greater wealth creation for the party owned endowments that happen to enjoy unrestricted levels of freedom that private entrepreneurs or investors do not. For EPRDF, therefore, issues with regards to the policy of land are non-negotiable. As Devereux et al (2005), who analyzed economic stagnation in the Ethiopian state and land policies across the previous regimes stated, although the regime has outlined ways to protect the peasant owned small-holding farms, it also seems very much rigid with regards to even correcting the flaws of some of the policies on the topic. By mentioning the words of the Prime Minister, who ruled the state and the EPRDF for over two decades, the authors clearly stated that:

“Prime Minister Meles argues that allowing land to become a tradable commodity would inevitably result in an ‘urbanization of rural poverty’. When the next major drought strikes, hungry families with nothing else to exchange for food will be forced to sell their

land and, being displaced, will then migrate in enormous numbers to cities like Addis Ababa, where they will survive in squalor in squatter camps, with little prospect of securing formal employment. This is related to the “land as safety net” argument: even if tiny farms are inadequate for self-sufficiency, the family plot does provide some proportion of subsistence needs, and this safety net would be removed if land can be sold. Ideologically, the EPRDF shares the Derg’s opposition to large landowners, and they believe that commercializing land will inexorably concentrate ownership in the hands of a minority. In his end-of-year report to Parliament in June 2004, Meles announced that the privatization of land in Ethiopia would take place only ‘over EPRDF’s dead body’” (page 122).

The ruling coalition’s notion that the privatization of land could lead to exodus of farmers into cities and then rural poverty transforming into urban poverty could very well hold water, if their fears are to happen in reality, especially in absence of ways to protecting as well as transforming the lives of such farmers that are utilizing very backward ploughing mechanisms and dependent on rain-fed farming practices. As we could see from the above quote, the problem however, is that the regime considers correcting the flaws of its policies not only as unnecessary but more than dangerous to their political existence. The language of the late Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi proves just that. The question now becomes why is it privatization of land could be considered a danger to the survivalist political and economic programs of the EPRDF? And is it just only on the issue of land that the regime forbids privatization or the scope could even encompass other economic sectors? The answers to both, I argue could be attributed to the presence of political party run endowments and state enterprises that are also run by the political elites in the ruling coalition and the protection of such party run entities would become priorities to the regime. As

Berhanu Abegaz (2011) explains, the issue of privatization of land and the private sectors' involvement in the economy could very well impact the survivalist ambitions of the incumbents. The author states:

“... the impact of Party Owned Businesses on long-term wealth creation and distribution revolves around four empirically measurable variables: regime insecurity, its organizational capacity and discipline, its ideology, and the degree of centralization of the state it inherited. Monoparties in formerly socialist countries, which peddled universalistic class-based ideologies and faced no organized opposition from private business elite, needed only to focus on national defense, economic growth and the provision of basic needs to all in order to earn legitimacy to rule. Similarly, vanguard but narrowly based parties in market-led economies, on the other hand, are compelled to stand on multiple economic legs (private, party, state) to mitigate deep-seated political insecurity. Furthermore, the nexus of the four factors noted above suggest three possible paths of evolution: a paragonist path favoring a competitive politico-economic system, a parasitic path of entrenchment of organized interests that results in a poverty-tyranny trap, or an unstable mutualist path of coexistence of state, party, and private actors” (page 3).

Indeed, as the author makes it clear, insecure regimes rely on such mechanisms like party businesses and state enterprises through which they not only seek the blessings of the ruled, but also rely to avert existential threats that could come from privatization schemes. The fact that the most dominant party within the ruling coalition, TPLF has not completely left its socialist roots could also be an indication that its political elites might have learned from the mistakes of the old socialist republics. It was within that respect that in post-1991 Ethiopia, the EPRDF created party

endowments by directly assigning unaudited government finances but also strengthened them throughout the last two decades to the level of becoming the heavy weights in the economic sphere all together (Legesse 2016). Such party businesses are led by party appointed politicians. And such leaders of party endowments have effectively used the party structure to grow their political party's influence in the Ethiopian economy. Moreover, they have also effectively continued to make acquisitions of formerly state owned enterprises and exploited the absence of fair economic competition to their favor. And when some level of completion occurs, the political parties undoubtedly would eliminate it by using the coercive powers of the state (Legesse 2016).

