

**Ethnic-Based Party Systems, Culture of Democracy,
and Political Transition in Africa**

Nation-Building Predicament, Transition Fatigue,
and Fear of State Collapse

Ethiopia's Burgeoning Democratic Transition

The Effects of Land Tenure Policy on the Environment in
the Gambella Region

What Shall We Think About an Afrocentric Vision?

The Treason of the Intellectuals.
An Essay About the Hungarian Lesson



Kiadja/Published by: IDResearch Kutatási és Képzési Kft./Publikon Kiadó

Alapító és felelős kiadó/Founder and Executive Editor TARRÓSY István

Főszerkesztő/Editor-in-Chief BÚR Gábor

Olvasószerkesztő/Proofreading Editor A. GERGELY András

Tördelőszerkesztő/Technical Editor VÖRÖS Zoltán

A szerkesztőség tagjai/Members of Editorial Team TARRÓSY István, VÖRÖS Zoltán

Külső munkatárs/Contributor SZILASI Ildikó Hermina

Szerkesztőbizottság/Editorial Board BESENYŐ János, BÚR Gábor, CSATÁDI Katalin, MARSAI Viktor, MORENTH Péter, SUHA György, SZABÓ Loránd, TARRÓSY István (elnök/chair), VOJNITS András, VÖRÖS Zoltán

Tudományos Tanácsadó Testület/Scientific Advisory Board BENKES Mihály, BIERNACZKY Szilárd, CSIZMADIA Sándor, FODOR Erika, KISS Judit, RÉGI Tamás, SÁRKÁNY Mihály, SUHA György, SZOMBATHY Zoltán, VIDACS Bea

Nyelvi konzulens és korrektor/English language consultant and reviewer: SZARKA Evelin

Design & Layout IDResearch Kft./IDResearch Ltd. - facebook.com/idresearch/

Kiadó és szerkesztőség elérhetőségei/Publisher and Editorial Team

7624 Pécs, Jakabhegyi út 8/E.

T.: +36 (30) 408-6360 afrika.folyoirat@gmail.com, www.afrikatanulmanyok.hu

Hirdetésfelvétel/Ads and Publicity 7624 Pécs, Jakabhegyi út 8/E.

T.: +36 (30) 408-6360 afrika.folyoirat@gmail.com

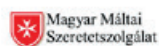
Olvasói levelek/Readers' Comments afrika.folyoirat@gmail.com

Értékesítő partnerek/Sales Partners

www.afrikatanulmanyok.hu; www.publikon.hu

Támogatóink/Our Supporters

A 2019-es évfolyam támogatója a Magyar Máltai Szeretetszolgálat, stratégiai együttműködésben a PTE Afrika Kutatóközponttal
<https://maltai.hu>



Megjelenik évente legalább két alkalommal/Published at least twice a year

Online: africa.pte.hu

A lap előfizethető/Subscription

IDResearch Kft. / Publikon Kiadó • 7624 Pécs, Jakabhegyi út 8/E

T.: +36 (30) 408-6360, afrika.folyoirat@gmail.com

www.afrikatanulmanyok.hu

Nyomda/Printing House Molnár Nyomda Kft. **Felelős vezető** Molnár Csaba

ISSN 1788-6422 Minden jog fenntartva!

ISTVÁN TARRÓSY

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

OPENING REMARKS

35

BALÁZS SZÉLINGER

THE TREASON OF THE INTELLECTUALS AN ESSAY ABOUT THE HUNGARIAN LESSON

8

As the subtitle indicates, this is not a scholarly article based on research but one almost identical to the oral presentation I gave during the workshop “30 Years of Freedom – Farewell to Communism in Hungary, Local and Global Lessons” in Addis Ababa on October 25, 2019, organized jointly by the Embassy of Hungary in Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian Civil Service University, the Hungarian National University of Public Service, and the University of Pécs, Hungary. I made every effort to strengthen my arguments with valuable references.

ALI [SHEIKH] AHMED ABDI

ETHIOPIA'S BURGEONING DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION: NEW GLAMOUR OR NEW STATESMANSHIP GIMMICKS?

13

Following the amounting accusation of autocracy, the heritage of exclusionary rulership with an underlying ethnic undertone that confined the parameters of political power finally yielded nearly three years of unemployed youth-led street protests initially in Oromia region and later spread all over the country, demanding for political reform and socio-economic improvements. All these paved the way for PM Abiy Ahmed on April 2nd, 2018 in what seemed to be a transition in the form of a “play-within-a-play”. In this article, I offer an account that explains the image of Ethiopia's democratic transition in 2018, undeniably using my own physical experience and observations as an academic and a humanitarian practitioner owing to my more than 15 years of stay in the country where I have often been close to the decision-making tables in Addis Ababa as well as in the Somali region. Of course, I will also use all other seminally relevant information helpful to draw an explanation to the interminable socio-political and economic transformation in Ethiopia.

MERESSA TSEHAYE GEBREWAHD

NATION-BUILDING PREDICAMENT, TRANSITION FATIGUE,
AND FEAR OF STATE COLLAPSE:
AN EMERGING PHENOMENON IN POST-2015 ETHIOPIA

32

Ethiopia, evolved from Tigray, is known by its history of having been an empire (e.g., the Axumite kingdom) and having been independent. The fundamental weakness of the Ethiopian state has been the lack of inclusive national consensus, hampered by national oppression and the dilemma of democratizing a feudal state. The article investigates the nation-building aspirations, transition fatigue, the predicaments of secessionist, federalist, and assimilationist narratives, and the subsequent fear of ‘state collapse’ in the post-2018 crisis in Ethiopia.

MIFTAH MOHAMMED KEMAL

ETHNIC-BASED PARTY SYSTEMS, CULTURE OF DEMOCRACY,
AND POLITICAL TRANSITION IN AFRICA: CHALLENGES
AND PROSPECTS FOR POLITICAL TRANSITION IN ETHIOPIA

51

According to David Easton, “Politics involves change; and the political world is a world of flux, tensions, and transitions”. Ethiopia’s history of political transition fits the conceptualization of politics as changes and the political world as a world of flux. This article discusses the challenges and opportunities for a political transition in Ethiopia using comparative data analysis and various presentation methods.

CHUOL KOMPUOK

THE EFFECTS OF LAND TENURE POLICY ON THE
ENVIRONMENT IN THE GAMBELLA REGION

64

An attempt is made to investigate the consequences of land tenure policy on the environment enhancing reforestation as a means of ascertaining tenure security in the Gambella region. This paper sheds light on the accelerated pace of deforestation in the study area and its impact on the environment.

SZILÁRD BIERNACZKY

WHAT SHALL WE THINK ABOUT AN AFROCENTRIC VISION?

82

In many cases, series of theses and antitheses get to grips with each other for a long period of time without the hope of creating a synthesis. And of course, to open the gates elsewhere: this old-world syllogism, as a reflective model, is not sufficient for the interpretation of the realistic and mental entity that inundates us. However, nowadays we can pick up on the specific mental-interpretational ideology that stands out in the form of this model whose essence is Afrocentrism set against the Eurocentric approach. This is discussed in the paper.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

It is a delightful task for me to announce the second English-language issue of the Hungarian Journal of African Studies (HJAS). Our determined plan is to annually publish such issues and make HJAS more known internationally. The so-to-say 'mother journal', the Hungarian-language Afrika Tanulmányok, has been running for fourteen years without interruption, and has become a core source of scientifically sound information about Africa in Hungary and beyond, so we firmly believe that we have established the base for more international collaboration.

Our second English-language issue presents six articles, most of them stemming from discussions at the joint Ethio-Hungarian conference held on October 25th, 2019, in Addis Ababa. As Ambassador Attila Koppány underlines it in his Opening Remarks to our issue, the event contributed to the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of official diplomatic relations between Ethiopia and Hungary, and allowed existing partnerships between Hungarian and Ethiopian universities to further develop. As a result, after thorough peer review several academic pieces were selected for our special issue. First, Balázs Szélinger offers an essay about similar historical experiences and what the Hungarian way might shed light on in terms of transition. Then, Ali Ahmed Abdi puts forward an account that explains the image of Ethiopia's democratic transition in 2018. Third, Meressa Tsehay Gebrewahd discusses the policy reforms based on 'neo-pan-Ethiopianism', which according to him, opened the box of Pandora of secessionist, irredentist, and federalist forces. His article focusses on investigating the nation-building aspirations, transition fatigue, the predicaments of secessionist, federalist, and assimilationist narratives, and the subsequent fear of 'state collapse' in the post-2018 crisis in Ethiopia. Miftah Mohamed Kemal's sharp article analyses the challenges and opportunities for a political transition in Ethiopia using comparative data analysis and various presentation methods, drawing attention to what is missing in the Ethiopian experience of transition so far is the changing of governments through elections. Chuol Kompuok presents a case study showing the consequences of land tenure policy on the environment enhancing reforestation as a means of ascertaining tenure security in the Gambella region. And the final piece by Szilárd Biernaczky is again an essay, this time, about Afrocentrism.

The third issue is already in the making, but let me underline that HJAS expects submissions from a wide range of disciplines within the realm of interdisciplinary African Studies. Please, consult our Guidelines for Authors.

Finally, I wish to thank the University of Pécs and the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta for their continuous support.

Dr. István Tarrósy
Editor of HJAS



Check the first English-language issue of the Hungarian Journal of African Studies (HJAS) online:

africa.pte.hu/?page_id=1486



Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

First, I would like to express my gratitude to the leadership of the Ethiopian Civil Service University for hosting and important joint Ethio-Hungarian scientific conference on October 25th, 2019. I also wish to convey my appreciation to the National University of Public Service and the University of Pécs for co-organizing this event and to the academics from both countries for participating and delivering lectures today on this special occasion. I have the privilege of welcoming here H.E. Jemel Beker, State Minister of Innovation and Technology.

The year 2019 has been declared by the Hungarian government a commemorative year with the title ‘30 years of freedom in Hungary.’ With this ambition in mind and with the valuable contribution of Hungarian and Ethiopian historians and lecturers, we intend to draw people’s attention to the global influence of the events happened in 1989 and to demonstrate the determined struggle how the countries of Central and Eastern Europe – making use of the historical opportunity – have reached freedom and independence.

With Ethiopia, we have more in common in our history than we think sometimes. Our continuous fight against oppression and our devotion to making every possible effort to preserve our independence and to defend our identity against all odds.

Furthermore, I wish to highlight that this year we celebrate the 60th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations with Ethiopia. Hungary has had an excellent relationship with Ethiopia for more than 60 years, our relations are laid on a solid foundation of partnership. Over the past 60 years, the people of our two countries have created a deep friendship by supporting and helping each other. This diverse and multifaceted relationship includes economic, political, educational, and cultural relations. The reopening of our embassy in Addis Ababa in 2016 has resulted in the intensification of our bilateral cooperation. Through the Hungarian government’s Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship Programme every year 50 students from Ethiopia can begin their studies in Hungary.

Hungary contributes to Ethiopia’s economic growth and development objectives in line with Hungary’s new Africa Strategy, which is the first such official strategy, adopted by the Hungarian government in April 2019.

Again, I thank you all for attending this conference of paramount importance and sharing the celebration of this double anniversary of the long-lasting friendship between Hungary and Ethiopia.

H.E. Attila Koppány
Ambassador of Hungary to Ethiopia

Glimpses of the 2019 Conference





THE TREASON OF THE INTELLECTUALS AN ESSAY ABOUT THE HUNGARIAN LESSON

BALÁZS SZÉLINGER, PH.D.

ECONOMIC AND TRADE ATTACHÉ, EMBASSY OF HUNGARY IN ETHIOPIA

BSZELINGER@GMAIL.COM

Abstract

As the subtitle indicates, this is not a scholarly article based on research but one almost identical to the oral presentation I gave during the workshop “30 Years of Freedom – Farewell to Communism in Hungary, Local and Global Lessons” in Addis Ababa on October 25, 2019, organized jointly by the Embassy of Hungary in Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian Civil Service University, the Hungarian National University of Public Service, and the University of Pécs, Hungary. I made every effort to strengthen my arguments with valuable references.

Keywords

Ethiopian intellectuals, similar historical experiences, exchange of solutions

Received: December 2019 | 1st Revision: February 2020 | Accepted: April 2020

Szélinger, Balázs (2019). The Treason of the Intellectuals. An Essay About the Hungarian Lesson. Hungarian Journal of African Studies [Afrika Tanulmányok], 13(5), 8-12.

“Plato is my friend, but truth is a better friend,” said Aristotle, the great Greek philosopher already some 2200 years ago. Luckily, both of them, Plato and Aristotle, were Greek, moreover, from the same Ionic tribe. In 1927, another philosopher, the French Julien Benda published his famous book titled ‘The Treason of the Intellectuals’ (Benda, 1927; 2007). This is a book that is perhaps more talked about than read, most probably because of its catchy title. As Roger Kimball put it in the book’s latest English translation, “Today, only the title of the book, not its argument, enjoys currency” (Benda, 2007: i). Indeed, for example, if one tries to Google the title in its Hungarian translation, dozens of hits will pop up from scholarly articles to tabloid ones using but rather misusing the title for the most various political interests from the far right to the far left. Those who did (and are doing) that, did exactly what the book’s intention is in fact: betraying the entire society, humankind, and last but not least, themselves too.

I have spent almost exactly 30 years studying Ethiopia’s history and culture, and I have always paid close attention to contemporary developments too. Therefore, I am well aware of what Ethiopian historian Bahru Zewde calls the missing generations of Ethiopian intellectuals. Almost an entire generation of the highest educated was killed by the Italians between 1936 and 1941. Later, they were persecuted (killed or forced into exile) by the Derg, which – even if to a lesser extent – was continued by the EPRDF regime (see, for example, Bahru, 1993; 2014). It is widely known too that most of the students of Ethiopia who were lucky to obtain a scholarship abroad never returned.

Yet, here I would like to put something on the table that is rarely or never mentioned regarding politics in Ethiopia – that is the *responsibility* and *active role* of intellectuals. We seldom witness this. Of course, it does not mean that there are no Ethiopian intellectuals. In fact, there are many. But they are silent and hiding in real or self-imposed exile, scared of real and imagined dangers. A silent and numb intellectual is not an intellectual. His or her education, knowledge, and morals are impotent and fruitless. Ethiopian philosopher Messay Kebede (who was chased away by the EPRDF government in 2005) argues that Ethiopia’s failed modernization is due to the lack of “homegrown intellectuals”:

“The great tragedy of Ethiopia is, therefore, that it did not produce domestic, homegrown intellectuals, who might have conceived of modernization as an upgrading of the traditional culture. Such intellectuals could have easily risen from the traditional culture if the system of education had established some form of continuity between traditional and Western educational systems” (Messay, 2008: 100).

But who is an intellectual, anyway? Every highly educated person? A medical doctor? An actor? A university professor of political science? By their education, none of them. Potentially, all of them. To be an intellectual is rather a lifestyle than just being spent several years in school. In my view, based on Aristotle’s and Benda’s philosophies, education may be a tool to be an intellectual but not one entirely attrib-

uted to it. As one of the very few Ethiopian scholars who regularly address this topic, Maimire Mennasemay, a philosopher living and teaching in Canada, expressed:

“Though the subjects of political society are those who suffer from capabilities deprivations, the participation of intellectuals is vital; however, they cannot enjoy ‘place-holder’ functions for the underprivileged. The intellectuals’ authority is not rooted in their knowledge-claims, but in the fact that their proposals speak to the emancipatory interests of the participants and enhance their capability sets” (Maimire, 2008: 27).

An intellectual is led by morals like the seeking of impartial truth and justice. An intellectual is empathetic to others from different ethnic groups, classes or political affiliations. He or she is actively seeking to transfer these values to others, and not only when their self-interest dictates that. Can a politician be an intellectual? Yes, but only when he or she is gifted with the ability (humbleness) to openly and immediately admit when the opposition is right. This is the exact reason why we do not find many intellectuals among politicians. And that is why real intellectuals have in fact the same responsibility as politicians, or even more than that. More importantly, an intellectual can never be radicalized or become an extremist, and this is where the otherwise excellent Messay Kebede is wrong, mixing up the educated and the intellectuals (Messay, 2006: 5-27).

Then a question arises: is there a demand for intellectuals in the society at all? There is so much debate about this in the age of mediocratic plutocrats. Anyway, the answer can be yes or no. I believe it is *yes*. If yes, then it is a big responsibility because if the real intellectuals keep silent, the demand will still seek for others and will find fake ones, self-appointed crooks and impostors. No need to explain how dangerous this is. And if anyone (especially one of those intellectuals) thinks that there is *no* demand, just remember what Leonardo di Caprio said in *The Wolf of the Wall Street*: “If there is no demand, then create the demand.” And remember Lord Varys from the *Game of Thrones*: how many kings try to make him stand by their sides while the ‘Spider’ insists on serving “only” the realm itself. As Maimire Mennasemay put it, “If Ethiopian intellectuals are to play a constructive role in the creation of a democratic, prosperous, and just society, they need to ‘think in front’ and not ‘on behalf’ of the oppressed and exploited” (Maimire, 2008: 26).

One of my motivations to study Ethiopian history and culture was when I discovered the similarities between Ethiopia and Hun-

But who is an intellectual, anyway? Every highly educated person? A medical doctor? An actor? A university professor of political science? By their education, none of them. Potentially, all of them.

gary. Just like Ethiopian history, Hungarian history too is a constant fight against intruders, for independence, and for survival. Hungarians fought against the Muslims (Ottoman Turks) and finally lost the decisive Battle of Mohács in 1526. The similar decisive Battle of Shimbra Kure happened three years later in Ethiopia. The Habesha developed a sense of “mission identity,” a Christian fortress to fight against Islam; in a similar way, the Hungarians considered themselves the ‘most Eastern bastion of Christianity’ against the Turks. The Habesha referred (and the most religious still do) to their land as *Tsion* (Zion), meanwhile *Sion* (the Hungarian word for Zion, pronounced as “she-on”) became a metaphor for Hungary in numerous religious songs and poems until the 20th century. Paprika or *berbere* that had been brought to both countries by Muslim merchants became an essential ingredient in both national cuisines. We both lived under Communism, although the Ethiopians were lucky enough to suffer under it only for 17 years, while in Hungary it was more than four decades. I strongly believe that similar historical experiences cause similar reactions and mindsets. Therefore, I believe that we can learn from each other, too. What is going on in Ethiopia recently – extremely strong ethno-nationalist movements – is not uncommon for Hungarians, although by different historical experiences.

Careless observers – and in this world of social media they are the majority – may wonder where all the Ethiopians have disappeared. It seems today that in a country called Ethiopia, proud of her history and culture, everyone wants to be just Oromo, Somali, Amhara, Sidama, Tegar, etc. It seems that all the Ethiopians are living abroad – at least that is what they answer when asked about their origin – or attend international sports competitions (and when they win, they may cross their arms when celebrating victory). Of course, one may find more Ethiopians in Addis Ababa, but remember that a capital city never reflects the true self of a country or a nation.

Here, this topic connects to intellectuals – and a somewhat similar historical trauma in Hungary (and nations are always forged by traumas, not happy times). In the 1930s, due to the racial laws enforced upon Hungary by the increasing German pressure, all Hungarians were forced to provide their own birth documents and those of their parents and grandparents. The criminal aim of the state was to know who had (and “up to what amount”) Jewish blood in their veins. This essay is, however, not about the history of antisemitism in Hungary. The aforementioned laws forced the entire Hungarian population into an investigation of origin. The previous decades in Hungarian politics (and, therefore, in education as well) were spent under the motto of “one country, one nation,” which brought the illusion that everybody who spoke Hungarian in the 1930s *was a Hungarian*. The search and the finding of birth certificates (many people had to travel for them extensively) caused shock and trauma. Hundreds of thousands of Hungarians had to realize that although their identity was absolutely Hungarian, there had been many non-Hungarians among their ancestors (sometimes the majority). I believe that if a similar large scale investigation of birth documents happened in Ethiopia now, the shocking surprise would be inevitable. In 1938 and 1939, perhaps half of the Hungarian population asked: “Who am I? – Am

I a Hungarian at all? – What matters more? My mother tongue? My identity? My blood?”