The level of unfair economic competition that the presence of such political party owned endowments would create were even discussed among the political elites in few of EPRDF's retreat camps that are also used for training and brainstorming sessions for new political programs. According to Ermias Legesse (2016), a former EPRDF member who also served as a deputy minister, in one of those retreats, the Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi was asked by fellow EPRDF leaders about one of those endowment that now has greater share of the Ethiopian economy and administered by his wife, former First Lady and member of parliament, Ms. Azeb Mesfin. However, not only the Prime Minister downplayed the issue but also stated that EFFORT (Endowment for the Rehabilitation of Tigray) is actually facing huge problems that would endanger its existence in the long term. Therefore, according to Meles, the political leaders that were asking such questions should not be concerned about a 'failing organization's' potential impact in the economy. His responses, according to the author, were extremely untrue and all the participants in the meeting were quite aware of that. But, the usual problem in the EPRDF camp is that, none of them would have the courage to confront or even question the Prime Minister, who was the chairman of both the TPLF and EPRDF in all the twenty-one years that he served as the head of state. Because,

for such elites, confronting TPLF's highly revered leader would result in unwanted consequences. Today, such party endowments are growing tremendously and now are economic forces that have effectively dominated the competition.

One major aspect that is also missing in much of the discussion on the problems associated with the party owned businesses is how much negative impact they would incur on the group rights promotion agenda. A university professor, who had taught courses in both the public and private colleges in the capital Addis Ababa, interviewee number-eighteen, argues that, "when it comes to the increasing economic influence and dominance of the endowments, one particular issue ignored by both the regime and critics alike is that of how such party owned businesses that belong four of the EPRDF member parties impact different ethnic groups' economic rights. Besides the four regions, the remaining regional states that are considered developing are run by EPRDF affiliate political parties that do not have any role in the economy"<sup>148</sup>. According to the interviewee, this is extremely significant because, according to him, "if the endowments run by EPRDF's four parties are primarily designed to aid the development efforts of those four regions, their affiliate parties' in other regions lacking such economic capacity would leave them to continue to depend on the blessings of the EPRDF in their development efforts." Indeed, the point raised by the individual shows that such regions that are being administered by the affiliate parties in fact depend solely on EPRDF'S party structure in receiving goods and services that they could have obtained from the private sector. Because, according to the interviewee, whether a given economic sector is dominated by party endowments or state enterprises that the ruling elites administer as board chairmen

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<sup>148</sup> The interview with interviewee number-eighteen was conducted in June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017 in Atlanta, United States.

or directors, the delivery of goods and services across all levels of the federal setting must pass through the party structure. Hence, we further see that the party structure is not only about ensuring the continuity of the ruling coalition's political dominance, but also the economic aspect.

In a vital example provided by one of my interviews, interviewee number twenty-four, who had worked for Amhara Regional State's Bureau of Agriculture, stated that when *Tiret* Corporate (endowment owned by ANDM) involves in the business of distributing fertilizers and seeds to the farmers, the endowment uses warehouses and offices that belong to the regional administration. The point however, is that the endowment never pays rents for using such facilities or for its use of the regional state bureaucrats in selling its products<sup>149</sup>. Here, what is important to note is that distinguishing what the state owns from what the party owns is a difficult task. As we saw in earlier chapters, the lines that differentiate the state from the ruling coalition party are very much blurred.

The problems that we saw in the discussion above with regards to the endowments could also be attributed to state owned enterprises. With EPRDF's promises of liberalization of the economy curbed by its adoption of developmental state economic growth and development strategies, the ruling elites control of state enterprises has grown enormously. The state (EPRDF), with its ownership of land and the absence of bureaucratic hurdles would also mean that the growth of such enterprises have essentially become boundless. All of the state enterprises in the country, which includes among others, Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation (EPCO), Ethiopian Telecommunications Corporation (ETC), Ethiopian Roads Authority, Ethiopian Airlines and soon are run by board of directors headed by senior political elites within the EPRDF coalition (Legesse 2016).

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<sup>149</sup> The interview with interviewee number twenty-four was conducted in a telephone interview conducted on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

Per what a former minister (interviewee number twenty-three) that had also had the responsibility of closely monitoring and controlling certain state enterprises, but currently lives in exile informed me, although the board that administers a given state enterprise had to provide quarterly reports directly to the minister's office, that has never occurred to him even once<sup>150</sup>. According to the individual, all such reports are directly delivered to the Prime Minister's office all while bypassing other authorities in the chain of command. Even after the death of Meles Zenawi, according to the interviewee, TPLF had become effective in installing its influential political leaders. And such leaders who are now serving as advisors to Prime Minister Haile Mariam Dessalegn are the ones that are receiving such reports from the state enterprises. This indeed shows that the situation is even worse than before given the Prime Minister, who is now the head of state of the country, does not have a clear understanding of how such huge economic cash-cows of the state are actually operating. In fact, I believe that no further evidence should be needed to understand the magnitude of political power the ruling coalition and most importantly, the TPLF holds in the Ethiopian state.

Interviewee number two, who is one of the most senior elites in the ruling coalition, disagrees with the assessment of other interviewees, especially when it comes to endowments. According to him, it is unfortunate that the endowments are actually referred to as party-owned while the real owners are the peoples of the regional states. However, from my preliminary research of the party-owned endowments in Ethiopia based on the secondary research data and my extended conversations with former bureaucrats, interviewee number-two's accounts are found to be far from truth but attempts to elude.

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<sup>150</sup> I conducted the interview with number twenty-three on Saturday, July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017. The interview location could not be indicated, per agreement.

The ruling coalition's dominance of the economic sphere that ranges from the party endowments to its control of state enterprises, has actually grown in the last decade even further with the emergence of the Ethiopian military as another economic power. Given the scope of the chapter, discussing the process to show how the military also emerged as an economic giant, could very much be a daunting task, thus understanding its ramifications should be left for another project. However, such dominance of the ruling coalition in the economic sphere and the regime's boundless intervention in the economy, its take-over of the properties of various groups in the name of further urbanization and industrializations schemes have led to the emergence of popular resentment especially in two of the economically and political important regions i.e., Oromia and Amhara regional states. Especially, the massive protest that broke out in the regional state of Oromia in summer of 2016, protesting the expansion of the city limits of Addis Ababa, which would have evicted Oromo farmers from their historical lands were too big that the regime had to use its trusted military and police forces to crush them. Many peaceful protesters were met with live ammunition and hundreds were murdered. As I stated at the end of last chapter, such new popular resentments, although now effectively crushed, still remain as time-bomb situations that could further tantalize and challenge EPRDF's authoritarian rule. In that regard, I believe that the growing role of the military and its commanders in the economy might signal that the regime's intentions in pushing the military in administering some of the most important state enterprises and its use of the military owned factories in taking over vital state projects emanated from its sole desire to gain the support of the army in the event of the rise of popular uprisings. Of course, the fact that the military's top echelons are highly dominated by ethnic Tigrayans that keep the interests of the TPLF in mind at all times could make one to believe the military's involvement in the economy does not mean much any way. However, I argue that given instances of military's control of economic engines in

other countries have led to the survival of the regimes in power in those states, it would not be surprising to argue EPRDF might also see in its military as last resort to ensure its survival ambitions.