The answer and the solution as a balm – *medhanit*, I would say – came from the intellectuals. It was a prominent historian, Gyula Szekfű, who got the idea to publish a volume titled ‘What is Hungarian?’ While Szekfű also contributed to the volume, he asked other twelve intellectuals to write their piece on their respective fields (Szekfű, 1939). Others completed the task later, publishing influential articles in different journals. As you may expect, the majority were not politicians but historians, religious leaders, ethnographers, art historians, musicologists, etc. They together, as an “intellectual army,” provided the healing of a nation. They kept the majority of Hungarians away from narrow nationalism and provided guidance by delivering a message that can be summed up as “If you feel Hungarian, you are a Hungarian, whatever your name sounds or however your blood is mixed.”

I believe that Ethiopians are in need of something similar to that now. Imagine artists, religious leaders, musicians, etc. writing their short pieces, from Humera to Jigjiga and from Semera to Jinka, under the same title: “What is to be Ethiopian?” I truly believe that the answers would surprise everyone 🌸

Notes

- 1 I used the English translation of Richard Aldington (Benda, 2007).
- 2 I am reflecting here that identity always has different layers, and these are dynamic: in a foreign environment the Ethiopian layer may get stronger, and in international sports competitions *all* Ethiopians are supposed to celebrate the *Ethiopian victory*. Yet, the reader may remember silver medalist Feyisa Lilesa at the Rio Olympic Games crossing his arms – which became a widespread symbol of Oromo protests against the Ethiopian government from then on.
- 3 I mention here that while it is relatively widely known among the population of Ethiopia that Emperor Haile Selassie I had a very mixed origin of Amhara, Gurage Oromo, and Tegar (and perhaps more if we go back in time), people rarely talk about their own mixed origin and refer to Haile Selassie as the ‘Amhara ruler.’

References

- Bahru Z. (1993). The Ethiopian intelligentsia and the Italo-Ethiopian war, 1935-1941. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 26 (2), 271-295.
- Bahru Z. (2014). *The Quest for Socialist Utopia: The Ethiopian Student Movement, c. 1960–1974*. James Currey, Suffolk.
- Maimire M. (2008). A millennium democratic goal for Ethiopia: some conceptual issues. *Africa Today* 55 (1), 3-32.
- Márkus, B. (2018). *What is the Hungarian?* MMA Publishing, Budapest.
- Messay K. (2008). *Radicalism and Cultural Dislocation in Ethiopia, 1960–1974*. University of Rochester Press, Rochester.
- Messay K. (2006). *The Roots and Fallouts of Haile Selassie’s Educational Policy*. UNESCO Forum Occasional Paper Series, Paper No. 10. Philosophy Faculty Publications, University of Dayton.
- Szekfű, Gy. (Ed). (1939). *Mi a magyar?* [What Is Hungarian?] Magyar Szemle Társaság, Budapest.

ETHIOPIA'S BURGEONING DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION: NEW GLAMOUR OR NEW STATESMANSHIP GIMMICKS?

ALI [SHEIKH] AHMED ABDI

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF PUBLIC SERVICE, HUNGARY

DHAGAWEYNE3@GMAIL.COM

Abstract

Following the amounting accusation of autocracy, the heritage of exclusionary rulership with an underlying ethnic undertone that confined the parameters of political power finally yielded nearly three years of unemployed youth-led street protests initially in Oromia region and later spread all over the country, demanding for political reform and socio-economic improvements. All these paved the way for PM Abiy Ahmed on April 2nd, 2018 in what seemed to be a transition in the form of a “play-within-a-play”. In this article, I offer an account that explains the image of Ethiopia’s democratic transition in 2018, undeniably using my own physical experience and observations as an academic and a humanitarian practitioner owing to my more than 15 years of stay in the country where I have often been close to the decision-making tables in Addis Ababa as well as in the Somali region. Of course, I will also use all other seminally relevant information helpful to draw an explanation to the interminable socio-political and economic transformation in Ethiopia.

Keywords

Transition, Deep State, Ethno-nationalism, Ultra-nationalism, Orthodox

Received: November 2019 | 1st Revision: January 2020 | Accepted: April 2020

Abdi, Ali Ahmed (2019). Ethiopia's Burgeoning Democratic Transition: New Glamour or New Statesmanship Gimmicks?. Hungarian Journal of African Studies [Afrika Tanulmányok], 13(5), 13-31.

1. Introduction

Ethiopia has impressive records in relation to nature and texture, in which it is molded, as well as considering the mystery and the bloody recipe associated with power transitions, in which it is cloaked. In the medieval period, the fundamental source of conflict in Abyssinia was one mainly within and between the monotheistic Abrahamic civilizations; Judaists vs Christians, Islam versus Christians, and Judaists vs Islam. As European intellectuals and philosophers reached the pinnacle of the Age of Enlightenment that would dominate the world of ideas for nearly four consecutive centuries, and as the Arab Renaissance, often regarded as a period of intellectual modernization and reform, was about to take off in Egypt, these ideas moved to other regions in the Middle East, such as Syria and Lebanon that were under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. Abyssinian kings, though varied in their efforts, radically engaged in historical processes of creating a defined territory to install their political and institutional order that later would be named Ethiopia.

According to the Abyssinian northerners' romantic tales, to the exclusion of the other three cardinal directions embodying the compass of present-day Ethiopia, four remarkable emperors are accredited with territorial expansionism. These men, by a seriously well-thought-out effort, reconstructed the historical narratives symbolically representing the country's chronicle over the past 200 years. They shaped and reconstituted, to varying degrees, the recently much disputed cultural and political sphere and the geography of modern Ethiopia in accordance with that of northern Ethiopia. In almost all literature on Ethiopian history, the following men are constantly referenced as the architects of contemporary Ethiopia: Tewodros (Theodore) II (1855-65), Yohannes (John) IV (1872-1889), Menelik II (1889-1913), and Haile Selassie (1916-74) (Zewde, 2014). These four kings, who ruled modern Ethiopia for most of the last two centuries, sustained their bureaucratic power expansion through the formation of a hierarchical political body classically similar to that of a non-industrial society. The Solomonic and Aksumite Houses, founded typically on affinity, where self-anointed, senior members from selected families dominated formal leadership, took alternating turns through maximum coercion, thereby rendering the rest of Ethiopia's nations and nationalities mere spectators. Further to this, identity supremacy in Ethiopia has always been a critical factor, which has cascaded down from generation to generation throughout time, as Robert Gale Woolbert indicated as early as 1953 in his case study article that appeared in *Foreign Affairs*. Woolbert argues that

"In the case of Ethiopia there can be no question that a single people rules over various subject peoples. Probably not more than one-third of the inhabitants belong to the ancient Ethiopian stock. The rest neither profess Christianity nor speak the Amharic tongue and are consequently regarded by the ruling race as its inferiors. The true Ethiopian resides on the central plateau, while the subject races inhabit the peripheral lowlands" (Woolbert, 1935).

No matter the title they used, king or emperor, ancient nobles in Ethiopia ruled until their death or they were forcefully deposed. Thoughtful and peaceful transitions were perceived as a sign of dimness; hence those who let power go in peaceful transitions were damned to hell. Similarly, in modern history, there were no peaceful political power transitions that are worth calling to mind. Solomonic and Aksumite houses never permitted the transition of rulership to anyone outside these houses. Thus, the age-old delinquency of ethnic-based marginalization is as old as the country's history. At the beginning of the third quarter of the twentieth century, Ethiopia entered the race of the shifting ideological winds across the world. Thus, ousting Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974 put a full stop after the hundreds of years of monarchial regimes in Ethiopia. The scattered civilian-led revolution that battled for the end of the "supreme" system could not provide unitary leadership to sustain the unrest and establish a much-anticipated civilian rule. Subsequently, the military, having the advantage of the coercive hardware of the state, developed into a limited but tyrannical force, which estranged and separated the political powers of ordinary citizens from the nation's open political life. The ensuing battles that had surfaced between the Derg system and ordinary citizens brought about a stream of political viciousness that killed a huge number of Ethiopians in the second half of the 1970s. The fall of the Derg military regime in May 1991 and the coming to power of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), led by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), not only meant the military victory of the latter but also the imposition of a certain conception of Ethiopian statehood (Bach, 2014). This paved the way for the nascence of a new but sacred constitution that Abbink would later call the 'Second Republic' – ethno-federalism in Ethiopia (Abbink, 2009). Hopes were that the ongoing demonstration effect of transitions, during the early 1990s in the third wave's later phase in sub-Saharan Africa, would snowball in the newly-born EPRDF region in Ethiopia (Huntington, 1991a), which would lead to a new era of liberal democracy.

However, the wave dissipated fairly quickly, within a decade, as the procedures and functional policies regulating the context of the voting processes of free and fair elections, held for the first time in 2005, were considered impartial in the Ethiopian context. As soon as the results that justly favored the opposition party over the sitting EPRDF government were published, the ruling party struck back with the intent to cancel the results. Subsequently, new forms of illiberalized authoritarianism emerged. As the ruling party began to lose their grip on power, they tried to shrink the political and civil society space by passing two notorious laws in 2009, namely the Charities and Societies Proclamation and the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation. Together, these "ruined" the country's already feeble human rights record (Brechenmacher, 2017). Thus, the government effectively shut down public hopes for competitive democratization in Ethiopia for the following decade.

In the ensuing years, the EPRDF government became a security regime controlled by a selective party elite, whose political supremacy for the following twenty-seven years was gleaned from the rent-seeking of bureaucratic professionalism that would

accelerate the widening of the gap between societies. Consequently, inequalities in assets, education and land inequality among the diverse ethnic nationalities in Ethiopia became commonplace under the EPRDF regime. In 2015, disenfranchised youth from the region of Oromia, numerically Ethiopia's largest ethnic nation, led protests demanding more inclusive reforms, which triggered further dissension and discord and gave a greater incentive to the youth of other regions to undertake similar actions in their respective regions.

The topical issue is that Ethiopia's heterogeneous reality is shaped by the contextual certainty of its demographic diversity as well as its geography. The country's economic difficulties and the related effects include but are not limited to drought, famine, and poverty, which have become mainstream news dominating the global media. The fact that Ethiopia has significant natural and human resources gives rise to the view that it is the 'water tower' of Africa. Yet, paradoxically, the country is also categorized as one of the poorest countries on Earth. Such a critical reality of the state sits at the conjunction of two related and commonly fortifying formative difficulties – destitution and social imbalance, and the answers to these challenges lie at the heart of the policy choice of the government leadership (Olson, 1982). Despite the recent wave of economic growth, the country is still plagued by deeply ingrained poverty and alarmingly high and rising inequality (World Bank Group, 2015).

In spite of the much-discussed economic growth in the last decade, there is an ever-widening rift between Ethiopian classes; the gap between the rich and the poor is greater than that of any other country in the region. The EPRDF regime's endeavors in Ethiopia show a multifaceted style of development that is not arranged in a straight line, rather it is customized in a non-linear style, and bears no automatic relationship to the conception that economic development should "be managed for inclusive growth to advance human development and uphold the basic human rights of all as a means to end poverty and expand the choices of Ethiopians" (United Nations Development Programme, 2018).

The speed in which the world's information technology is revolutionizing has eased modalities to spread all kinds of data, therefore, it turns to be hard to keep in secret the material causes of poverty and economic difficulties in Ethiopia. It all began in November 2015, when protests cropped up in Ginchi, Oromia region. The ensuing protests pervaded the entire Oromia region over the following three years. The initial anxieties of protesters were to halt the government's proposal to expand the original perimeter of Addis Ababa city, which would have otherwise led to the further displacement of Oromo household farmers (Human Rights Watch, 2016). What began as a slight dissent against the implementation of the government's masterplan to expand Addis Ababa later pervaded across Ethiopia's major regions and towns. After three years of shoulder-to-shoulder mass demonstrations demanding an end to the EPRDF's rule, the Ginchi revolution detracted from the most powerful regime in Addis Ababa and reconstructed the 27-year one-party rule of the EPRDF regime. Also, the domino effect of the Ginchi uprising stretched far and wide and caused significant implications for peace and security in the Horn of Africa. For

example, the political movement that began some five years ago in Oromia region is now widely known as the ‘Qeerroo’ cross-hands revolution.’ This started originally as an obstruction against land seizure accommodating the Addis Ababa city expansion. However, it quickly changed into a continued resistance against the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government’s unabated stranglehold on the political scene, constantly accused of bias in dispensing national assets and the ceaseless utilization of brutal force to quell political dissenters against their regime. It went on for just about four years, coming full circle with the fall of the EPRDF’s vanguard party system, thereby introducing a new era of democratic transition. This development paved the way for the installation of radical political and economic reforms under the bureaucratic leadership of the new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali — ethnically an Oromo, which is actually a single majority nationality in Ethiopia. In this article, I offer an account that explains the contemporary image of Ethiopia’s democratic transition undeniably using my own physical experience and observations as an academic and a humanitarian practitioner. I have spent nearly ninety percent of my time, if not more, in the country and often close to the decision-making tables in Addis Ababa as well as in the Somali region in the last fifteen years. Of course, I will also use all other relevant information, academic analyses, and other testimonials pertinent to the ongoing socio-political and economic transformation in Ethiopia.

In spite of the much-discussed economic growth in the last decade, there is an ever-widening rift between Ethiopian classes; the gap between the rich and the poor is greater than that of any other country in the region.

2. The EPRDF transition: an enigmatic somersault

“I see my resignation as vital in the bid to carry out reforms that would lead to sustainable peace and democracy.”

From the resignation speech of Hailemariam Desalegn (BBC News, 2018a)

In the wake of the second wave of democratization, there were hundreds, if not thousands of thesis and antithesis papers penned by prolific authors and dozens of the subject matter. Most importantly, these experts put their exposition in questioning the theoretical appropriations and the fitness of its application in a cultural context (i.e., Africa) quite dissimilar to the place of its origin, the Western Hemisphere. The third wave of democratization dawning from Western Europe, particularly Portugal, a predominantly Roman Catholic country with a close-knit family ethic, would later flounce through most parts of the developing world in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Towards the mid-1990s, the whirling wind carrying this significant and historically influential ideology, as noted in Huntington's *Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Huntington, 1991b: 2), invigorated an extremely scorching discourse among African leaders, the political elite, and academics on the establishment of the pertinent linkage between western democracy and the socio-cultural reality awaiting it in Africa. Considering the 'third wave' events that followed, democratic transitions in mainly Global South countries started from the 1980s and early 1990s, while the challenges of the infamous Cold War threatening authoritarian regimes in Africa receded. International donor countries, chiefly the United States of America, the EU, and other actors of influence, such as the World Bank and the IMF, started to put the promotion of democracy at the top of their developmental aid program in post-Cold War Africa as an indispensable, crucial element of foreign policy like development aid. By the mid-1990s, most of the multilateral organizations and a large number of national and international civil societies felt the influence and jumpstarted the reintroduction of their commitments to international engagement to support efforts of transitioning to democracy in Africa. At the time in question, Burnell argues, in order to promote and to transnationalize democracy and democratization values across the four hemispheres, the international community adopted the following three approaches: via economic relations, via the state, and via civil society (Burnell, 2004).

During this period, growing demand for multiparty democracy emerged from the political elites, intellectuals, and the public at large, following a mushrooming of democracy assistance projects from bilateral governments and related efforts by the civil society and multilateral organizations. Thereafter, authoritarian regimes in the continent, mainly in the sub-Saharan region, started feeling the threat and the snowballing effect of the third wave democratization from within. Consequently, not only did democracy appear as a worldwide objective, but also standards correspondingly arose in the international community signifying the lawfulness of having developed the curiosities of endorsing and supporting democracy abroad (Bjornlund, 2004).

After the fall of the Derg, the TPLF-led EPRDF coalition party reportedly applied liberal democracy policies at the onset of the transitional period (1991–1995). This was the political reality and represented the conditions of "doing a deal," which surfaced at the end of the Cold War. Whereas other African states, such as Kenya, tried to reshape it, the EPRDF's post-Derg transitional government leaders were disposed to a discursive shift for survival at the heights of the third wave democratization. Under the provisions of the new constitution formulated in 1995, Ethiopia proclaimed a new political system based on ethnic federalism, thereafter to be called the 'Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,' in which a multi-party system has, from then, been backed by periodic national elections. On the contrary, PM Meles Zenawi incomprehensibly reaffirmed his former Marxist-Leninist revolutionary democracy ideological line by establishing a government giving protection to democratic centralism under the watchdog of the vanguard party.

The government, which had been firmly in control for nearly three decades with a high element of honey-glazed policy frameworks that were not upheld during implementation, kept nearly 110 million people under severe surveillance. Consequently, this created a situation where no one was beyond suspicion, which finally led the security regime to produce a rock-hard, restive, and highly secretive government. These regime-controlled political, socio-cultural, and monetary circles created a special strategy that most of the time fit the enormous personal interest of the EPRDF's deep state. At once, after 27 years of an unshakeable rule, public dissatisfaction began to crop up to a perceptible point. The time bomb “detonated” in Oromia region where the Oromo youth's, the Qeerro's, tenaciously irksome disposition (partly pervaded with an ethno-nationalist sentiment), which chiefly emanated from vexation or the discontent with the EPRDF's rule, demanded change.

Often marred by such inconsequential hassles and the ensuing instability that were embedded virtually in every nook and cranny of the country and in an attempt to put the genie back in the bottle, the EPRDF government invidiously issued two martial law orders, one after the other. As the public dissent and discord continued to gather momentum in Oromia region, other parts of the country, such as Amhara, Somali, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Regional State, joined the ongoing Oromia cross-handed remonstrance, only to augment the existing political crisis right up to the hilt. To add insult to injury, the youth, mainly of Oromo origin, in the remaining mega-municipalities of Dire Dawa and Addis Ababa metropolitan areas, finally joined the ever-growing public dissent across the country in a way that worsened the EPRDF's already frail situation. At this moment in time, a flickering sign of deep polarization within the ruling coalition of EPRDF emerged for the first time since coming to power in May 1991. The widening interstices of the overarching coalition increased to the maximum extent possible between 2016 and the early quarter of 2018, literally exposing the entire government functions of the EPRDF to a partly or completely fragile situation. The rattling sounds of discontent sharply knocked at the EPRDF's flimsy door and further strengthened the flaring political rifts among the top echelons of the EPRDF leadership. With it, both the socio-political and the economic wellbeing of the country dwindled, which finally catapulted the vanguard party regime into a stage of losing the balance of legitimacy in the eyes of the citizenry.

For a country once hailed as an economic force to be reckoned with by achieving a 10 percent GDP growth rate in 2017 according to the World Bank, and whose troops played critical roles in UN peacekeeping missions around the world, and at the same time, which had become an important hegemonic power in the Red Sea region, it was a bitter pill to swallow. All of a sudden, Ethiopia leaped off the precipice into a deep abyss of political uncertainty. PM Hailemariam Desalegn's unprecedented resignation on the eve of February 15, 2018, left the ruling coalition's further hope of survival reeling. Unfortunately, before the arrival of the much-yearned-for archetypally fictitious “trickster,” who would re-establish Ethiopia according to the EPRDF elites' wishes, the ambitious ruling coalition, now petrified by the youthful Qeer-

roo's obstinately irritating temper, lost its stranglehold on power once and for all. As luck would have it, Hailemariam's resignation paved the way for Colonel Abiy Ahmed Ali to be selected as the youngest but a "redemptive" chairman of the ruling coalition party of the EPRDF, which was now losing public trust, and a few months later, in April 2018, he became the new prime minister of Ethiopia at the age of 42.

Therefore, the selection of a "savior," particularly from the ethnic Oromo group, was an aptly well-calculated decision to repair the already cracked wheels of the ruling EPRDF coalition that was near the end of the road. Within the first hundred days of his rule, PM Abiy Ahmed embarked on a historical journey of reform that he thought was necessary and timely in order to save nearly 110 million Ethiopians from falling into political and socio-economic chaos. From day one, Prime Minister Abiy discharged political detainees, rescinded bans on ideological groups, lifted the emergency laws, and indicted authorities blamed for gross human rights violations. Furthermore, he initiated a momentous rapprochement with neighboring Eritrea after more than two decades of conflict, appointed women to more than half of his cabinet posts as well as other government parastatals that possess political clout. Last but not least, he planned to liberalize the country and close down once and for all Chinese-like business models of monopolies in vital fiscal sectors, including telecommunications, energy, the airlines and other service industries (banks), etc. These reforms were not only historical on their own merits but also unique innovations to transform Ethiopia's rigid political tradition.

The despotic society, which suffered from a form of government in which a single entity ruled with absolute power, started inhaling the fresh and healing wind of change. By achieving most of the constructive and unprecedented socio-political and economic reforms in a span of less than a year, and so much more in the making, Prime Minister Abiy would have been a sure bet to deliver reforms that could have helped the country if his opponents had given him the benefit of the doubt to do so. If the new reform agendas had progressed as planned, Ethiopia would have heralded a considerable triumph of democratic governance and would have become a remarkable model at least for countries in the Africa continent, if not worldwide. Regrettably, ever since the dawn of modern Ethiopia, this country has never been lucky enough to embrace peaceful democratic transitions.

Towards the start of the 21st century, when the rest of the world enjoyed inhaling the breath of democracy, Ethiopians were unfortunately subjected to the prescription of a new political drug that the EPRDF vanguard party leaders would call 'Revolutionary Democracy.'² Through this approach, they claimed the prioritization of economic growth under a patrimonial system, which had overseen political, economic, and civil rights for nearly three decades under a consistent chain of command. As election date nears (August 17, 2020), it seems that PM Abiy, who wishes to implement his reforms to transition the country to a full-scale democracy, has to face challenges along the way, which may shrink his chances as new obstacles continue to rise to the surface. Therefore, it looks likely that the momentous strides and scope of PM Abiy's government's restructuring process would mean to some or

perhaps to the majority of citizens, who have never experienced the height of the new PM Abiy's speedy transparency and accountability, nothing less than a roller-coaster ride. Thus, in this article, I am particularly interested in examining the extent to which the changing landscape of the contemporary transition in Ethiopia can attest PM Abiy's reform agenda.

Abiy's amazing ascendance to power and his capacity to chart a swift and increasingly serene political course in Ethiopia revealed the pressures and complexities of the nation's governmental issues both at ethnic and ideological levels. Thus, it is true that taking steady steps to launch pragmatic reforms was not only a thoughtful transitional strategy but also a risky decision, which threatened the political hegemony of the two historic houses of the nobility and the privileges that the 'deep state' had accrued over the past two and half centuries. This triggered stubborn cynicism and resentment, which activated latent hazards to the contemporary transition in Ethiopia. However, the big-heartedness of the reformist prime minister would soon goad the already insecure 'deep state,' which was provoked by a sudden and unexpected fall from power. In retaliation, the 'deep state' employed its strategy of blocking PM Abiy's new ideologies from flourishing, and this act had a noticeably detrimental effect on the new prime minister's plans.

Here, by 'deep state' I mean a well-connected ruling clique comprised of characteristically powerful members of the ruling party (EPRDF), government agencies, and the military, alleged to be involved in secret government business operations or the control of government policy. In the last two decades, such categories have been covertly forming the architecture of the government in the style of a business in a patrimonial system characterized by close, mutually advantageous relationships between business leaders and government officials. This situation has often led to allegations of designing and operationalizing an obsolete hybrid of economic principles hidden in the form of "crony capitalism." These were the circumstances

The despotic society, which suffered from a form of government in which a single entity ruled with absolute power, started inhaling the fresh and healing wind of change. By achieving most of the constructive and unprecedented socio-political and economic reforms in a span of less than a year, and so much more in the making, Prime Minister Abiy would have been a sure bet to deliver reforms that could have helped the country if his opponents had given him the benefit of the doubt to do so.

that eventually brought the legitimacy of the former EPRDF rule to its knees to get their just deserts. Allegedly, the departing ‘deep state’ orchestrated deadly schemes and spoiler events in a bid to pull back the fast-rolling reform machines from their advancement and instead push the country to the brink of political implosion. This article takes a heuristic approach to highlight the salient features of the Ethiopian transition by analyzing the core implications set forth against Prime Minister Abiy’s ongoing policy and practices, transformational objectives, and goals.

To start with, precisely two months after the new prime minister took office in April 2018, major blood-stained events, which often made strong assertions against the departing ‘deep state’ cliques, began to unfold. Some of the remarkable and vulgar incidents included an attacker who, wearing a police uniform, hurled a grenade at a rally exhibiting solidarity, in word and in deed, with Ethiopia’s new prime minister and his reform agenda. This incident culminated in a sudden stampede leaving at least two people killed and more than 150 people injured, triggering pandemonium as panicked people rushed to safety (Hadra, 2018).

In the following month of July, an Ethiopian engineer, who served as chief project manager of the \$4-billion Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, was killed; thereby the progress of such a megaproject was hindered. In October the same year, a contingent of angry soldiers from the Ethiopian National Defense Force walked into the PM’s palace under the pretext of requesting a pay rise. Although PM Abiy tactically calmed the situation by offering to do ten military push-ups with them, later in a session with the country’s legislative branch, he openly accused the soldiers of not only being unlawful and dangerous but having the intention to abort the ongoing reforms in the country (BBC News, 2018b). Perhaps, this incident might have been an ominous sign of a similar lethal event that materialized nearly a year later, namely the foiled coup in Amhara region, in the mountainous north of Ethiopia, in which the chief of staff of the Ethiopian army was shot and killed by his bodyguard at his home in Addis Ababa. In parallel, these serious incidents served to fuel the ongoing and deadly inter- and intra-communal conflict and violence in almost all of the major regions in the country, Oromia, Somali, Amhara, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples’ Region as well as the two municipalities of Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa, and resulted in displacing almost 3 million people since 2018 (Pinna, 2019). In any case, unconfirmed hearsay creates additional doubts that the brutality has been incited by the new ‘deep state’ overwhelmed by the PM’s Oromo ethnic nation as an approach to legitimize security crackdowns and to introduce territorial organizations that are more in line with the political goals of the experts under the head administrator’s control in the capital. PM Abiy Ahmed, who rose to power as Ethiopia’s fourth prime minister by a stroke of luck, faces critical and lengthy challenges obstructing his ambitious reform pledges, in which he thought he would deliver Ethiopia to Nietzsche’s Superman status and thereby would herald a future of abundance and peaceful co-existence among Ethiopians. However, PM Abiy is confronted with the same anxiety that Nietzsche expressed in Zarathustra, that is, the populace would soon refuse admittance to this ideal due to lassitude, so they

would cast off ‘Superman’ to replace him with the ‘Last Man’ (Fukuyama, 2018). On the contrary, it appears that PM Abiy’s political reforms have not been well-received, and the vivacious and charming 43-year-old prime minister has been severely criticized for being more concerned with designing a cult of personality than solving the country’s crisis. In his maiden speech as prime minister, Abiy Ahmed said, “In one way, the world is eagerly awaiting our country’s transition, and in another way, they are waiting in fear...” (Manek, 2018). In fact, a year later, the country was far closer to political turmoil than it had been when he had made his inauguration speech on April 2, 2018 (Manek, 2018).

Retracing the Hegelian principle that argues that the only rational solution to the desire for recognition is universal recognition, in which the dignity of every human being is recognized, such concept of universal recognition is only a catchword. This “beguiling model on the front page” and the distinctiveness based on socio-political identity, particularly in modern Ethiopia, are some of the chief challenges that the empire builders of northern Abyssinia, who constitute the ‘deep state,’ should confront. The reality, true to the Hegelian principle, that the world was formerly accustomed to regarding the definition of universal recognition is now facing the challenges evolving from, but perhaps not limited to, the ever-changing communication technology repositioning civilizations in a new era, which seemingly perpetuates an existential threat to the recognition of the rights of individuals, groups or nations and cultural identity.

‘Cultural identity’ is an unavoidable reality providing self-definition to the entire Africa continent, and more so, Ethiopia’s already polarized heterogeneity. Ethiopia’s emerging cultural identity, its consciousness, and the insatiable hunt for realigning the nation’s strategy with the interests of different groups and individuals are becoming important concepts that form the basis for what is happening to Ethiopia’s political transition. It is an undeniable fact that, in the event of entirely ignoring populist patriots, government officials will exploit the situation just to drive themselves forward to the highest political echelon. Such ethnic-nationalist politicians lock onto the feelings of disparagement and would go all out to appeal to those people who express the concerns that they were formerly disregarded and now the same is happening to PM Abiy’s ongoing government reforms. Accordingly, such groups with their narrow nationalist agenda will soon pose direct threats to the reform agenda of the new PM. However, the current transition is also tested by the efforts to heal past hurts and reunite a country seemingly Balkanized into smaller ethnically homogeneous nations and nationalities that have felt affronted in the past two centuries. It is important to note that Abiy’s first few months in office have seen numerous positive human rights changes and a restored feeling of good faith following quite a long time of fights and instability that accompanied the many years of the tyrannical rule.

Consequently, the question on the table is whether PM Abiy and his established reformist team could give a guarantee to all marginalized nations, groups, and individuals that their concerns will be satisfactorily addressed and consolidated in

the ongoing transition. Another perilous challenge to PM Abiy's reforms emanates from the foreign debt he inherited from the previous government in April 2018. How many of his government's operations come from foreign debt? Even though PM Abiy Ali claimed that the ongoing economic reforms were designed in such a way to thrust Ethiopia forward to an iconic stage by 2030, the UN's cautionary remarks regarding Ethiopia's foreign debt burden may hinder the government's restructuring processes, which may further increase the existing macroeconomic imbalance. On another occasion, Vera Songwe, the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), raised eyebrows on the worrying status of Ethiopia's foreign debt, which, according to the Ethiopian finance ministry, amounted to \$52.57 billion (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2019). She further recommends that, in order to implement reforms, Ethiopia needs about \$10 billion to support investments. Ethiopia's government, in 2018 alone, recorded a debt equal in value to 60 percent of the country's gross domestic product. Perhaps the lull in the mechanical and extractive industries has basically brought slower growth in construction, owing to foreign trade deficiencies and, more significantly, higher prices of imported construction materials. In addition, in more manufacturing and agriculture sectors, these factors may have contributed to a huge degree of growth deceleration, shackling Ethiopia's real gross domestic product's (GDP) growth rate to 7.7 percent in FY2018 (World Bank Group, 2019).

Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali came to power when each component of the nation encountered a dangerous realignment process slanting towards culture and creed; where the center is never again trustworthy, and as time passes by, the shortcomings of the system turn out to be increasingly discernable to everybody and anybody. Now, anybody with preconceived ideas about the EPRDF's firm grip of leadership would not be swayed to accept the inclination that Ethiopia is now tiptoeing on the way towards a failed state. Such a political setting portrays Ethiopia at a stage of total insufficiency both at the center and the regional level, thus creating a vast power vacuum, making authority at every level flimsy. This causes two primary side effects, one with the determination to speed up the further weakening of the regime and the second with the capability of creating a hostile atmosphere, ostensibly fostering the emergence of ethnic-based conflicts.

Thus, in this part of the article, I am obliged to address the ongoing political talk in Ethiopia in the light of the ongoing transitional reforms, major changes, and the important agreements that brought about new sets of political standards. For example, there are neo-ultranationalist groups, i.e., heavyweight politicians with an unshakable enthusiasm for a neo-patriotic plan, in which they still keep the outrageous political

■ **Now, anybody with preconceived ideas about the EPRDF's firm grip of leadership would not be swayed to accept the inclination that Ethiopia is now tiptoeing on the way towards a failed state.**

feelings based on ultra-nationalism as a metaphorical “holy relic” through which they believe they can win the enthusiasm of their kin. The political philosophy of PM Abiy Ahmed’s ‘Medemer’ to merge the peripheral regional states’ political parties who were formerly affiliates, such as those of Somali, Afar, *Benishangul-Gumuz*, and Harar regional states, was criticized by his opponents for building a massive power base. However, the new premier feels this is the only way to lead the country out of the maze of tyrannical regimes that have long lingered in the second most populated nation in the continent for nearly two centuries if not more.

3. Challenges

3.1. *The dilemma of ‘deep state’ and ‘departing dynasties’*

Since Abiy Ahmed took over premiership, the front coalition that had ruled Ethiopia for nearly three decades did a somersault by moving from its previous policy of national independence to one of welcoming Western capitalists, while the new premier started to incorporate his country into the community of America’s Middle Eastern Arab allies in the region, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. As he made such a major but exclusive decision without national agreement or even discussion, it became a possible cause of conflict fueling the persistent and widespread racial tensions that were synonymous with Ethiopia’s bloody transition resulting in lots of deaths from violent inter- and intra-ethnic clashes. The highly pragmatic PM advocated a strong state to bring about market-like reforms in every aspect of the Ethiopian political society, to establish political order and an ethical way of life based on respect for freedom, human rights, impartiality before the law, and finally, a democratic regime that shall conform to the principles and the values derived from the premises of the civil public discourse. The fact of the matter is that novelty is persistently confronted by enormous challenges.

Herein lies the crux of the problem and what could present a potential hindrance to the implementation of PM Abiy’s bold political pledges to transition Ethiopia to a fully-fledged liberal democracy. Some of the major stumbling blocks are the “indefatigable” challenges of introducing liberal reforms to a country where everything and anything about authentic democracy in the former regime was considered unfit for the system and where the despotic rule was considered inherent in the country’s culture and history. Abruptly opening up a democratic opportunity that values the freedom of speech and the right to assembly, among others, without providing context-based knowledge of the process of democratization might be a significant barrier to the PM’s reform project. Adherents of the ‘deep state’ remaining in the various government organs, who are not on board for implementing the reform agenda, are in a position to derail the momentum of change and cause frustration among the public. The liberal reformist government riding a wave of good feeling about the socio-political and economic changes has suspected the motives of these established elements and has held them responsible for designing deadly schemes to disrupt the flow of progress realized in the country so far. For example, Abiy’s government laid allegations against the disappointed but departing ‘deep state’ in the

security services for some disruptive acts of subversion, including the projectile or grenade assault at the pro-Abiy rally in Addis Ababa in June, 2018 (Badwaza, 2018).

3.2. The awareness of ethnocultural identity

The end of the TPLF-led EPRDF regime brought a new wave of ethnic identity consciousness, which departed from the principle of ethnonationalism to create a kind of ultranationalism that was not known in the country. It has been unknown to ethnic groups to gather in crowds on the streets waving various nations' flags symbolizing the differences from others while marching all over the megacities built on multicultural diversities, such as Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. Accordingly, in the rise of ultranationalism, every ethnic group and individual steadfastly demand full autonomy to exercise their choice of self-governing to uphold both their communal affiliations and their cultural identity. Ethnonationalism, evolving from various ethnic groups, proceeds to challenge PM Abiy's call for Ethiopian solidarity, maintaining the conflict between major ethnic nations alive; in Oromo and Amhara, for instance, where different nationalities keep on requesting the privilege to frame their own states under the government's framework, or in the case of the recent Sidama referendum demanding to form the 10th regional state, an event to be respected as a sign of self-motivation and a pluralistic interpretation of culture. Nowadays, we see crowds of people flapping ethnic flags as they parade all over the world: "in Barcelona, Britain, Austria, and France, in the main streets of Kurdistan, in the United States, and in the public squares of Istanbul. Flag-waving for and against political causes is back in fashion. [Neo-]Nationalism is everywhere" (Tamir, 2019). Therefore, the comeback of extreme nationalism, 'ultranationalism,' has taken the world by storm (Ibid.). Regional political pundits contend that the quick pace of the political changes under the new premier's leadership has given breathing space to some of the ethnic-based aspirations that in the past were held under tight restraints. This has "played on historic grievances between the different ethnic groups and reignited territorial border disputes that have resulted in mass displacement" (Jeffrey, 2019).

The ever-widening ethnic divide in Ethiopia, mainly between Oromos and Amharas, presents two distinct differences: one evolving from the Oromo and Amhara elites' historical interpretations of Ethiopia's dihard dynasties, as the former believe that the present political society of Ethiopia is the inheritor of the departing Axumite and Solomonic dynasties, who forcefully conquered and disgracefully manipulated the peripheral sovereign tribal nations including, but not limited to, Oromos, Somalis in the Ogaden region, and others at the hands of Ethiopian emperors. The oncedynamic core state conquered the periphery region at the end of the 19th century (Markakis, 2011). The subjugated marginal lands, mostly present-day Oromia and Ogaden regions, possessed the needed resources and the strength of the Abyssinian Empire that ruled Ethiopia from the late 18th to the late 19th century. Thus, considering such disgracefully prejudiced historical events, the Oromo elite feels eligible to rule Ethiopia as a *de facto* reparation gift to erase the erstwhile dynasties' acts of the humiliation of Oromos. Moreover, they also demand to have their language

recognized as an official language given that Oromos form the single majority ethnic group in Ethiopia. In contrast, the dissolving dynasty consisting mainly of the Amhara ethnic group considers that had it not made the sacrificial offerings during the past Abyssinian era, the faultless and virtuous formation of the modern Ethiopian state would have not been achieved. However, Amhara elites argue that no one should be held responsible for the events that took place centuries ago and that the prospect of power and access to national resources shall be handled in an equitable and democratic manner.

These accounts alone are insufficient to identify the last indicator to measure the degree in which the contemporary ultranationalist division in Ethiopia is inconveniencing PM Abiy's reform progress. In any case, they show how the ascent of the two major ethnic and ultranationalist discourses together with the permissiveness of social media can spur the wistful battle for power during the nation's historical political transition through capitalizing on the historical interpretation of Ethiopia's past occasions, which process would grant the triumphant group a bright political future in Ethiopia. This is the current reality, not only posing a challenge to PM Abiy's infant government but also causing the decline of state-nationalism.

4. Theological schism within the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church

While all around the world of today power has been characterized as political, monetary, and military in nature, in present-day Ethiopia the idea of 'power intensity' necessitates somewhat to be deciphered as an indispensable subject arising from the religious-cultural reality of the country. Political challenges and civil strife in Ethiopia are currently in an indefensible and even conceivably ill-fated phase. This is neither an overstated case, in order to make my point of view attractive, nor is it blown out of proportion as endless conflicts and clashes have had precarious consequences, e.g., claiming many lives and making Ethiopia become the host of the largest number of internally displaced people in the world. However, the EPRDF's severe system and its ethno-federalist political order that began to govern the country as far back as 1991 have been frequently blamed for the underlying reasons of the present challenges confronting PM Abiy's transitional reforms. At least, this helped the ascent of the open awareness of its social character and an innate ultranationalist realignment through which they look for "political amazingness." Despite the fact that the EPRDF's rule, taken at face value, was simply regarded as a law-based democratic system with a stable practice of separating states from religions, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) has been indisputably the "preeminent gift" of the regime's political force. As a result, the more and more influential and potent Orthodox Tewahedo Church, until now, has remained intolerant to the beliefs of other Christian denominations. This tendency was challenged by PM Hailemariam Desalegn, the successor of PM Meles Zenawi who passed away on August 20, 2012. As Hailemariam Desalegn (the eighth prime minister of Ethiopia from September 21, 2012, to 2018) and his successor, PM Abiy Ahmed Ali (in office from April 2, 2018), have happened to be people with Protestant background, they have been

exposed to the concepts and values of Anglo-Saxon Protestants, the companions of their denominations, and no wonder that the new “political darlings” and this new political asymmetry redefining the original proximity seemingly pose a threat to Ethiopia by an uncommon, disturbing state of power imbalance.