In general, in this chapter, I have tried to show that besides the ruling coalition's political dominance through its manipulation of the federal arrangement, it has also designed effective ways that led to its dominance of the economic sphere. From its economic ideologies that evolved from revolutionary democracy to developmental state growth strategies, and its efforts to control the economy via its endowments and its skilful management of state enterprises, the ruling coalition have indeed created a well functioning deep state. However, we have also witnessed that the regime's actions are not representative of its political and economic promises given the failure of its group rights agenda, that was indicated via the instances I discussed in terms of the rise of popular anger. Therefore, I argue that as the discussions in this the chapter clearly indicate, for the EPRDF's ruling coalition, its survival ambitions and its ceaseless efforts to acquire further legitimacy to its rule outweighs citizens' varying economic and political interests. For the regime, if the people are to enjoy their economic and political rights, then EPRDF has to remain with its grips of political power. That would be the only option so it provides the answers needed for such popular demands.

## **10 CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSION**

Earlier in part-one of the dissertation, and the theoretical explanation presented, I argued that while the debate that centered on individual rights versus group rights was a healthy part of the discussions in the political discourse of the Ethiopian state. Nonetheless, the fact that the promotion of group rights somehow emerged as a 'winning idea' later paved the path to the creation

of winners and losers. The institutional solutions established to help that cause, as clearly presented throughout the project, came to reward regime loyalists and supporters and punish those perceived opposition and critics, as that becomes evident from the explanations in part-two of the dissertation. As I stated in my theoretical explanations, the elites' maneuver of the very institutional solutions they provided for their survivalist agenda have achieved those very elites some level of political stability they aspired and most importantly provided them a platform to succeed in their political survival ambitions through the mechanisms of co-optation prevalently seen across all levels of the federal structure.

Whether ethnic federalism is what exists in Ethiopian state, given the discussions presented until this point, could also be put into a question. Indeed, what I have presented thus far could effectively nullify the notion of its existence. What we saw from the extended discussions I presented throughout part-two of the dissertation, the situation indicates form of a federal setting and regional state-central government relations might just be in name only. However, it is very important to note that the fact that the regional states are designed along ethnic lines (regardless of the very small levels of administrative autonomy those regions enjoy), the issue of rights violations directed against minorities in different regional states (despite addressing the rights issues was the main drive behind such an institutional solution), and the fact that such a design was implemented with the impression that it could help the ruling elite's survivalist ambitions all could also validate why the system of governance and structure still remains embedded in the ethnic federal setting and why I argue that it needs to be studied in such a way. Moreover, even if the discussions could imply that federalism is only in name and that the centralist party structure is what is evidently there to see, I argue that the federal setting still must be considered as the most integral part of understanding contemporary Ethiopian politics in general and our efforts to understand the EPRDF

coalition's success in its survivalist ambitions in particular. Ethnic federalism as a government structure in the country, therefore is the enabling mechanisms for such an explanation of authoritarian survival. In that respect, in the last substantive chapters of part-two of the dissertation, I have addressed how the remaking of the Ethiopian state in post-1991 political era effectively safeguarded the ruling political elite even from the most pivotal challenges that they had to endure and survive mainly in the first two decades of their political rule. Indeed, I have also showed that that was possible as a result of the mechanisms implemented along the federal setting in place and the party structure that outmaneuvers the political structure at large.

To that end, I have presented how the Ethiopian state evolved under EPRDF's rule and how the regime under this ruling coalition used the country's political history as an important narrative. In such discussions of the historical narrative, we saw that the emergence of legitimate grievances as a result of political and economic inequality in the past were legitimized. However, remains critical to reiterate that the ruling coalition had seized such a fact as a greater opportunity to exploit for its survivalist ambitions. The fact that correcting the historical injustices were what led to the emergence of rebellion that carried what are referred as ethnic questions and grievances indeed makes the introduction of the institutional solutions from both political and economic realms less surprising even if the fact that such solutions were quite a departure from the pan-nationalist Ethiopian state of the old political regimes. Furthermore, I argued that explanations that centered among others on the persistence of political culture we see throughout the Ethiopian state, the strategic interests of the political elite and institutional approaches used by such elites all matter in equal measure. Hence, in this dissertation, I believe that the discussions presented are able to demonstrate just that through the use of various approaches in the study of democratization and authoritarian survival.