The second challenge seems to be more relevant than the former one, as the biggest and most precarious challenge that the EOTC has ever confronted is the growing schism within its congregational churchgoers. Given the growing awareness of multilingualism and multiculturalism in Ethiopia, the realignment of cultural identity through language is becoming a serious concern that questions not only MP Abiy’s transitional agenda but also the religious institutions of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC). The Oromo clerics’ recent grievances are partly linked to those historical grudges that resulted in the long-standing rift between Amhara and Oromo people. Hence the Oromo clerics’ definitive demand for an urgent reform to pave the way for the process of the conceptualization and institutionalization of the Oromo language (Afaan Oromo) within the EOTC. Oromo clerics claimed that there is “no sacred document or scripture or tradition that prevents using various mother tongues for religious practices; rather all the scriptures of the church including the Holy Bible support the use of different languages for spiritual ministry” (Desalegn, 2012: iii). Such concern, which is on the rise, is part of today’s global reality. Recently, in a joint statement signed by the head of Egypt’s Al-Azhar Mosque and Pope Francis, the head of the Catholic Church and sovereign of the Vatican City State avowed that “[t]he pluralism and the diversity of religions, colour, sex, race and language are willed by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings” (Lawler, 2019).

Historically, similar concerns precipitated the final separation between the Eastern Christian Church from the Western Church. “The Great Schism of 1054 is actually noted as the first major split in the history of Christianity, separating the Orthodox Church in the East from the Roman Catholic Church in the West” (Fairchild, 2019).

Therefore, the Great Schism of 1054 paved the way for the division of Chalcedonian Christianity along geographical patterns of faith into what are now known as the Western liturgical denominations, such as the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church, which differ in, among others, whether they use unleavened bread for the ceremony of communion or not. Thus, the likely split coming about to the EOTC could be associated with more of the cultural identity of these groups. Hence, the face value of the budding theological contests revolving around the demand for the recognition of religious-cultural and multilingual diversity within the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church is likely to create great schisms. This, in the end, could result in the disruption of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church into two bodies; the Oromo Orthodox congregation and Amhara Orthodox churchgoers, both soon departing with their own language of the Lord, Afaan Oromo and Amharic, respectively. Thus, the combination of the above narratives is a practical test capable of presenting a new recipe to “blow up” MP Abiy’s reform agendas.

5. Conclusion

The premier's move of swiftly pressing the pedals has exacerbated longstanding tensions between ethnic nations, and as a consequence, there emerged a large number of ultranationalist politicians of which many spread straightforwardly narrow-minded messages. As a result, Ethiopia has recorded more internally displaced people since PM Abiy's come to power. The most recent episode happened in October 2018 after prominent media mogul and Oromo activist Jawar Mohammed blamed PM Abiy's regime for attempting to coordinate an assault against him. In response to this claim, Jawar's supporters expressed dissension and discord against the government, a move that later developed into an ethnic conflict across all major cities in Oromia region leaving 86 people dead. Such an unprecedented act can make the already fragile situation of the country worse unless a quick but institutionalized solution is put in place in time, thus the prime minister and his team are not assured of success in the elections of May 2020.

Given the premier's unapologetically personalized rule, he has chosen to make key policy decisions singlehandedly with little or no reference to party procedures to reach structural consensus. Some of the major policy decisions executed steadily include, among others, the shaky rapprochement with Eritrea. From a "heretic" viewpoint, water is one of the priorities of the deal. Regrettably, the terms, conditions, and parameters of the Ethio-Eritrea peace deal were neither plainly spoken out nor were communicated to the public, thus the sustainability of the peace accord remains doubtful. Last but not least, PM Abiy did not enjoy the full-fledged consensus of the front coalition to officially dissolve the alliance of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). In order to establish a new national political party, the Ethiopian Prosperity Party raised from the ashes of the former EPRDF. Henceforth, the cynical political opposition, as well as key members of the former coalition, see this move as a design strategy of institutionalizing a "tailored" powerbase allowing PM Abiy to exercise greater and more personalized control over the state and the party machinery countrywide.

While there is some truth to those criticisms, the Ethiopian leader has generally proved to have an "all talk" leadership style — saying he will do many impressive or politically exciting things but, in essence, he is often confronted by a bagful of challenges. Colonel Abiy Ahmed himself being a political orphan of the former EPRDF was nearly born and brought up in an unreliable regime that later defied even analysts' judgmental assumptions in the early years of its establishment by providing political opportunities to their people in a bid to reap the donors' support. However, inwardly, they installed an impermeable elite protection system to shield themselves from open political challenges that might undermine the tenure of the occupants. With such historical circumstances forming the background of the country's political trajectory, it is difficult to predict the course in which the present transition in Ethiopia would end up. They try to guarantee transparency and democratization through a process of fast, befuddling, and troublesome decision-making, which may also contain additional hazards. As the former regime started behaving

at the onset of their rule between 1995 and 2005 similarly, it is difficult to predict whether the new premier will soon take a different course. One would wonder why a son's character or behavior cannot be expected to resemble that of his father. A "like father, like son" leadership attitude is apparently in display in contemporary Ethiopia's transition. While the jury is still out on the question of providing a pertinent and straightforward recommendation, I believe that getting timely and appropriate answers to the abovementioned challenges is not only critical, but it is also a litmus test for PM Abiy's reform era's successes. As the Somali proverb goes, however sweet date bran is, the palm's seed tests the strength of the jawbone (that is, there is a stone in every date). ☀

Notes

- 1 Qeerroo and Qarree (literally, 'bachelor' and 'bachelorette,' respectively) are Oromo terms meaning politically active young men and women.
- 2 Revolutionary democracy is a term of political science, first coined by Vladimir Lenin, leader of the Russian Bolshevik Revolution, denoting a political economy of nations in transition from feudo-capitalism to socialism. But in Ethiopia, and according to the interpretation of the EPRDF's vanguard leaders, it means establishing democracy by forcefully restoring a former undemocratic government to power.

References

- Abbink, J. (2009). The Ethiopian second republic and the fragile "social contract." *Africa Spectrum* **44** (2), 3-28.
- Bach, J.-N. (2014). EPRDF's nation-building: tinkering with convictions and pragmatism. *Cadernos de Estudos Africanos* **27**, 103-126.
- Badwaza, Y. (2018). Ethiopia: turning promise into progress. *freedomhouse.org*. <https://www.freedomhouse.org/2018/09/28/freedomhouse.org/article/reform-ethiopia-turning-promise-progress> [19.01.2020]
- BBC News (2018). Abiy Ahmed: protesting Ethiopian soldiers wanted to kill me. *BBC.com*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-45903244> [10.18.2019]
- Bjornlund, E. C. (2004). *Beyond Free and Fair: Monitoring Elections and Building Democracy*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.
- Braukämper, U. (1977). Islamic principalities in Southeast Ethiopia between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. (Part one). *Ethiopianist Notes* **1** (1), 17–56.
- Brechenmacher, S. (2017). *Civil Society Under Assault: Repression and Responses in Russia, Egypt, and Ethiopia*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington DC.
- Burnell, P. (2004). Democracy promotion: the elusive quest for grand strategies. *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft* **2**, 100–116.
- Desalegn L. (2012). Language and religion: the case of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church. *AAU Institutional Repository*. <http://etd.aau.edu.et/bitstream/handle/123456789/6362/Desalegn%20Leshyibelu.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> [01.20.2020]
- Fairchild, M. (2019). The Great Schism of 1054 and the split of Christianity. *learnreligions.com*. <https://www.learnreligions.com/the-great-schism-of-1054-4691893> [01.20.2020]
- Fukuyama, F. (2018). *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment*. Farrar, Strus and Giroux, New York.

- Hadra A. (2018). Deadly grenade attack at Ethiopian prime minister's rally. *The New York Times Online*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/23/world/africa/ethiopia-explosion-abiy.html> [06.23.2018]
- Human Rights Watch. (2016). *"Such a Brutal Crackdown"- Killings and Arrests in Response to Ethiopia's Oromo Protests*. Human Rights Watch, Washington DC.
- Huntington, S. P. (1991a). Democracy's third wave. *Journal of Democracy* **2** (2), 14-24.
- Huntington, S. P. (1991b). *Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*. University of Oklahoma Press, Norman.
- Jeffrey, J. (2019). Briefing: five challenges facing Ethiopia's Abiy. *The New Humanitarian*, [thenewhumanitarian.org](https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2019/10/16/Abiy-Ethiopia-Eritrea-Nobel-peace-Tigray). <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2019/10/16/Abiy-Ethiopia-Eritrea-Nobel-peace-Tigray> [10.16.2019]
- Lawler, P. (2019). Not all religions are part of God's plan. *CatholicCulture.org*. <https://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/not-all-religions-are-part-gods-plan/> [01.20.2020]
- Manek, N. (2018). Can Abiy Ahmed save Ethiopia? *ForeignPolicy.com*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/04/04/can-abiy-ahmed-save-ethiopia/> [04.04.2019]
- Markakis, J. (2011). *Ethiopia: The Last Two Frontiers*. James Currey, New York.
- Olson, M. (1982). *The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagflation, and Social Rigidities*. Yale University Press, New Haven.
- Pinna, M. (2019). Ethiopia: 3 million internally displaced in escalating humanitarian crisis. *euronews.com*. <https://www.euronews.com/2019/01/31/ethiopia-3-million-internally-displaced-in-escalating-humanitarian-crisis> [01.31.2019]
- Tamir, Y. (2019). *Why Nationalism*. Princeton University Press, New Jersey.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2018). *ETHIOPIA - National Human Development Report 2018: Industrialization with a Human Face*. United Nations Development Programme, Addis Ababa.
- United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. (2019). UN official cautions Ethiopia against debt burden. *UNECA.org*. <https://www.uneca.org/content/un-official-cautions-ethiopia-against-debt-burden> [09.09.2019]
- Woolbert, R. G. (1935). Feudal Ethiopia and her army. *Foreign Affairs* **14** (1), 71-81.
- World Bank Group. (2015). *Ethiopia Poverty Assessment 2014*. World Bank, Washington DC.
- World Bank Group. (2019). *Ethiopia's Steady Economic Growth Leads to Poverty Reduction*. World Bank, Addis Ababa.
- Zewde G. (2014). *Yohannes IV of Ethiopia: A Political Biography*. The Red Sea Press, New Jersey.

NATION-BUILDING PREDICAMENT, TRANSITION FATIGUE, AND FEAR OF STATE COLLAPSE:

AN EMERGING PHENOMENON IN POST-2015 ETHIOPIA

MERESSA TSEHAYE GEBREWAHAD

POLITICAL SCIENCE AND STRATEGIC STUDIES, MEKELLE UNIVERSITY, ETHIOPIA

MERESSA21T@GMAIL.COM

Abstract

Ethiopia, evolved from Tigray, is known by its history of having been an empire (e.g., the Axumite kingdom) and having been independent. The fundamental weakness of the Ethiopian state has been the lack of inclusive national consensus, hampered by national oppression and the dilemma of democratizing a feudal state. The post-1991 TPLF-EPRDF-led Ethiopia has been experimenting with federalist nation-building to address Ethiopia's historical contradictions: national and class oppression. The 1995 FDRE Constitution established a federal system and subsequently recognized the right of nations to self-determination including secession, self-administration, and local development. The constitution also declared that the Ethiopian nations were the "sovereign owners" of the constitution. However, the coming of Abiy Ahmed to power and his policy reforms based on 'neo-pan-Ethiopianism' opened the box of Pandora of secessionist, irredentist, and federalist forces opposing his plan to recentralize the ethnic federation, as it happened similarly in the case of former Yugoslavia. PM Abiy's reforms have been branded as those of the 'Mikael Gorbachev of Ethiopia' for his sweeping campaign against the 27 years of federalist control. The article investigates the nation-building aspirations, transition fatigue, the predicaments of secessionist, federalist, and assimilationist narratives, and the subsequent fear of 'state collapse' in the post-2018 crisis in Ethiopia.

Keywords

Ethiopia, assimilationist, secessionist, and federalist narratives, transition fatigue, fear of state collapse.

Received: November 2019 | 1st Revision: January 2020 | Accepted: March 2020

1. Background and Introduction

Ethiopia's federal nation-building is still in the making and is full of controversies about its philosophical and political foundations, institutional arrangements, and aspirations. Scholars focusing on Ethiopian federalism define it as a “unique phenomenon” (Abbink, 2006) in Africa as it recognizes the right of nations to self-determination up to secession. This introduction thus aims at highlighting the historical contradictions of the Ethiopian state and the process of nation-building as well as the emerging political forces to challenge the federalism experiment since the coming of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to power in April 2018. He champions a centralist ‘neo-Ethiopianist’ narrative as opposed to the approach of the ethnic nationalist federation, so it is not surprising that the question of the self-determination of nationalities has been a pervasive concern in Ethiopia. As a result, the federalist-assimilationist polarization peaks at an unprecedented level as in the case of former Yugoslavia (International Crisis Group, 2019). The International Crisis Group's report of December 2019 put the situation in Ethiopia on the list of the “ten conflicts to watch in 2020” and warned that if the attempt to reform the federation was not properly managed, state collapse or disintegration would be the worst-case scenario (International Crisis Group, 2019).

Ethiopia, evolved from the north, from Tigray¹, has been known for being an empire-state (e.g., the Axumite kingdom and many other sultanates in the lowlands and the southern part of Ethiopia) and for territorial independence (the only African country that escaped European colonialism though it lost Eritrea, the kingdom's gateway to the international market and Italian colonialism). Ethiopia also faced protracted peasant protests (the Woyane² peasant protest of 1943 in Tigray later evolved into a rebellion with the legendary slogan of “Land to the Tiller,” see Gebru, 1991, and was continued by the Ethiopian Student Movement of the 1960s and 70s), the social revolution of 1974 that heralded the end of the Solomonic dynasty and the beginning of the Marxist-Leninist Derg regime (1974-1991), and protracted armed struggles for “national self-determination” in the geographically peripheral part of the country (e.g., Eritrea, Tigray, Ogaden, and Oromia) that led to the downfall of the ‘unitarist’ or ‘Ethiopiawinet’³ Derg regime in May 1991, and since 1991, Ethiopia has been experimenting with a federalist nation-building project (Gebru, 2009).

In the 16th century, the empire of Ethiopia degenerated into the *Zemene Mesafint* (the Era of Princes) that introduced the political culture of regionalism and ethnonationalism, opposing centralized statehood (Andargachew, 1993). Since then, ethnonationalism, regionalism, and pan-Ethiopianism remain the general theme of the discourse on the Ethiopian political anomalies.

Furthermore, the internal struggles and the expansion from the northern Abyssinian kingdom (dominantly Semitic families: Tigray and Amhara) to the southern part (dominantly Cushitic: Oromo, Somali, Sidama, Wolayta, and Omotic and Nilotic people) of the country have contributed to the state of affairs of contemporary Ethiopia. However, the Ethiopian state has not fully prevented the negative impacts of colonialism (the main features of post-colonial African states). For instance, it lacks

democratic institutional foundations (though it claims a long history of statehood) due to an age-old absolute monarchy that lasted for a millennia and culminated in the 1974 revolution against Emperor Haile Selassie; the 17 years of the Marxist-Leninist military regime of the Derg and its notorious Red Terror and protracted civil wars; and the single dominant party regime of the EPRDF⁴ since 1991 (Teshale, 2008). Moreover, the Ethiopian state lacks legitimacy as its boundaries, institutions, and regimes have been contested by secessionist, irredentist, federalist, and assimilationist forces since its formative years.

Religious and cultural diversities further undermine the quest for societal cohesiveness and national consensus as the multinational polity still faces irreconcilable contradictions between the idea of Ethiopianism and ethnic nationalism. The country's borders are also fragile and contested as they divide similar ethnic groups, and consequently, this continues to cause trans-border conflicts, which all together compromise the prospects for the social and political legitimacy of the Ethiopian state (Azar and Moon, 1988; Merera, 2007).

Furthermore, Ethiopia in its historical evolution also defied the nation-state model of the 19th- and 20th-century Europe and hence evolved into a multiethnic and multination state. The successive Ethiopian regimes have followed the policy of nation-building from above under the slogan of "Ethiopia First" (Andargachew, 1993) (like the postcolonial African governments' slogans saying "United We Stand" and "One People One Heart") and have been relying on territorial nationalism, or "absolute Ethiopianism," that has led to controversies by denying the multinational feature of the non-colonial empire-state of Ethiopia. Ethiopia, therefore, has uniquely produced three "irreconcilable" political narratives, including the assimilationist/neo-pan-Ethiopianist, the national oppression-based accommodationist, and the secessionist/irredentist one, which define today's national dilemmas (Alemseged, 2004).

The narrative of absolute Ethiopianism has demanded different cultures and languages to be melted into one national identity, language, and culture; which means the Amharanization of the state (Merera, 2007). The absolute Ethiopianist ('Ethiopia First' narrative) nation-building policy has been, therefore, a structural reason for the proliferation of secessionist armed struggles in Eritrea, which started in 1961 and led to the independence of Eritrea promoted by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) in 1991. The secessionist Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) have also been continuing their struggle for independence from Ethiopia since 1975 though they have not been successful to date. Furthermore, pan-Ethiopian groups are dominantly perceived as "chauvinists" or "neftegna" by the federalist and secessionist forces who consider Ethiopia an empire-state which should foster remodeling or deconstruction (the opinion of federalist forces) or even decolonization (a view supported by irredentist and secessionist forces). Moreover, pan-Ethiopianists have been criticized for their territorial expansionist approach and have been branded, by those who claim that indigenous people are the settlers, as the remnants/sympathizers of the *Neftegna* system who

waged war on different ethnic groups that were forced to drop their national pride and identity to become Ethiopians (Merera, 2007). Merera Gudina (2007) further argued that the *Neftegna* system had been led dominantly by Emperor Menelik who had shaped the topography of Ethiopia by incorporating different kingdoms and sultanates from the south, southeastern, and western parts of Ethiopia. Emperor Menelik was determined to create the empire of Ethiopia under the motto of “one people and one Ethiopia” through these assimilation instruments: the Solomonic dynasty as the royal family, Orthodox Christianity as the state religion, and Amharic language as the only official language. The creation of “one Ethiopian nation” continued under what was then termed ‘makinat’ (Amharic for pacification or civilization) through unification, reunification, pacification and/or colonization, and ‘masgeber’ (Amharic for exact tribute) that later led to class oppression and the movement of “Land to the Tiller.”

Since 1960, Ethiopia also faced several armed and non-armed liberation movements including those of the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Party (EPRP), the All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement (a.k.a. MEISON), and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF). Three of them agreed on the two major contradictions of the state: national and class oppression (Gebru, 2009) that served as the historical and political basis for the post-1995 federalization experiment (Merera, 2003). However, unlike the EPRP and MEISON, the TPLF gave priority to national oppression over class or land question (TPLF, 1976). After 17 years of civil wars (1975-1991), the Derg regime and its assimilationist policy based on the ‘Ethiopia First’ narrative were defeated by the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and the EPLF jointly on May 28, 1991.

After the fall of the Derg regime in May 1991, the TPLF-EPRDF-led government introduced the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia of 1995 that legally and politically made a formal acknowledgment of the three contradictions: Article 39 on the equality of nationalities, Article 40 on land ownership, and chapter three recognized that individual and group rights were mutually compatible rights. More importantly, the new constitution made Article 39, on self-determination of nations and nationalities up to secession, and Article 40, on joint land ownership by the state and nationalities to balance the interests of secessionist, federalist, and assimilationist forces, pillar articles to address historically long-lasting contradictions (Aalen, 2002; 2006). The “secession clause” has made the FDRE Constitution

Since 1960, Ethiopia also faced several armed and non-armed liberation movements including those of the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Party (EPRP), the All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement (a.k.a. MEISON), and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF).

the most contested fundamental law of Ethiopia ever and a “unique phenomenon” in Ethiopia’s political history and constitutional reengineering (Abbink, 2006; Asafa, 2018; Kymlicka, 2006; Turton, 2006). The constitution uniquely empowers the Second Chamber (locally known as the House of Federation) to interpret the constitution, set federal budget frameworks for the regional states, resolve emerging conflicts between regions, and organize self-determination rights up to secession or referendum; and it aspires to create a federal, multinational state and build a federalist society out of the oldest unitary and feudal empire.

Moreover, the federalist experiment, which could ultimately transform the country into an inclusive multinational federation, has been thought to be the only remaining option to maintain the territorial integrity of the Ethiopian state, to heal the historical “wounds,” and to solve the contradictions among nations. Indeed, the federal system has also been considered the only remaining option to contain the potential threats from radical secessionists–irredentists as well as assimilationists, i.e., ‘absolute Ethiopianists’ (Markakis, 2011). Finally, it has been widely expected to justify the mutual destiny of a shared rule, a bigger market, a larger population, secured sovereignty instead of constitutionally entrenched self-rule and development, the containment of ethnic nationalist and territorialist polarization, and transforming center–periphery, minority–majority, pastoralist–agriculturalist, and highland–lowland dichotomies (Alemseged, 2004).

2. Resurrected nation-building predicaments and transition fatigue: a post-2015 phenomenon

Following the death of the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, the strong man who effectively managed security and politics in the federalized Ethiopian state winning legitimacy, and indeed building a personal cult, within the EPRDF and its affiliated members and getting undeniable support from international actors, Ethiopia has slowly, but sometimes unpredictably fast, moved to a new and not yet established political platform.

In the first three years (from August 2012 to December 2015), since the death of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, the EPRDF leadership under Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, the first prime minister from southern Ethiopia in the modern history of the country, tried to neutralize Meles Zenawi’s strong “big man” leadership and reinstall a “loose” collective leadership of the four core EPRDF member parties both at federal and regional levels. Also the affiliated parties and regional leaders outside the EPRDF government supported the policies designed by the federal government.

Therefore, the outcomes of the first period of transition (August 2012–December 2015) were continued stability and growth, and, more importantly, the beginning of the quest for establishing a new system both within and outside of the EPRDF. The inevitable demands of political power reconfiguration have gradually been reinforced mainly by the Oromos, claiming supremacy as the most populous nation, at all levels of the government. New demands of the emerging young generation,

born and grown after the fall down of the Derg regime, including the employment of the graduated youth and a democratic opening have begun to challenge the 25 years (1991-2015) of the political establishment led by the TPLF-EPRDF.

These have not only been accelerated by the demographic change of the youth and technological revolution (i.e., social media and activism have emerged as an alternative platform for discourses), but also agenda-setting, interest articulation, aggregation, and mobilization have outbalanced the state's offer and hence aggravated the state's vulnerability to challenges within the country and the Ethiopian diaspora. In addition, the expansion of education, the increasing enrolment in colleges and universities, and the tendency of more and more college graduates further uproot the youth (in search of economic and political self-definition potentially in urban centers) from their rural and urban family-based life, while the industrial and urban establishments cannot adapt to the demographic changes. Still, the bureaucratic apparatus of the state is shouldering the burden of employment, which in turn forces the government to redirect its investable capital to salaries and, in the long run, it results in unseen consequences affecting the state's "renaissance vision" of structural transformation.

The young generation has thus been waiting for a class-based identity, i.e., the creation of the working and the middle class and the bourgeoisie from the Ethiopian "classless" society. The country has been struggling to break free from an agrarian subsistence economy into an industrial and urban-based political economy (with projects like the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, railway development plans, and by establishing industrial parks). The expansion of education and health services negated the strategy of agricultural development-led industrialization (ADLI) as the two sectors accelerated youth mobility and, finally, the abandonment of rural life, which created a big "shock" to 80% of the demographic regime; and the government faced the "separation, from rural, and integration, into urban" dilemma. In general, the fast-growing demands of the youth, scarce capital, the "resurrected" mobilization of the populists and ultranationalists, and rampant corruption have put the legitimacy of the EPRDF leadership and the optimism of the citizens in an unprecedented dilemma (Lefort, 2016).

3. Militant youth movements and mass protests: from December 2015 to February 2018

Following the 2015 federal- and regional-level election (all of the seats were won by the EPRDF and its affiliated parties), the attention of the Ethiopians was directed to the 12th TPLF and 10th EPRDF congresses held in September 2015, in Mekelle, Tigray. The 100% control of the seats of the federal and regional parliaments by the EPRDF and its affiliated parties undermined the instrumental values of elections in electoral democracy in a country where polarized political interests existed.

For those closely observing the political history of the EPRDF, congresses and renewals (like, in 2001, the TPLF rift, or the 'deep renewal' in 2018) are much more critical junctures in the analysis of continuities and changes in Ethiopian politics,

leadership, strategies, and policies as well as a way of mapping out potential opportunities and challenges ahead that have been affecting national and regional politics (Tsehay, 2015).

The 12th TPLF congress that was held in Mekelle in September 2015 sparked a new era of leadership reconfiguration within the post-2001 TPLF (“post-Bonapartist”⁵) leadership and critical influences via social media activism and the discourses of the emerging young generation (the ‘post-armed struggle generation’), who openly forward their critique against the TPLF, even by criticizing it (from within the congress and outside) on issues related to leadership secession and the integration of the new generation into political platforms, the development of Tigray, and the “no war, no peace” dilemma with Eritrea that lasted for two decades (1998-2018) (Meressa, 2015). The process of leadership reconfiguration has been continuing since the death of Meles Zenawi and passed through two major “transition” congresses (the 11th in March 2013 and the 12th in September 2015).

In September 2017, the TPLF gathered to announce the process of ‘deep renewal’ to deal with the flaring political and security crisis started in Oromia and Amhara regions in December 2015. The TPLF’s long-awaited ‘deep renewal’ (lasted for 35 days) came up with the replacement of the party chairman and the region’s president, Abay Woldu, for Dr. Debretsion Gebremichael (current chairman of the TPLF and president of Tigray) and purged Azeb Mesfin, widow of Meles Zenawi, from the TPLF Executive Committee and from the position of an EFFORT manager (Berhane, 2017).

Like the 12th TPLF congress, the 10th EPRDF congress that was held after the 12th TPLF congress in Mekelle signaled a new political process. After the death of Meles Zenawi, Hailemariam Desalegn served as a prime minister without bringing noticeable changes, he was the “legacy maintainer” of the ‘Great Leader’ (Lefort, 2016). He also followed a cluster-based “collective leadership” style, unlike Meles Zenawi’s uncontested control of the party and the state, in order to contain the inevitable power struggles within the core member parties and secure legitimacy from the EPRDF member parties. Furthermore, Hailemariam Desalegn, outsmarted by the Chief of Staff General Samora Yenus and Getachew Assefa, Chief of the Ethiopian National Intelligence and Security Service, both from Tigray (TPLF), was also viewed as a “loose” commander in chief not common in Ethiopian political culture, in which leaders have always been expected to be “strong and commanding” with the mixed use of both fear and love. But one inevitable scenario was in the pipeline as, after the slow motion of neutralizing “the strong man’s, Meles Zenawi’s, cult,” there emerged new “competitions among equals” within the ERPRDF, mainly from the Oromos and the Amharas, to control state power and replace the 27-year TPLF-EPRDF leadership. In order to achieve this, leaders of the Oromo People’s Democratic Organization (OPDO) and the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) established an alliance locally known as Oromara from which Abiy Ahmed emerged as the chairman of the EPRDF and, subsequently, as the prime minister of Ethiopia in April 2018.

4. The secessionist–irredentist–assimilationist resurrection: a post-2018 phenomenon

After 27 years (1991-2018) of a relatively stable federal system, the Ethiopian state again faces protracted violent protests across the country, which threatens the territorial integrity of Ethiopia. The resurrection of radical ethnic nationalist and absolutist, pan-Ethiopianist forces are continuing to challenge the prospects for multinational federalism.

The protests, after December 2015 in Oromia Regional State, were against the Addis Ababa “master-plan saga,” as a pretext, and claimed the control of federal power because of fundamental and historical causes as the Oromos have been the largest ethnic group in the country but had been politically marginalized and oppressed by Abyssinian ruling elites since they were incorporated into the Abyssinian Empire by Emperor Menelik II. Following the protests, the OPDO established an alliance with the ANDM under the umbrella name of Oromara⁶ (Oromo and Amhara alliance, ‘neo-pan-Ethiopianism’) to challenge the post-1989 EPRDF system that was dominantly led by the TPLF.

The Oromara alliance was defined as an alliance of the two relatively largest ethnic groups to counter the TPLF-EPRDF regime’s multinational federation. It is a majoritarian narrative that transforms the historically evolved nations’ ‘inequality narrative’ into a ‘majority–minority’ and a ‘center–periphery’ contradiction (the Amhara and the Oromo people are geographically located at the center but most of the minority regional states including Afar, Ethiopian Somali, Tigray, Gambella, and Benishangul-Gumuz are located in the periphery). However, the Team Lemma-led Oromara alliance has been challenged by the ethnic nationalist/secessionist OLF as the latter has been progressively controlling the larger portion of Oromia after Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed became the premier. Abiy Ahmed is the first Oromo prime minister in the modern history of Ethiopia who unexpectedly champions neo-pan-Ethiopianism⁷ (Fisher and Meressa, 2018), a counter-narrative to the 27 years of ethnic nationalist-based federalism. Furthermore, Abiy Ahmed began his reforms by delegitimizing the 27 years of federal nation-building, labeling the developmental democratic state as a “dark era,”⁸ and crimi-

The Oromara alliance was defined as an alliance of the two relatively largest ethnic groups to counter the TPLF-EPRDF regime’s multinational federation. It is a majoritarian narrative that transforms the historically evolved nations’ ‘inequality narrative’ into a ‘majority–minority’ and a ‘center–periphery’ contradiction.

nalizing the former EPRDF government as “state terrorists” who had aggravated the national security crisis and had brought political instability.

4.1. The Oromo dilemma: balancing ‘Oromummaa’ and ‘neo-pan-Ethiopianism’

In the last quarter of the 20th century, the Ethiopian state faced secessionist and irredentist armed liberation struggles for territorial independence, based on the colonial thesis (EPLF, 1971), in Eritrea (ELF and EPLF), Oromia (OLF), and the Ethiopian Somali (ONLF) regions. Inspired by the Eritrean liberation movements, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) have also continued their struggle for independence from Ethiopia since 1973, though they are not successful in achieving their stated objective till now. Since then, the secessionist forces from Oromia and Somali⁹ regions have been continuing to shape and influence Ethiopian politics, nation-building, and security.

Secessionist and irredentist forces claimed that “Abyssinia (central and northern Ethiopia, the historic core of Ethiopian polity) colonized roughly half of the territories and peoples of today’s Ethiopia to form a colonial empire-state in the last quarter of the 19th century” (Mesle, 2016). Asafa Jalata discussed the Oromo view of the Abyssinian colonization of Oromia as follows: “Conquered by and absorbed into Ethiopia in the nineteenth century, the Oromos were removed from the global community by the Abyssinian system of political slavery. Oromia was denied status as a nation among the community of nations. The Ethiopians established a settler-colonial structure in Oromia, erased the cultural identity and the language of the Oromo from public life and the historical record, and isolated Oromos from one another” (Asafa, 2002: 136).

From the colonialist thesis’ vantage point, Ethiopia is, therefore, a colonial empire that needs to undergo decolonization, and ethnonational colonies should be independent states (Alem, 2003: 9). Thus, Ethiopia continues to be viewed as an African colonial state and its existential contradiction should be resolved through decolonization or unconditional independence like in other colonized African states of the 20th century (Merera, 2007). Even though the Federal Constitution of 1995 basically incorporated the rights of nations and nationalities to self-determination up to secession (see Article 39) to recognize the legitimate concerns of the secessionist and irredentist forces, they continue their military and non-military struggle for independence. Secessionist and irredentist groups define Ethiopia as a “prison house of nationalities” (Gebru, 2009: 32).

In general, secessionists (ultranationalists) from Oromia and the Somali diaspora indeed define Ethiopia as a symbol of the marginalization of the Oromos and Somalis by the Abyssinians (Amharas and Tigriyans) as “Ethiopia is a symbol of racial/ethnonational oppression and exploitation, and Oromos never assumed an Ethiopian identity for themselves” (Thompson, 2017: 7). Moreover, Oromo secessionists (led by the OLF) living in the diaspora, who have supported the Oromo struggle for independence from Ethiopia, also argue that leaving the Ethiopian state for Europe and America is considered a journey escaping from political slavery in Ethiopia

and enjoying freedom in western states. For example, Asafa Jalata (2002: 133) argued that the Oromos felt freer and more secure in America than in Ethiopia: "... the Oromo diaspora who, under 'Ethiopian political slavery,' lived without freedom of expression and association, came to exercise these rights in the United States. Members of this Oromo group created communities, political organizations, and scholarly associations. In foreign lands, they became able freely to define and defend their individual and collective national interests and to link the Oromo people to the global community."

Asafa also stated that the Oromo diaspora were instrumental in voicing the Oromo people's oppression and colonization in Ethiopia to the world. And indeed, the Oromo diaspora has been supporting the people's struggle for decolonization at home: "Isolated from the world for more than a century by Ethiopian colonialism, the Oromo people became scattered around the world. Oromo diaspora communities nowadays are building close linkages among themselves and with the Oromo movement at home, thanks to globalization and modern communication technology... The diaspora Oromo nationalists [...] can be inspired to contribute their part to the Oromo movement's struggle for survival, self-determination, and multicultural democracy" (Asafa, 2002: 134).

The Oromo community enjoying freedom and security in western nations continues the struggle for decolonization and engages in building organizations that reflect 'Oromummaa,' Oromoness, and promotes the Oromo struggle for self-determination, self-expression, and self-sufficiency both in Oromia and abroad (Asafa, 2002). By the 1995 FDRE Constitution and its Article 39 on the rights of nations to self-determination, the Oromo people, among other nations, are granted their own regional administration and cultural autonomy.

However, after 27 years (1991-2018) of relatively stable federal nation-building, Ethiopia has been facing the protracted violent protests of assimilationist (neo-pan-Ethiopianist) and secessionist forces against the federation. Following the 2015 protests, the Oromara alliance began to challenge the post-1995 federalism. The Oromara alliance, also popularly named as 'Team Lemma' (after the name of Oromia Regional State's president), champions pan-Ethiopianism, i.e., a majoritarian narrative of the Oromo and Amhara alliance, which claims that the Amhara and Oromo ethnic groups have the largest population in the country and should control federal power. Indeed, Team Lemma demonstrates its commitment to neo-pan-Ethiopianism by stating that Ethiopianism is "addiction like opium." The OLF-led Oromo nationalism has been dominantly secessionist and defines Ethiopia as an "Abyssinian colonizer" (Asafa, 2002) that should undergo decolonization through armed and unarmed means. However, following the 2015 protests in Oromia region, the Lemma Megersa-Abiy Ahmed-led Oromara alliance tactically (as a means of controlling federal power) began to champion neo-pan-Ethiopianism relegating Oromummaa/Oromoness into second place. Such shift in the Oromo outlook of the Ethiopian state, in turn, created a dilemma of "secessionists turned into pan-Ethiopianists" as the majority of Oromo nationalists (including the Oromo Liberation Front and the

Oromo Federalist Congress) opposed the Abiy Ahmed-led Ethiopianism fearing that neo-pan-Ethiopianism would reverse Oromo aspirations for self-determination and administration.

In April 2018 PM Abiy Ahmed became the first Oromo prime minister in the modern history of Ethiopia and at his inauguration he announced to reform the “ethnic-based federation” and subsequently established an Administrative Boundaries and Identity Issues Commission (House of Peoples’ Representatives, 2018) to redraw the regions’ boundaries to fit his (re)centralization policy. He changed all borders, except for those of the region of Tigray, replaced the leaders of regional states unconstitutionally and, in some cases, via military intervention (like in the case of Somali region), and put most of the regions under federal leadership. Abiy’s recentralization policy posed existential threats to the minorities’ self-rule and self-determination rights that had been in place since 1995.

Moreover, the Abiy-led Oromara alliance is also contested by the secessionist OLF (in Oromia) that is increasingly controlling the larger part of Oromia region. However, the OLF is calling for Orommumaa, the Oromization of Ethiopia under the current federal arrangement, at least, if not opting for plan B, i.e., establishing an independent “Oromia state,” which further complicates the Oromo dilemma between controlling government power in a federal Ethiopia and establishing an independent Oromo state if neo-pan-Ethiopianism resurrects. Oromo Regional State is located at the center of landlocked Ethiopia with limited access to neighboring states and international markets and is surrounded by minority ethnic groups, which geopolitically and demographically complicate the feasibility of an independent Oromia state. Therefore, the Oromos face the legitimacy dilemma of the “secessionist turned into a pan-Ethiopianist,” i.e., whether Abiy Ahmed will try to establish an independent state of Oromia hampered by historical, geopolitical, and demographic problems or not. As a result, the fear of state collapse becomes an existential threat in the emerging political crisis of post-2018 Ethiopia.

4.2. Tigray: the quest for renaissance and reclaiming the glorious past

Both in the ancient and modern political history of Ethiopia, Tigrayans have been claiming that Tigray has been the political and cultural soul of the Ethiopian state. However, following the death of Emperor Yohannes IV and the ascendance of Emperor Menelik of Shoa as king of Ethiopia in the second half of 19th century, Tigray was relegated into a secondary place; it lost its sea power as Emperor Menelik handed Eritrea over to Italian colonizers and faced political, economic, and cultural oppression under the unitary political system of Shoa (Amhara elites) (Alemseged, 2004). Elites in Tigray also claim that Tigray has paid innumerable sacrifices in the fight against “oppressive assimilation” and militarism by supporting other nations in their struggle for freedom and during the successful transition, from the civil war against the Derg regime (1975-1991) under the leadership of the TPLF to federal multination-building since 1995. Federalist forces dominantly led by the TPLF since 1995 call for full-fledged federal and democratic nation-building, where Ethiopian

nations and nationalities would have effective self-administration in their respective regions and equal representation at the federal level. Hence, federalist Ethiopia continues to be their priority (plan A) but they threaten to opt for unconditional independence (plan B) if the federation fails to ensure the aspirations of the constitution and if absolutist Ethiopians control federal power. For instance, Tigriyan elites insist that the status of Tigray should be recognized at least as “one among equals” with the many nations and nationalities and, at best, this region should be given a greater role in (re)shaping the political magnitude of Ethiopia. They object to the resurrection of absolute Ethiopianist movements: their desire for centralization and Amharanization¹⁰ in the name of pan-Ethiopianism. Tigriyans define Ethiopia as a non-colonial empire that should be federalized and democratized in order to recognize the rights of nations and nationalities (Alemseged, 2004; Assefa, 2018). Moreover, they also claim that the post-1991 federal multinational nation-building project was basically derived out of the 17 years armed struggle of Tigray and, hence, they continue to defend it. This federalist Tigriyan narrative has also been supported by many other nations and nationalities except for the Amhara unionist elites, secessionist Eritreans and Oromos, and irredentist Ethiopian Somalis.