From the rights perspective, when looking at how the TPLF led EPRDF regime utilized what it introduced as an institutional solution to the historically challenging problems through its agenda of the promotion of group rights, we see that the coalition has even failed to deliver its own predetermined goals. As could be seen from different angles that I examined in part two of the dissertation in terms of the oppression of individuals and the impact on minority rights in the federal setting, the flaws in the electoral landscape, the fact that the line between the bureaucracy and the party structure is highly blurred, and the existence of patronage systems across all levels of the political spectrum, we can infer that the institutional solution of ethnic federalism has also failed to deliver the promises from the rights perspectives. Instead, what such an institutional solution accomplished was to reinforce the survivalist approaches of the ruling coalition while the country and its diverse groups remain at cross roads and attempting to foresee the future is an extremely difficult task.

As clearly seen from the extended discussions in the chapters presented, the ruling coalition, that has been ruling the nation since the post-1991 period has effectively utilized the ethnic federal arrangement for its survivalist political strategies. The fact that the TPLF, which is one member of the ruling coalition, controls the military and security apparatus of the state has also overshadowed any prospects of real and tangible reforms. As Christopher Clapham (2009) explains of how the challenges of the country at large could now be understood:

“The deeper problem facing Ethiopia is that it is now too complex and diverse a society to be managed without the extremely adept deployment of the political skills - of discussion, bargaining, compromise and simultaneous recognition of alternative sources of

authority - that are needed to create some kind of workable synthesis of the different elements of which it is composed” (page 191).

Clapham’s observation in fact shows that unless political dialogues become the norm and the EPRDF coalition understands the current ways of doing things are not sustainable in rapidly changing political climate both at home and at the international level, the repercussions of lacking a genuine political reform could further be very damaging. The country’s political actors both in opposition and within the ruling coalition have diverging views and reconciling the two is quite an extremely difficult task. This does not mean however, that no consensus on many politically relevant but sensitive issues could not be reachable. As long as every individual political actor or group seeks a common goal of building democratic institutions, work towards the promise of democracy and focus on the process of democratization, I do not see why the statuesque we are witnessing today remain the challenge with out a solution. As I have presented throughout the dissertation, the persistent nature of patterns of elite interaction within the Ethiopian state could in fact remain a problem. However, I am still adamant that by incorporating democratic values to their political party platforms with genuine intent, by employing tactics of political reconciliation embedded within the framework of give and takes, chances that such political actors can revive the democratic fortunes of the state moving forward. That is also what exactly the author quoted above transpired. One particular issue that explains the problem of lack of understanding among the elites when it comes to the future of the country is this notion of ‘we have to agree on everything’. Thus, the elites must also come to an understanding that most of the difficult issues that divide public opinion need to be left for the citizenry to decide. Periodic elections, besides their service in determining who takes particular offices, must also be considered as a platform for the people to vote

on series of important issues that remain challenging problems for the elites to reach certain level of agreements.

I reiterate that the Ethiopian state remains poor, unequal, and its political sphere demonstrates a ticking time-bomb that endangers the future of the country unless the most needed reforms are arriving anytime soon. Moreover, the issues I discussed in terms of the new developments that are now challenging the viability of federal model, that are mostly concerns in the evolving questions of identity and demands of equality and fairness that were heard across the greater Oromia and Amhara regions should also become the focus on the future of the federal model and how such developments play out would have a lot to say about how comparative politics researchers would look at the Ethiopian case moving forward. Because, such new challenges probable far-reaching consequences are yet to be determined.