Generally, Tigriyans have struggled for the elimination of Shoa domination and the radical restructuring of the Ethiopian state, which is the only remaining option to maintain the integrity of the state and its nationalities. Tigriyan elites agree with Amhara elites on the long history of Ethiopia (more than 3000 years of statehood), continued independence, and shared culture (Abyssinian cultural ethos), but disagree on the interpretation of the history, politics, and ownership of the state in the 19th and the 20th century.

After Abiy Ahmed’s coming to power and the subsequent weakening of the TPLF at the federal level, federalist Tigriyan nationalists also opted for ethno-nationalist mobilization in response to the assimilationist neo-pan-Ethiopianism narrative by the Abiy-led leadership. The newly emerged Tigriyan ethnic-nationalist forces are of three variants, i.e., (a) *federalist* nationalists, struggling to defend the current federal system and the core rights of nations including the right to self-determination and self-administration (regional autonomy); (b) the *Republic Movement*, calling for establishing an ‘Independent Republic;’ and (c) the *Agazian Movement*, a nationalist movement calling for a new relationship of the Tigrigna-speaking peoples in Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Furthermore, Tigray, thanks to its ruling party, the TPLF, and its federalist manifesto where the FDRE Constitution was framed, has been the home of federalist nation-building in Ethiopia since 1995. Since Abiy Ahmed came to power in April 2018, the people of Tigray and their ruling party have been targets of the Abiy-led ethnic marginalization. Thus, they are continuing their struggle for self-determination and self-defense against Abiy Ahmed’s government. Following the dissolution of the ruling party (the EPRDF, where the TPLF was the mother party and a member of the coalition since 1989) and its transformation into the Ethiopian Prosperity Party (PP) in November 2019, Tigriyan people and their ruling party defiantly rejected Abiy

Ahmed's neo-pan-Ethiopianist recentralization: unanimously both in the regional parliament and the federal parliament, via mass demonstrations, and at the TPLF's first-ever emergency congress held on January 4-5, 2020, in Mekelle. Therefore, Tigray remains the only region administered by the federalist TPLF and the ruling party declared it a *de facto* state. Tigray also warns that if the federal government changes the federal constitution, they will declare the full self-determination of the region of Tigray. Dr. Debretsion Gebremichael, leader of the Tigray National Regional State, cautioned Abiy Ahmed's federal government: "From now on, violating the Ethiopian constitution will not continue. Either the voice of the people needs to be heard, or it will be heard!" (Arif7 News Network, 2018)

4.3. Amhara restorationists: the dilemma of pan-Ethiopianism and pan-Amharanism

The pan-Ethiopianist or absolute Ethiopianist narrative has dominantly been the perspective of the Amhara elite that has argued for citizenship-based pan-Ethiopianist nation-building (Alemseged, 2004). It contends for an absolutist Ethiopia, "Greater Ethiopia first" (Andargachew, 1993), which is fundamentally defined by territorial nationalism, the tri-color flag, and even pan-Africanism. This group, as part of its neo-pan-Ethiopian irredentism (Teshale, 2008), further asserts that Ethiopia's territorial boundary has been "up to the Red Sea" (claiming that Eritrea has been a part of Ethiopia). Pan-Ethiopianists defended the critique of the secessionist and federalist diaspora on their undemocratic assimilation attempts: the "assimilation of periphery cultures into the Amhara or the Amhara/Tigray core culture made the creation of the Ethiopian nation possible" (Mesle, 2016). Ethiopia's existential threats emanate from Islamic Arab states that have been determined to undermine Ethiopia's territorial integrity through supporting secessionist forces in Eritrea, Oromia, and Ogaden. The assimilationist forces argue that internal diversity has never been a problem. And hence, they are determined to reverse the ethnic federalism-based nation-building project and call for the redrawing of the boundaries of the current regional states and the neutralizing of the negative effects of ethnic federalism. From this perspective, Ethiopiawinet is indivisible.

However, following the coming of PM Abiy Ahmed to power in April 2018, in Amhara Regional State, a new ultra-pan-Amhara nationalist movement, called the National Movement of Amhara (NAMA), emerged in 2018 as opposed to the pan-Ethiopian movements of Amhara cultural elites. The NAMA comes up with new territorial claims (Welkait and Raya from Tigray, Addis Ababa and Shoa from Oromia, Metekel from Benishangul, and Afar Regional State), rejects the current federal arrangement, and uses its flag as a mobilizing instrument of ultra-Amhara nationalism. As a result, such rejection of the federal flag, a territorial claim from the mentioned regional state, and the NAMA's determination to dissolve the multinational federation and its attempt of restoring the pre-1991 unitary Ethiopia further pose an existential threat to the multinational state and the minorities' self-determination/self-administration.

4.4. The threat of irredentism in Somali Regional State and the Balkanization in the Southern Nations and Nationalities, and Peoples' Region

Since the 1960s, an irredentist armed liberation movement spearheaded by the Oga-den National Liberation Front (ONLF) has grown steadily in the Ethiopian Somali Regional State. However, since 2006, the region, under the leadership of former President Abdi Illey's Somali Democratic Party (SDP), has also been a relatively strong supporter of the post-1995 federal arrangement. But, with the coming of Abiy Ahmed to power and the subsequent change of leadership in the region, the leaders of Ethiopia's Somali region changed its flag, which was historically linked to the 'Greater Somalia' irredentist ideology, and its hyphenated name (Ethiopia-Somali) to 'Somali' (Shaban, 2018).

Finally, the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' regional state (SNNPR) that was made of 56 ethnic groups has also been Balkanized into "self-declaring autonomous regions" since Abiy Ahmed was elected president. The Sidama nation, one of the nations of the SNNPR, secured its regional statehood via a referendum held in November 2019. Wolayta, Hadiya, Kembata, and many other nations in the SNNP region are already calling for a referendum and exacerbating the Balkanization of the region though Abiy Ahmed is determined to recentralize them in the hands of the federal government claiming to contain the proliferation of powerful regional states (International Crisis Group, 2019).

In the light of the above arguments, Ethiopia's federal nation-building experiment again failed to address the fundamental and historical contradictions and to neutralize the radical intents of the assimilationist, secessionist, and irredentist groups. As a result, the legitimacy of the Ethiopian state continues to be challenged and national integration remains an unattainable goal. As in the former USSR and Yugoslavia or like in the case of Somalia and Libya, there is no region which can effectively claim statehood and get recognized by the international community, i.e., all regions except for Tigray are under the control of militant youth groups, so the fear of 'state collapse' is becoming a dominant (and the normal) agenda among Ethiopian citizens, and the media report that the contradictions among the dominant narratives are getting irreconcilable.

Ethnic polarization reaches an unprecedented level due to the protracted social conflicts among regions and ethnic groups. The regional states of the federation are continuing to act as *de facto* states by challenging the federal government's power and engaging in social conflicts with neighboring regional states (e.g., the Oromo-Somali conflict of 2018, the Tigray-Amhara conflict, the Gedeo-Guji conflicts between Oromia and the Southern region, and so on). Furthermore, regional states are continuing to use "border and flag claims" as mobilizing factors and proxy causes for trans-border and ethnic conflicts. The emerging ethnic conflicts since 2015, in turn, are challenging the prospects of federal multinational projects and the aspiration of national integration, i.e., the 'new Ethiopian renaissance.'

Since April 2018, Ethiopia's internal contradictions have reached an "irreconcilable" level with no single narrative emerging victorious even after Abiy Ahmed

called for “medemer, love, and reconciliation.” Abiy Ahmed’s popular support has sharply declined even in its core constituency (Oromia); it is a process branded as the “neo-Neftegna” hijacking of the Oromo historical causes to undermine nationalist forces (like the OLF) who have been struggling for more than half a century to “decolonize the Ethiopian empire-state.” Abiy Ahmed’s legitimacy crisis also comes from non-Oromo political forces criticizing him that he failed to deliver practical reform initiatives to address the fundamental causes of the crisis like youth unemployment, security crisis, internal displacement, ultranationalism, youth militarism, the proliferation of small and light weapons (the privatization of security and militarization), and religious and ethnic conflicts. More fundamentally, Ethiopia is recently defined as a ‘failed state’ characterized by the “lack of control over armed forces, militias, etc. within the country; lack of free participation in politics; lack of control over territory within national borders; massive displacements; failure to provide public services food, health, shelter, etc.; high level of corruption; high numbers of refugees seeking to leave; and no or poorly functioning economy” (Woldegiorgis, 2019: 2-3). As a result, the hope for sustainable peace and reconciliation becomes increasingly fragile, the fear of Ethiopia’s disintegration is looming, and recently Abiy Ahmed was named the ‘Ethiopian Mikael Gorbachev’ for his failure to save the age-old empire-state from crumbling.

5. Conclusion

Ethiopia is a country with several contradictions. It was one of the early civilization states (empires) with sea and land power, the only country to escape European colonialism in Africa though continuously facing serious challenges of both unitary and federal nation-building projects; however, the quest for federalism, democracy, development, and multiculturalism remained the fundamental question for centuries. In the 16th century, the empire-state degenerated into the era of *Zemene Mesafint* that introduced the political culture of regionalism (ethnic nationalism) opposing a larger and centralized statehood. Ethiopia’s nation-building project is, thus, neither European (nation-state model) nor African (territorial state or state without nation) but rather its own “unique phenomenon.” As a result, Ethiopia has uniquely produced three narratives or political theses that define today’s political dilemmas.

Following the completion of state formation in the 1900s, Ethiopian nation-builders established the Solomonic ethos (that of the royal family of the empire), Orthodox Christianity as the state religion, and the Amharic language as the official and national language of the feudal empire embracing Abyssinian and non-Abyssinian nationalities with the aspiration of building a nation-state. The empire of Ethiopia, however, failed to build a nation-based Ethiopianism and faced three major challenges that still hampers its imagined nation-building: pan-Ethiopianism versus ethnic nationalism, addressing nationalities’ and class (and land) inequalities as well as the quest for democratization. Because of the three major contradictions, Ethiopia experienced many revolutionary social movements (both peasant and student movements), protracted rural and urban armed struggles from the 1970s to 1991, and the

post-1991 struggle for the institutionalization of federalism's shared rule, self-rule, and the democratization of the feudal Ethiopian state on equal terms.

The 1995 FDRE Constitution legally and politically recognized the three contradictions (Article 39 on the equality of nationalities, Article 40 on land ownership, and chapter three viewing individual and group rights as mutually compatible) and aspired to achieve federal-multinational nation-building. Federalism was thought to be the only remaining option to maintain the territorial integrity of the Ethiopian state, to heal the historical "wounds," and to resolve contradictions among nations, while it contained potential threats from radical secessionists-irredentists as well as assimilationists (absolute Ethiopianism).

Since December 2015, following the protest in Oromia, Ethiopia has been in a "new (dis)order in the making." Leadership crisis and power struggle within the EPRDF have further uncovered Ethiopia's irreconcilable nation-building and territorial integrity crisis. The polarized narratives of Amhara assimilationists or restorationists, Oromo secessionists, Somali irredentists, and Tigriyan federalists have once again resurrected to shape and reshape the Ethiopian politics and security dilemma. Furthermore, new fault lines have emerged, in addition to the traditional contradictions (nationality and class questions), including "center-periphery," "census majority-minority," "Cushitic-Semitic," and "Abyssinians/Northerners-Southerners." The privatization of security or the decentralized monopoly of violence and the proliferation of militant youth movements (Qeerroo, Fano, Ejjeeetto, Hagoo) to replace elected governments through organized violence, the crisis of internally displaced persons (IDPs), and the economic and constitutional crisis are the structural and fundamental problems that undermine the prospect for conflict transformation and sustainable peace. ☀

Notes

- 1 Historically named the 'Abyssinian state' that encompassed Tigray, highland Eritrea, and northern Amhara as its political, religious, and cultural heartland.
- 2 Tigrigna word for revolt, popular resistance against national oppression and intervention. It started to be used in 1943 by the Tigriyan peasant protests fighting against Emperor Haile Selassie's land policy and centralization. They called for self-rule and cultural and language autonomy for Tigray. The peasant protest of 1943 is also known as the 'first Woyane,' while the 'second Woyane' was started in 1975 by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) against the military Derg regime's national oppression via armed struggle, and succeeded in toppling the regime in May 1991.
- 3 Amharic word for pan-Ethiopianism.
- 4 Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, the Ethiopian ruling party since 1991. It is an offshoot of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), first established in 1989 as a coalition of the TPLF (mother party) and the EPDM (Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement), and the latter evolved into the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), and the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM). After the election of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, the OPDO changed its name to Oromo Democratic Party (ODP), and the ANDM to Amhara Democratic Party (ADP). After a year of Abiy Ahmed's leadership (since the 11th EPRDF congress), the EPRDF

dissolved itself into the Ethiopian Prosperity Party (Prosperity party, PP) in November 2019. However, the mother party of the EPRDF, the TPLF rejected the dissolution of the EPRDF and still maintains its historical name and program.

- 5 In 2001, the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi introduced the concept of ‘Bonapartist Decay’ to define the political leadership crisis within the TPLF and the EPRDF after they had taken state power in 1991. It was a call to evaluate the 10 years’ leadership and evolved decadence or political factionalism. The TPLF leadership split into two groups and the majority of the politburo and central committee members were purged. Meles Zenawi emerged as an uncontested leader of the party and the government, which contradicted the established norm of collective leadership within the TPLF after the 2001 rift. After 2001, Meles began to champion the developmental democratic state model of East Asian Tigers and a “renaissance vision” to achieve structural transformation in Ethiopia. The post-2001 TPLF-EPRDF leadership is called a ‘post-Bonapartist’ leadership.
- 6 Dubbed as Team Lemma and named after the former president of Oromia Regional State, Lemma Megersa, who was instrumental in the making of the Oromara alliance.
- 7 Abiy Ahmed publicly presented his pan-Ethiopianist project in his inaugural speech in the Ethiopian parliament in April 2018: “When we live, we are Ethiopians, when we die, we become Ethiopia” (Addis Standard, 2018).
- 8 When asked by a Tigrayan audience member in a July 2018 visit to the US why he did not appreciate the developments of the last 27 years, Abiy responded: “In the last 27 years there was a lot of garbage made by the ruling party in Ethiopia. There are people who think that development is about building asphalt pavements and condominiums. Infrastructure without freedom is good for nothing...I request your forgiveness and reconciliation” (Addis Tribune, 2018).
- 9 Both Oromos and Ethiopian Somalis are Cushitic people from the southern and eastern part of Ethiopia that have been struggling against the state of Ethiopia culturally and politically dominated by Abyssinians, i.e., Amhara and Tigriyan people.
- 10 Amharic language, Amhara culture, and Amharic historiography dominating Ethiopia.

References

- Aalen, L. (2006). Ethnic federalism and self-determination for nationalities in a semi-authoritarian state: the case of Ethiopia. *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* **13**, 243-261.
- Aalen, L. (2002). *Ethnic Federalism in a Dominant Party State: The Ethiopian Experience, 1991- 2000*. Chr. Michelsen Institute, Bergen.
- Abbink, J. (2006). Ethnicity and conflict generation in Ethiopia: some problems and prospects of ethno-regional federalism. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* **24 (3)**, 389-406.
- Addis Standard. (2018). Ethiopia: new PM Ahmed makes ‘stunning’ statements in first speech. *AllAfrica.com*. <https://allafrica.com/stories/201804020133.html> [08.01.2019]
- Addis Tribune. (2018). Ethiopia. (Author’s own translation from Amharic.) *Addis Tribune News Channel*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQuhQzCjXqc&pbjreload=10> [08.01.2019]
- Alem H. (2003). *Ethnic federalism in Ethiopia: background, present conditions and future prospects*. Second EAF International Symposium on Contemporary Development Issues in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, July 11-12, 2003.
- Alemseged A. (2004). Diversity and State building in Ethiopia. *African Affairs* **103 (413)**, 593-614.
- Andargachew T. (1993). *The Ethiopian Revolution 1974-1987: A Transformation from an Aristocratic to a Totalitarian Autocracy* (LSE Monographs in International Studies). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

- Arif7 News Network. (2018). The mother of all rallies took place in Mekelle, Tigray state northern Ethiopia. *Arif7 Trusted News Site*. <http://arif7.com/the-mother-of-all-rallies-took-place-in-mekelle-tigray-state-northern-ethiopia/> [01.20.2020]
- Asafa J. (2002). The place of the Oromo diaspora in the Oromo national movement: lessons from the agency of the “Old” African diaspora in the United States. *Northeast African Studies* **9** (3), 133-160.
- Assefa F. (2018). Federalism and development: the Ethiopian dilemma. *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* **25** (3), 333-368.
- Azar, E. and Moon, C. (1988). Legitimacy, Integration and Policy Capacity: The “Software” Side of Third World National Security. In: Azar, E. and Moon, C. (Eds). *National Security in the Third World: The Management of Internal and External Threats*. Edward Elgar, Aldershot, 77-101.
- Berhane, D. (2017). TPLF demoted chairman, executive members. *Horn Affairs*. <https://hornaffairs.com/2017/11/28/tplf-purges-chairman-executive-committee-members/> [01.20.2020]
- EPLF. (1971). Our struggle and its goals. Manifesto of the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front. *EPLF*. <http://www.ehrea.org/Nhnan%20Elamanan%20&%20Comments.pdf>
- Fisher, J. and Meressa T. G. (2018). ‘Game over’? Abiy Ahmed, Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front and Ethiopia’s political crisis. *African Affairs* **118** (470), 194-206.
- Gebru T. (1991). *Ethiopia: Power and Protest; Peasant Revolts in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Gebru T. (2009). *The Ethiopian Revolution: Wars in the Horn of Africa*. Ohio University Press, Athens.
- Horn Analysis. (2018). Ethiopian politics: Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed. Gorbachev of Ethiopia? *hornanalysis.com*. <https://www.hornanalysis.com/politics/ethiopian-politics-prime-minster-of-dr-abiy-ahmed-gorbachev-of-ethiopia/> [01.20.2020]
- House of Peoples’ Representatives. (2018). Administrative Boundaries and Identity Issues Commission establishment. (Draft) Proclamation. *Ethiopian Legal Brief*. <https://chilot.blog/2018/12/administrative-boundaries-and-identity-issues-commission-establishment-draft-proclamation/> [01.20.2020]
- International Crisis Group. (2019). Keeping Ethiopia’s transition on the rails. *crisisgroup.org*. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/283-keeping-ethiopias-transition-rails> [01.20.2020]
- International Crisis Group. (2019). Ten conflicts to watch in 2020. *crisisgroup.org*. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/10-conflicts-watch2020?fbclid=IwAR29G2cnMz1bOYqitroDNR-MTYhi0AfNaq7M3fgvbZjqQ2SIDszd-E899uk> [01.20.2020]
- Kymlicka, W. (2006). Emerging Western Models of Multination Federalism: Are they Relevant for Africa? In: Turton, D. (Ed). *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective*. James Currey, Addis Ababa, 32-64.
- Lefort, R. (2016). Ethiopia’s crisis: Things fall apart: will the centre hold? *OpenDemocracy.net*. <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/ethiopia-s-crisis/> [01.20.2020]
- Markakis, J. (2011). *Ethiopia: The Last Two Frontiers*. James Currey, Oxford.
- Matfess, H. (2019). Sidama statehood vote throws a wrench in Abiy Ahmed’s plans for Ethiopia. *ForeignPolicy.com*. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/12/06/referendum-ethnic-sidama-throws-a-wrench-in-abiy-ahmed-plans-for-ethiopia/> [01.20.2020]
- Merera G. (2003). *Ethiopia: Competing Ethnic Nationalisms and the Quest for Democracy, 1960-2000*. Chamber Printing Press, Addis Ababa.
- Merera G. (2007). *The Problematic of Democratizing a Multi-cultural Society: The Ethiopian Experience*. Immigration, Minorities and Multiculturalism, Democracies Conference Ethnicity and Democratic Governance MCRI project, Montreal, Canada, October 25-27, 2007.