However, such recent political developments also present two important junctures in the current state of politics in the country and that should not be overlooked. Firstly, the ethnic federal arrangement and the subsequent emergence of institutional maneuvering of the EPRDF elite has succeeded in terms of the coalition's survivalist goals. In that regard, such a structural solution created some level of stability and delivered authoritarian survival. Secondly, however, it is now clear that both the diverse groups in the country (especially, the Amharas and Oromos) and the ruling elite have now understood that such status quo is not sustainable, which provides the important story of the dissertation. And the takeaway becomes that the regime's understanding of the problems within the federal setting and the reemergence of questions of the political and economic inequality and questions of identity requires, (undoubtedly from the side of the regime), the need

to adopt new and creative political solutions that would enable the continuity of the ruling coalition's dominance. In that regard, the political elites had to make sure their domination of the economy through the regime's developmental state inspired economic programs. Moreover, the coming into fold of the country's military (which is loyal to the regime and dominated by TPLF leadership) into playing a vital role in the economy indicates that the regime indeed is cognizant to such changing political climate and remains in the mold of devising new tactics that further safeguard its political rule. From the political direction, the regime is also inviting further division and animosity as it's been evident throughout the political violence that erupted across the boarder villages and districts between the Ethiopian-Somali regional state and Oromia, which is the most populated region as well as the economic engine of the country. This of course, is without delving into exploring what is been happening across all other regional states. For now, it seems succeeding in terms of helping the incumbent EPRDF coalition buy much needed time. The problem, again, is however, whether this would just end up as another critical juncture that would show yet another survival of the regime. In my view, that could not be a possibility given the country is experiencing ethnic strife and violence that we had not been the case in the past. In that regard, the only solution could be in available in the hands of the regime and its ability to come to terms with reality and understand that genuinely tangible reforms are needed.

In general, unless equal levels of representation across the political landscape emerges (per the ruling coalition's initial promises), and the citizens whether belonging to the majority groups of the Amhara and Oromo or minorities across the nation feel part of the ownership of the state, the domination of minority ethnic group over ninety percent of the population, I reiterate would never be sustainable but dangerous to the existence of a cohesive state. The absence of genuine reforms would definitely continue to leave traces of issues that could even endanger the existence

of the second most populous nation in all of Africa. This dissertation, in that regard, I believe has achieved its objectives of understanding why a political regime, with minority support base and domination was able to survive political opposition and its unpopularity through the means of its co-optation mechanisms, systems of patron-client relations that it created, its overall political and economic dominance, and the loyalty of the security apparatus (military and intelligence) that it enjoys.

Overall, the dissertation contributes to our understanding of two crucial points. Firstly, through the use of comparative historical analysis across time, it shows how the persistence of political culture, in terms of patterns of interaction among the political elite across different regimes, helps explain the continuity of the clientelistic and survivalist regime types in Ethiopia. Through the primary information gathered from several knowledgeable individuals, this project has also elucidated how the ethnic federal arrangement as an institutional solution evolved in post-1991 Ethiopian state ensured some level of political stability but most importantly, political survival to the very elite that designed such an institutional solution. Such were of course, the goals of the project. Secondly, however, the main contribution of this work becomes that given ethnic federal attempts from diverse historical cases were proven to have emerged for not the ideals of democratic promotion, the question then centers on how such an institutional solution help us understand authoritarian survival. It is my belief that the dissertation has effectively achieved that. Moreover, the discussions at the end of the dissertation also indicates that the new political developments that have now emerged are worthy of extended study, which could even lead to the need to part-three of explanations in a future research project.

The limitations of the project need to be addressed as well. As we recall, the introduction to this project mentioned the many attributes that many of the sub-Saharan African states share in common. Additions of some other federal and unitary states could therefore have helped our broader understanding of authoritarian survival in the continent. Therefore, this could be another path that might have to be explored in future projects. Besides the diverse qualitative methodological avenues used in the dissertation, I also believe that some use of quantitative methodology could help in bringing to our attention some of the impacts of the political and economic solutions provided via the institutional solutions on authoritarian survival.

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