- Meressa T. G. (2015). Tigray, the 12th TPLF congress and beyond: transcending existing discourses. *academia.edu*. https://www.academia.edu/14940239/Tigray_the_12th_TPLF_congress_and_Beyond_Transcending_existing_discourses [01.20.2020]
- Mesle A. (2016). Building a democratic culture in exercising the federal framework. *Aigaforum.com*. <http://aigaforum.com/article2016/democratic-culture-in-exercising-the-federal.htm> [01.20.2020]
- Shaban, A. R. A. (2018). Ethiopia's Somali regional parliament restores flag, amends name. *Africa News*. <https://www.africanews.com/2018/09/07/ethiopia-s-somali-regional-parliament-restores-flag-amends-name/> [01.20.2020]
- Teshale T. (2008). Modernity, Eurocentrism, and radical politics in Ethiopia, 1961–1991. *African Identities* 6 (4), 345-371.
- Thompson, D. K. (2017). Visible and invisible diasporas: Ethiopian Somalis in the diaspora scene. *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies* 17, 1-31.
- TPLF. (1976). *Manifesto of the Tigray People's Liberation Front*. TPLF, Sudan.
- TPLF. (2020). TPLF extraordinary congress statement. *aigaforum.com*. <http://aigaforum.com/documents/tplf-extraordinary-congress-statement-010520.htm> [01.20.2020]
- Turton, D. (Ed). (2006). *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian experience in comparative perspective*. James Currey, Oxford.
- Woldegiorgis, D. (2019). Ethiopia: a country on the brinks. *borkena.com*. <https://borkena.com/2019/04/10/ethiopia-a-country-on-the-brinks-by-Woldegiorgis-woldegiorgis/> [08.05.2019]

ETHNIC-BASED PARTY SYSTEMS, CULTURE OF DEMOCRACY, AND POLITICAL TRANSITION IN AFRICA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR POLITICAL TRANSITION IN ETHIOPIA

MIFTAH MOHAMMED KEMAL

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, JIGJICA UNIVERSITY

MIFTAHMOHAMMED2015@GMAIL.COM

Abstract

According to David Easton, “Politics involves change; and the political world is a world of flux, tensions, and transitions” (Miftah, 2019: 1). Ethiopia’s history of political transition fits the conceptualization of politics as changes and the political world as a world of flux. Political transition in Ethiopia has been dominantly tragic. Atse Tewodros II’s political career ended in the tragedy of Meqdela (1868), Atse Yohannes IV’s reign culminated in the ‘Good Friday in Metema’ (1889), while Menelik’s political career ended peacefully, and that of his successor, Iyasu, ended in tragedy before his actual coronation (1916). The emperor was overthrown in a coup in 1974, and Mengistu’s regime came to an end when he fled the country for Zimbabwe (1991). (Miftah, 2019) Thus far, revolutions, peasant upheavals, and military coup d’états have been political instruments of regime change in Ethiopia. What is missing in the Ethiopian experience of transition so far is the changing of governments through elections. This article discusses the challenges and opportunities for a political transition in Ethiopia using comparative data analysis and various presentation methods.

Keywords

Africa, Ethiopia, election, political transition

Received: November 2019 | 1st Revision: January 2020 | Accepted: March 2020

Kemal, Maiftah Mohammed (2019). Ethnic-Based Party Systems, Culture of Democracy, and Political Transition in Africa: Challenges and Prospects for Political Transition in Ethiopia. Hungarian Journal of African Studies [Afrika Tanulmányok], 13(5), 51-63.

1. Conceptualizing political transition

There are different ways of defining political transition. It can be defined as an act and a process of change from one form of government to another form, which focuses on human rights, the rule of law, and the empowerment of people to ensure that their choices, voices, and will are heard (Miftah, 2019). The concept of political transition appeared in the early 1980s in connection with the political development affecting countries in Eastern Europe, Latin America, Eastern Asia, and some African countries, where the collapse of many authoritarian regimes was underway. The concept became more popular in the last quarter of the 20th century and was portrayed effectively by Huntington as the third wave of democratization.

The political transition doctrine assumes that any country in which there is a shift away from the authoritarian regime is a country in transition to democracy. According to this paradigm, the modes of political transition can be achieved through reforms, compromises, and overthrows (Appiah-Thompson, 2018). Three sequential phases help build democratization. These are opening, breakthrough, and consolidation. These are also termed as the durations of democratic transition that are difficult to predict for sure (Alihodžić et al., 2018).

The opening phase refers to certain activities that mark the beginning of the transition itself and coincides mostly with a reformist move by the incumbent government. The breakthrough phase coincides with the total collapse of the old government and the establishment of a new and democratic government due to different paths, such as conducting an election, enacting a new constitution, the establishment of new democratic institutions, and so on. The last phase, that of consolidation, is the stage where democracy is shaped and materialized through the implementation of state reforms, holding periodic elections, and supporting the flourishing of civil society and the whole society's life according to the new democratic rule of the game. This paradigm, however, denies the importance of the specific structural factors of the countries in affecting the outcomes of the transition to democracy. These structural factors are economic conditions, historical factors, institutional legacies, the ethnic character of the population, and other social and cultural scenarios. This situation had given rise to the scholars' use of the concept of political transition until when the concept faced huge critics by scholars in the last decades of the 20th century.

The political transition doctrine assumes that any country in which there is a shift away from the authoritarian regime is a country in transition to democracy. According to this paradigm, the modes of political transition can be achieved through reforms, compromises, and overthrows.

The era of the 1990s brought an array of efforts that tried to combine the structural as well as the agency-related aspects by studying the drivers of democratic transitions (Alihodžić et al., 2018). By the early years of the 1990s, it became clear that only a limited number of countries had succeeded in establishing consolidated and functioning democratic regimes in Africa, Latin America, and Asia; and many of the new regimes that started the transition process have become stuck in transition. These countries have immersed in a new practice of “combining a rhetorical acceptance of liberal democracy with essentially [...] authoritarian traits” (Menocal et al., 2008: 29). The result was the proliferation of electoral authoritarianism. This invited scholarly attention to a shift from the study of democratization to the origins, designs, and outcomes of multiparty elections in authoritarian regimes (Helimann and Croissant, 2018: 3).

2. Political parties in Africa

The history of party formation in Africa relates to colonialism and anti-colonial liberation movements (Wondwosen, 2008). The aim of the party system in Africa between the 1970s and the mid-1980s was to achieve the twin goals of national unity and economic development. Widespread poverty and poor economic and social circumstances limited democratization efforts (Miftah, 2019).

The imported nature of democratization in the 1980s made many African political parties follow structures that resembled those of the established democracies. Yet the internal activities and dynamics of operation of most African parties reflect the experiences and practices of the African parties and not those of the West. The study of Salih (2005) on the nature of African political parties identified prevailing cleavages of ethnicity, language, religion, and regional affiliation used by political parties for the mobilization of their supporters. In addition to these, other structural factors are important for partisanship in Africa, such as interests and ideologies. That is partly why, despite their ethnic orientation, most political parties in Africa generally use a party name that reflects ideological orientation such as socialist, social democratic, liberal, and conservative, and refrain from using the name of a particular group or ethnicity as a party name, except for in the case of Ethiopia and Lesotho (Miftah, 2019).

2.1. Ethnic parties in Africa

Socio-economic conditions and political history are other factors that have affected party politics in Africa. African societies are alien to the Eurocentric concept of civil society or the development of civic culture. What has been practiced for centuries in Africa is a vertical relationship among the different “bands” or tribal groups (Chabal and Daloz, 1999). In the absence of associations that mobilize ideas and people towards a common goal, the introduction of liberal democratic practices, during the post-independence period, by external powers failed to deliver any results in democratization.

In most African countries ethnic parties are rare, while ‘ethnic congress parties’ are the most common ones. The fundamental reason for the existence of many ethnic congress parties in Africa is the highly fragmented nature of ethnic groups, thus these parties are practically incapable of forming a single majority in the parliament, making coalition formation less likely to be a pragmatic alternative. It is also argued that the lack of class divisions and the absence of a strong civil society, in many of these countries, have predestined African political parties to be established along identity lines (Salih, 2005).

2.2. The ethnic political party system and democracy

According to the study made by Saideman et al. (2002), ethnic parties are formed in response to the government’s domination and the marginalization of certain identity groups. And due to the presence of authoritarian governments and governments that do not respond to the demands of different ethnic groups, ethnic conflicts have become common in many developing countries and countries in transition. It is not surprising that ethnic conflicts have become the primary sources of war and the death of human beings in the last 50 years.

The consequences of such trends and compelling evidence have been recorded by different research and policy outlets counting the highest numbers of human death, and it can be seen that the discussion of the ethnic party system is characterized by the prevalence of problems caused by the ethnicization of political systems. Scholars have indicated that the politicization of ethnic differences creates instability. For example, Norris (2003) argues against ethnic party systems saying that countries where ethnically-based political parties dominate “are prone to conflict, exacerbating existing ethnic divisions” (Norris et al., 2003: 3). Others also consider ethnic division one of the causes of the weakness of political parties in Africa (Nikiwane, 2000).

According to Chandra and Humphreys (2002), countries where ethnic-based parties dominate the quality of democracy are likely to suffer. The presence of ethnic, religious, and regional parties leads to ethnic conflicts and wars. For instance, many contemporary African states ban particularistic and ethnocentric parties for several reasons to avoid wars and conflicts that arise from the ethnicization of politics (Miftah, 2019). Today, more than twenty African countries legally ban particularistic ethnic-religious parties.

3. Party politics in Ethiopia

The Ethiopian experience of democratization along with a flourishing civil society and the process of building a genuine multi-party system is at an infant stage (Miftah, 2019). This has to do with the prevalence of an authoritarian culture and an obvious lack of civic culture. Ethiopia’s political environment makes it difficult for a genuine political party system to emerge especially during the monarchic or the military regimes. In May 1991, when the EPRDF came into power, it promised the local as well as the international community to uphold democratic transition and

open up the political space for a multi-party democracy. However, Ethiopia under the EPRDF's 28-year rule failed to organize the first successful democratic election despite its ostensible effort to undertake a series of elections.

3.1. Legalizing post-1991 ethnic parties and the consequences of the process

The EPRDF government introduced ethnicity as a political instrument when coming into power in May 1991 (Semir, 2018). It also designed the country's administrative structure based on ethnically-designated regional states. Thus, ethnic-based political parties mushroomed in Ethiopia because the EPRDF, an ethnic-based party, favored the formation of political parties along ethnic lines and tacitly discouraged pan-Ethiopian parties (Merera, 2011). This period marked a historical juncture for the advent of multi-party politics in Ethiopia (Miftah, 2019).

But this juncture was manipulated by the incumbent government to serve its hidden agenda of ruling Ethiopia under the authoritarian model. The government worked to establish a system that favored the development of a vanguard party at the cost of multi-party politics. For example, according to Merera Gudina (2011), most of the parties invited to participate in the transition process of the 1990s were lacking organizational capacity and experience other than merely claiming that they represented ethnic groups. These were the parties that lacked the minimum experience required for mobilizing their communities and constituencies for political causes before the 1991 conference (Merera, 2011: 688). The logical consequence of this was that newly forged parties in the post-1991 period lacked the capacity and willingness to either challenge or critically support the EPRDF government in policy matters and regarding the sociological problems that the country faced (Abbink, 2000: 154).

In Ethiopia, the primordial ethnic criteria used for party formation complicated and negatively affected the possibility of forming a strong political party at the regional as well as the national level. This newly introduced ethnic criteria for party formation and the support given for this endeavor by the incumbent government made everyone capable of founding his or her party. The result was the mushrooming of infant politi-

In Ethiopia, the primordial ethnic criteria used for party formation complicated and negatively affected the possibility of forming a strong political party at the regional as well as the national level. This newly introduced ethnic criteria for party formation and the support given for this endeavor by the incumbent government made everyone capable of founding his or her party.

cal parties, of which number was estimated up to forty. This played two roles in favor of the EPRDF government in its early years of governance. First, the large number of political parties contributed to the good image of the TPLF/EPRDF and legitimized their acceptance by the national and the international donor community. Secondly, relating to the first statement and contrary to the expectations of the locals as well as the international community, EPRDF leaders used this image as a cover-up for their work against any kind of move towards the development of a genuine party system in Ethiopia (Miftah, 2019).

The result of this was that Ethiopia was to be categorized as a state in meltdown status where the quality of political institutions eroded over time. “The cases of Ethiopia and Zimbabwe show that real threats of being ousted from power through democratic elections can result in a ‘meltdown’ of democratic institutions and a reversion to authoritarian forms of leadership” (Rakner et al., 2007: 20). There are many accounts of the failed election efforts in Ethiopia throughout the two and half decades of the TPLF-led EPRDF leadership (Mattes and Mulu, 2016; Rynes, 2019).

4. Challenges and prospects for a political transition in Ethiopia

Following the sudden death of the ex-Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, by the year 2012, the International Crisis Group (ICG) anticipated the possibility of a political vacuum and a transition to be initiated in Ethiopia and made recommendations to the international community playing a significant role in preparing and shaping the process of a possible transition. The recommendations forwarded by the ICG were the following: the government of Ethiopia should open the political space, end repressive measures, and produce a clear roadmap of the EPRDF to divide power into key areas to “lead to an all-inclusive, peaceful transition, resulting in free and fair elections within a fixed time; helping to revive the political opposition’s ability to represent its constituencies, in both Ethiopia and the diaspora” (International Crisis Group, 2012). The following seven years, after these recommendations had been released, proved to be a period of instability, authoritarianism, the repression of civil society, and the closing of information outlets, which were totally against any of the indicators marking the opening up and the readiness for starting a journey towards a political transition. That is why, partly in his August 2019 podcast, Knopf mentioned that “rules and norms for a peaceful transfer of power in Ethiopia are underdeveloped” (Rynes, 2019).

A key indicator and one of the core activities during transitional politics have been to focus on transition elections because, as Helimann and Croissant (2018) state, “The end of the ‘third wave’ of democratization and the proliferation of electoral authoritarianism has sparked a shift in scholarly attention from the study of democratization to the origins, designs, and outcomes of multiparty elections in authoritarian regimes” (Helimann and Croissant, 2018: 3). Commenting on this relation, Verjee and Knopf (2019) mention that whether Ethiopia can achieve a successful, free, and fair election process by the upcoming Ethiopian elections in 2020 is a very important issue, the answer of which determines the propensity towards a peaceful political transition or the return of state repression and authoritarian rule (Rynes, 2019).

In case an election is undertaken, the things that will happen after the results are announced or during the result announcement, those that would happen anyway, and the actions that the government could take are unclear for many observers of Ethiopian politics and the electoral aftermath. The assertion of Verjee and Knopf (2019) mentioned above is valid in the case of repression in the post-election political activities that may occur in Ethiopia after 2020. To this end, the former US Ambassador to Ethiopia, Brazeal, reminds us what happened after the EPRDF's surprise loss of the May 2005 elections. So as not to be surprised once again, in the aftermath of the 2005 elections, the EPRDF government resorted to killing, jailing, and exiling the members of the opposition's political parties, and repressed independent media. Concerning this, a 2013 report of Afrobarometer included the following: "A largely dysfunctional civil society has been crippled by draconian legislation enacted in 2009 that has forced several organizations working on issues of human rights, governance, and democracy to close or curtail their activities" (Mattes and Mulu, 2016: 4).

In sum, "Ethiopians are ruled by a former rebel movement that espouses a notion of 'revolutionary democracy' based on top-down principles of democratic centralism. It has won a series of elections, several of them disputed..." (Rynes, 2019). Accordingly, what the aftermath of the 2020 elections would bring was not clear to the ambassador and he said that he could not tell whether the EPRDF had "evolved."

One of the relevant quotes in favor of the possibility and manageability of the 2020 elections is the finding that "the association between the strength of state capacity and the survival of democracy is by now a well-established research field and some quantitative and qualitative studies hint at a positive link between state capacity and autocratic regime stability" (Helimann and Croissant, 2018: 5). But the problem with this assertion in the context of today's Ethiopia is that the current government is less authoritarian and more fragile than it was under the EPRDF on the eve of the 2015 election.

4.1. Prospects: the winds of change in Ethiopia after 2018

Ethiopia is obviously in political transition, which attracts the attention of all the Ethiopians as well as the international community. Accordingly, key western countries', like the United States', information platforms and news outlets designate this period of ongoing political change as the year of change in Ethiopia (Rynes, 2019). The current US Ambassador to Ethiopia, Michael Raynor, in his keynote speech to the community of Jigjiga University, said that, in those days, Ethiopia was undertaking a remarkable change. A recent podcast of the Institute of African Studies discussing the change in Ethiopia in 2018-2019 mentioned that "The changes have raised many hopes as well as questions" (Cochrane and Asnake, 2019: 1).

So discussions are ongoing in the political state of affairs in Ethiopia today. As put by Cochrane and Asnake (2019: 1), "As Ethiopia has gained international attention over the last year, many people have been interested to learn more about the changes that have occurred and that continue to occur in Ethiopia."

The most significant achievements and indicators of changes undertaken by Abiy's government since 2018, cited and quoted by academics as well as the diplomatic and the donor community, are an array of activities and policy changes. According to Verjee and Knopf (2019), key observable changes in Ethiopia today include the release of political prisoners numbering hundreds of thousands. To use the words of Cochrane and Asnake (2019), one of the most significant changes observed is the release of almost all political prisoners as now there are no journalists imprisoned in Ethiopia. The unlocking of the "no-peace-no-war" situation between the governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea persisted for more than a decade, and the restarting of the relationship was initiated by the government of Abiy Ahmed. The relaxation of the political climate and that of the legal and policy environment helped the civil society function freely (Cochrane and Asnake, 2019). Women's empowerment actions were taken by the government by appointing female candidates to key positions and to the cabinet established by Abiy's government; this included the appointment of the first female head of state, the first female federal attorney general, and the first female president of the national electoral commission.

According to Cochrane and Asnake (2019), in today's Ethiopia, there is a favorable political environment for opposition parties to work. This includes allowing the return of the opposition groups operating abroad to the country. One of the major limitations for which the incumbent government has been criticized by scholars and the observers of the political developments of the EPRDF's Ethiopia relates to the ever-increasing trend of the narrowing of the political space. In this regard, however, the changes that have taken place since 2018 are "dramatic and substantial." Similarly, the majority of the Ethiopian members and organizations of political parties resisting and opposing the government peacefully and by picking up arms for decades within and outside the country returned to their home country, Ethiopia, and are currently struggling to take part in the political developments unfolding in Ethiopia today. "This is a major change in the political history of this country" (Cochrane and Asnake, 2013: 3).

4.2. *What are the challenges?*

According to Semir Yusuf Teshale (2018), by observing the changes in Ethiopia today, it is clear that the transition should not be taken for granted since certain factors affect the speed, the direction, and the results of the change observed, and the actors that have the capacity and willingness to alter things for personal or group interests. These are a couple of setbacks that are the results of the nature of change itself vis-à-vis the structural aspects of change brought into reality by a force from the members and leaders of the EPRDF as well as from some critical economic and security concerns (Verjee and Knopf, 2019). As mentioned above, the window of opportunity for political change has been opened in Ethiopia in a usual but a bit bold manner. And this could be taken as part of the continuum of the critical junctures that Ethiopia had had but lost for good in the past due to several political reasons.

So what those lost junctures can tell us is that the beginning of political reforms in Ethiopia does not necessarily imply or lead to a productive and positive political outcome that can practically satisfy the overall population of the country. Given the country's political culture and a pattern that is also discernible today, the possibility of the unwanted to happen is high. All of the three factors below may impede the successful political transition in Ethiopia. The first is the prevailing lack of a well-developed or evolving democratic practice, the second is the dominance of authoritarianism, and the third is the tragic nature of making politics or changing regimes in Ethiopia in the past. These factors may pose challenges to the current political opening and the possible transition to democracy to occur.

4.3. Some concerns

The above are some practical concerns and blurred issues that are related to the very nature of transitional politics. For instance, both the opposition parties' activists and commentators on Ethiopian politics raise such concerns as whether it is possible to realize transition through goodwill and leader's charisma alone knowing that despite the prime minister's promise to bridge the transition process in today's Ethiopia, "there is not yet a negotiated road map that could help the transition-to-democracy process" (Rynes, 2019).

Besides, observers also comment that the period of transition is marked by fluidity because of the relaxing of the means of coercion and the provision of measures to protect the rights of citizens. It is also typical of the unfinished nature of transition that mostly the "old guards" and the emerging groups work in tandem. This has been witnessed by scholars analyzing political transitions in emerging democracies. Ethiopia's case is not peculiar. The type of change occurring in Ethiopia is a reform initiated by the authoritarian EPRDF regime. The old political order has not been completely changed and the new political order has not yet been established. There is not even a consultation or a negotiation about the ideology and the structures of the new government. In other words, there is still no political settlement (Cochrane and Asnake, 2019). This lack is the crucial factor and makes the accurate prediction about what is to unfold in Ethiopia's politics in the short term a challenge.

As the change started to manifest, some modifications in managing the security of the federal state as well as the regional ones were made. Yet the return of various political forces, including those who are armed, to the country and the state's key institutions that are built on them and are staffed by ethnic groups who believe in the ideology and serve the interests of the state as well as their respective identity group complicate the task of protecting the state and its citizens. The result can be easily seen as a significant number of Ethiopians have been exposed to various kinds of violence that jeopardize the well-being of citizens (International Crisis Group, 2019). So power vacuum is the number one challenge the state may continue to face, the effect of which may force governments to resort to authoritarianism or, conversely, anarchism that may put the very purpose of the state, sovereignty, and guaranteeing protection to its citizens, at risk (Cochrane and Asnake, 2019).

“High-profile assassinations, inter-communal violence and the question of Sidama statehood have endangered Ethiopia’s transition to a multi-party democracy. [...] But the challenges it faces were laid bare on 22 June when the president of one of the country’s regional states, Amhara, and the Ethiopian military’s chief of staff was assassinated in concurrent events in separate cities. The killings came after inter-communal clashes in more than ten areas in 2018 led almost three million Ethiopians to flee their homes, the world’s largest conflict-related internal displacement in any one country that year” (International Crisis Group, 2019: 1).

4.4. Ethnic federalism

Ethiopia’s politics under the EPRDF that formalized ethnicity constitutionally has already created a high level of division and hatred among different groups who have conflicting interests within the state (International Crisis Group, 2009). Unprecedented protests, the continuing opposition, associated violence (beginning especially with the year 2015), killings, and displacements of people in many parts of Ethiopia have put the state at the verge of collapse; yet nothing has changed in this regard, and today it is ethnic-based federalism framed in the EPRDF Constitution that governs all political actions in Ethiopia. This has already brought tension as a certain part of the ANDM group, who plays a key role in the ongoing change, has been repeatedly asserting the limitations of this model in serving their interests and has been demanding a possible amendment. On the contrary, other groups have been warning about any changes in the rule of the game and caution that any alteration to this ethnic model would lead to the total collapse of the state. So the challenge is thus that it is hardly thinkable to achieve the political transition to democracy by using a rule of the game (politicized ethnicity) that is one of the most divisive ones and is contradictory to the basic principles and values of democratization.

4.5. Different groups

In a country with people of conflicting interests and cleavages such as ethnicity, race, religion, culture, and territory as well as past wounds, the biggest challenge to the government in transition would also be providing a cohesive and all-inclusive leadership that satisfies these diverse groups’ needs and aspirations (Cochrane and Asnake, 2019: 3). As mentioned above, the government called all opposition parties and militant groups that had been militarily challenging the government to enter the country to peacefully manage their differences. Yet the limitations of this invitation are the following: it is meant mostly for those who fled the country and it has to be followed by bilateral discussions. It lacks any clear-cut negotiation points and the involvement of a third party that could help solve possible disagreements between the government and these groups.

4.6. Economic challenges and the youth bulge

According to many observers of Ethiopian politics today, the peculiar path through which the economy achieving significant growth over the past decade has been man-

aged may be threatened due to transitional politics. Logically, the change has brought about an alteration in how the economy is managed, who manages it, and how the supply and demand sides of the market are regulated. This altering may lead to an economic slowdown. On top of this is the demographic factor of today's Ethiopia. The country has been shaken by upheavals, partly due to the high number of youth, reaching up to 70 percent of the total population, demanding jobs and financial security. The same force that hastens change may be a source of grievance that the government should wisely manage. Together with the presence of forces who are against the change to democratization, and who are suffering from what Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) called 'creative destruction,' high levels of youth unemployment are key challenges that may have a daunting effect on the possibility of a peaceful transition in Ethiopia.

According to many measure systems, such as the Human Development Index, Ethiopia performs the worst with high poverty and vulnerability indexes, a high dependency ratio, and the lowest per capita income. It is a closed subsistence economy with very limited human development and the second largest population of Africa with 70 million young people between the ages of 15 and 39; thus, Ethiopia is already at risk of facing a lot of socio-economic problems emanating from its incapability to guarantee a decent livelihood to its citizens. This is also worse in the light of a generation with a peculiar consumption pattern and an increasing demand for consumable goods. With limited work opportunities and an underdeveloped working culture, the youth has developed unrealistic expectations of what the government should provide them.

5. Conclusion

In his book called *Synergy*, published in November 2019, Nobel Laureate and leader of the transition in Ethiopia, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed commented about the nature of revolutionary democracy: it gave an ideological framework for Ethiopia's government under the EPRDF. According to his argument, revolutionary democracy has a significant problem with democratization. It tends to replace the constitutional design of a multi-party political system with a dominant-party system, creates a narrow political space, and weakens endeavors to build a democratic rule – as it has happened in Ethiopia in the last three decades. The problem of the dominant-party system emanates from the fact that it is designed in a way that it controls the bureaucracy and systematically suppresses or weakens competing political parties.

■ **According to many measure systems, such as the Human Development Index, Ethiopia performs the worst with high poverty and vulnerability indexes, a high dependency ratio, and the lowest per capita income.**

Accordingly, the good start of the democratization process witnessed in the 1980s was followed by the lack of inclusiveness and a narrowing political space (Abiy, 2019: 30). The subsequent measures undertaken by Abiy's government's recent move of establishing a party, called Prosperity Party, are based on citizenship politics and are ideological. The replacement of the EPRDF's leadership and the involvement of groups previously excluded by the EPRDF's revolutionary ideology, such as pastoralist regions, produce greater hope for the opportunity to move away from suffering from the "vice" of ethnic politics. However, this move is not without challenges. Those groups who have become the victims of 'creative destruction' have already displayed their grievances and are working to negate this process. Whatever the concerns of the authoritarian and extractive groups, who are the losers of democratization, may be, it is clear that the country is standing at yet another critical juncture, and the political activities of this moment of change, if they succeeded, would transform the country for good towards democracy and prosperity, a kind of which had never been imagined possible in Africa. ✪

References

- Abbink, J. (2011). Ethnic-based federalism and ethnicity in Ethiopia: reassessing the experiment after 20 years. *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 5 (4), 596-618.
- Abiy A. A. (2019). *Medemer*. Meskerem, Addis Ababa.
- Acemoglu, D. and Robinson, J. A. (2012). *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty*. Crown Publishers, New York.
- Alihodžić, S., Matatu, N., Joseph, O., and Lewis, K. (2019). Timing and sequencing of transitional elections. *International IDEA Policy Paper* 18. International IDEA, Strömsborg. <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/timing-and-sequencing-of-transitional-elections.pdf> [10.15.2018]
- Appiah-Thompson, C. (2018). Electoral politics and democracy in Africa: a critical review of Lindberg's thesis. *International Area Studies Review* 21 (1), 85-94.
- Chabal, P. and Daloz, J. P. (1999). *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*. Indiana University Press, Bloomington.
- Chandra, K. and Humphreys, M. (2002). *Incorporating constructivist propositions into theories of democracy*. Paper presented at the conference of Modeling Constructivist Approaches to Ethnic Identity and Incorporating Them into New Agendas, MIT, Cambridge, December 6-8, 2002.
- Cochrane, L. and Asnake K. (2019). Discussing the 2018/19 changes in Ethiopia: Asnake Kefale. *NokokoPod* 2019 (3), 1-16.
- Dima N. S. (2009). *Contested Legitimacy: Coercion and the State in Ethiopia*. PhD dissertation. University of Tennessee, Knoxville.
- Donno, D. (2013). Elections and democratization in authoritarian regimes. *American Journal of Political Science* 57 (3), 703-716.
- Egorov, G. and Sonin, K. (2018). *Elections in Non-Democracies*. University of Chicago, Chicago.
- Hashmi, R. S. and Majeed, G. (2015). Politics of ethnicity: a theoretical perspective. *South Asian Studies* 30 (1), 319-331.
- Helimann, O. and Croissant, A. (2018). Introduction: state capacity and elections in the study of authoritarian regimes. *International Political Science Review* 39 (1), 3-16.
- International Crisis Group. (2012). Ethiopia after Meles. Policy briefing. *crisisgroup.org*. <https://d2071andvipowj.cloudfront.net/bo89-ethiopia-after-meles.pdf> [10.09.2018]

- International Crisis Group. (2009). Ethiopia: ethnic federalism and its discontents. *crisisgroup.org*. <https://d2071andvipowj.cloudfront.net/153-ethiopia-ethnic-federalism-and-its-discontents.pdf> [10.09.2018]
- International Crisis Group. (2019). Preventing further conflict and fragmentation in Ethiopia. *crisisgroup.org*. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/preventing-further-conflict-and-fragmentation-ethiopia> [10.09.2018]
- Mattes, R. and Mulu T. (2016). Ethiopians' views of democratic government: fear, ignorance, or unique understanding of democracy? *Afrobarometer Working Paper Series* **164**, 1-50.
- Menocal, A. R., Fritz, V., and Rakner, L. (2008). Hybrid regimes and the challenges of deepening and sustaining democracy in developing countries. *South African Journal of International Affairs* **15** (1), 29-40.
- Merera G. (2011). Elections and democratization in Ethiopia, 1991–2010. *Journal of Eastern African Studies* **5** (4), 664-680.
- Merera G. (2003). *Ethiopia, Competing Ethnic Nationalisms and the Quest for Democracy*. Shaker, Maastricht.
- Miftah M. K. (2019). Nationalists versus ethnic-based political parties in Ethiopia. *Sage Submissions*. https://advance.sagepub.com/articles/Nationalists_versus_Ethnic_based_political_parties_In_Ethiopia/8292275 [10.15.2018]
- Nikiwane, S. (2000). "Electoral Management in Zimbabwe. Analysis of Recent Elections in the SADAC Region. Proceedings from the International conference on sustainable democratic institutions in Southern Africa. Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance Gabarone, May 8-10, 2000, 129-146.
- Norris, P. (2003). *Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behavior*. Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Pausewang, S., Tronvoll, K. and Aalen, L. (Eds). (2002). *Ethiopia since the Derg: A Decade of Democratic Pretension and Performance*. Zed Books, London.
- Rakner, L., Menocal, A. R., and Fritz, V. (2007). *Third Wave and the Challenges of Democratic Deepening: Assessing International Democracy Assistance and Lessons Learned*. Overseas Development Institute, London.
- Rynes, T. (2019). A changing Ethiopia: the puzzle of Ethiopian politics. (Podcast) *United States Institute of Peace Online*. <https://www.usip.org/events/changing-ethiopia-puzzle-ethiopian-politics> [10.15.2018]
- Saideman, S. M., Lanoue, D. J., Campenni, M., and Stanton, S. (Eds). (2000). Democratization, political institutions, and ethnic conflict: a pooled time-series analysis, 1985-1998. *Comparative Political Studies* **35** (1), 103-129.
- Salih, M. A. M. (Ed). (2003). *African Political Parties: Evolution, Institutionalisation and Governance*. Pluto Press, London.
- Salih, M. A. M. (2005). Globalized party-based democracy and Africa: the influence of global party-based democracy. *CSGR Working Papers* **173** (5). Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation, University of Warwick. <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pais/research/researchcentres/csgp/papers/workingpapers/2005/wp17305.pdf> [10.15.2018]
- Semir Y. T. (2018). *Insurgency in Ethnically Divided Authoritarian-Led Societies: A Comparative Study of Rebel Movements in Ethiopia, 1974-2014*. Department of Political Science, University of Toronto, Toronto.
- Teshale T. (2009). Ethiopia: the "anomaly" and "paradox" of Africa. *Journal of Black Studies* **26** (4), 414-430.
- Verjee, A. and Knopf, P. (2019). A year of change in Ethiopia. *United States Institute of Peace Online*. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2019/04/year-change-ethiopia> [10.09.2018]
- Wondwosen B. T. (2008). Ethnicity and political parties in Africa: the case of ethnic-based parties in Ethiopia. *The Journal of International Social Research* **1** (5), 780-809.

THE EFFECTS OF LAND TENURE POLICY ON THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE GAMBELLA REGION

CHUOL KOMPUOK

AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT (AIGAD),

ETHIOPIAN CIVIL SERVICE UNIVERSITY

CKOMPUOK2014@GMAIL.COM

Abstract

An attempt is made to investigate the consequences of land tenure policy on the environment enhancing reforestation as a means of ascertaining tenure security in the Gambella region. This paper sheds light on the accelerated pace of deforestation in the study area and its impact on the environment. The theoretical and conceptual issues of the interrelation between reforestation, deforestation, land tenure system, and other socio-economic indicators have been given due attention in the literature review. Research methodology gives much focus on qualitative data analysis that uses ranges of data collection approaches; FGD, KII, semi-structured household interviews with the inclusion of secondary data reviews. The paper considers the effect of land tenure system on the environment and discusses the landholding system in the study area, including customary land rights among the Nuer, the Anywaa, and the Majangir. To this effect, external factors and urban expansions are addressed with the view to understanding the impact of socio-cultural practice on physical environment perception and management. A conclusion and policy implications are also discussed.

Keywords

land tenure, deforestation, reforestation, environment, Gambella

Received: November 2019 | 1st Revision: January 2020 | Accepted: March 2020

Kompuok, Chuol (2019). The Effects of Land Tenure Policy on the Environment in the Gambella Region. Hungarian Journal of African Studies [Afrika Tanulmányok], 13(5), 64-81.

1. Introduction

Even though there is a wide recognition of the importance of land policy to agrarian development, there is no clear and universally recognized blueprint to define what an appropriate land policy ought to be. (EEA/EEPRI, 2002: 4) Ethiopia is one of the few countries in Africa that has not made any major change in its basic land policy since the radical land reform of 1975 when the government nationalized land and distributed it to the peasantry, thereby eliminating a highly skewed landholding pattern. In modern as well as traditional communities, the way in which property rights to land are defined is of great importance for economic growth, the efficient use of this resource, proper governance at the local level, poverty reduction, and the opening up of productive opportunities for the poor.

It is also believed that the landholding system in less developed nations is not a purely economic affair; people's culture and identity play a significant role. That is partly why land-related issues usually generate severe emotional reactions in rural areas including Gambella. Obviously, for the rural residents of most developing countries land is the primary means of production from which one is able to generate a livelihood for the household (Deininger and Feder, 2002). It is also the main asset that farmers have to further accumulate and transfer into a form of wealth for future generations (Berhanu et al., 2003).

Accordingly, the land size they own, "the feeling of security that they have on their holdings, and the process through which land disputes are adjudicated all affect the household's income" (Hosaena, 2010: 1). Moreover, "their incentive to work and invest, their desire to use their land sustainably, and even their social and economic position in their respective communities" (Ibid.) are impacted. "In predominantly agrarian societies all these factors combine to affect agricultural output and productivity, and along with it," (Ibid.) the economic development of the country. Ostensibly, land policy in developing countries is a vital albeit sensitive part of the overall development policy that the government has to consider if the hope for rapid economic growth and the objective of poverty alleviation are to materialize.

Since land is the main asset in the life of Ethiopian rural communities including Gambella, the direction in which property rights over land is defined and, among economic agents, the efficacy in administering and resolving conflicts around it are important for the country's overall development.

Since land is the main asset in the life of Ethiopian rural communities including Gambella, the direction in which property rights over land is defined and, among economic agents, the efficacy in administering and resolving conflicts around it are important for the country's overall development.

Several scholars and researchers have also associated the country's unfortunate state and rate of development with its inability to get rid of many problems related to its land policy and administration, in particular, and agrarian issues, in general (Beyene, 2017; Binayaw, 2015; Dessalegn, 1984, and Berhanu et al., 2003). This research aims to examine the effects of land tenure policy on the environment in the Gambella region. This is specifically to investigate whether the existing land tenure systems and institutions and the weaknesses or strengths of land rights have an adverse effect on environmental degradation.

2. Literature review

The interrelation between reforestation, deforestation, land tenure system, and other socio-economic indicators has been given due attention in recent studies. The macro-economic policies' performance, in general, and agricultural productivity, in particular, depend on the natural resource base (Place and Otsuka, 2000; Crisologo-Mendoza and Van de gaer, 2001). This implies that policy-makers should identify and implement measures that enhance agricultural productivity while retaining the resource base. A resource base can be maintained with the application of sustainable land tenure policies, though sustainability seems to be inconsistent with the current Ethiopian land tenure policy. To reverse this trend, a study needs to be undertaken at a community or household level by identifying factors that enable the community to engage in the long-term investment in the land tenure system.

Place and Scherr have developed a theoretical model of land use and reforestation. The model extends over 3 periods. In the initial period, a household decides whether to convert woodland to agricultural land; the decision depends on the benefit of forests or tree crops vis-à-vis agricultural land or annual crops. When a farmer makes a decision to clear the forest, he takes into account the availability of family labor and the expected profit from either forest or agricultural products. The entire decision-making process hinges on the land tenure system that is prevalent in the study area.

Place and Otsuka (2000) applied the standard household production model to Uganda where parishes were taken as units of observation. Their empirical findings suggest that changes in shares of land area (from agricultural lands to forests and *vice versa*) are affected by the prevalence of land tenure systems. The land tenure systems of the study area are classified into four types, namely, exclusive tenure, open tenure, resident tenure, and absentee tenure. Other explanatory variables include population density, the population growth rate, rainfall and the related climatic conditions as well as the distance to nearby towns.

Another study related to land tenure systems and deforestation in the study area was conducted in Ghana (Benneh, 1987). The results of this study indicate that "If trees are planted, individual tenure security is enhanced and rights to transfer land to desired heirs are strengthened. This is because the work effort for planting trees is rewarded by strong individual land rights under customary land tenure" (Quisumbing and Otsuka, 2001: 11). Similar results were observed by Quisumbing et al. (2001) and Shepherd (1991).

3. Methodology

The research was basically a qualitative type that used ranges of data collection approaches, focus group discussions (FGD), key informant interviews (KII), and semi-structured household interviews with the inclusion of secondary data reviews for the purpose of this study. The emphasis in such a method was to have an in-depth understanding of what people feel and think and why (Laws et al., 2003). Findings from the study may well have wider relevance for the policy prescriptions in the study area Gambella with respect to the effects of land tenure policy on the environment.

4. The effect of land tenure system on the environment

Although land policy is widely considered vital to agrarian development, there is not a universally agreed pattern of the best land policy to be pursued. In some cases, the efficacy of land policy in bringing agricultural development partly depends on socio-cultural and geographic variables that significantly vary from one country to another. Even within one country, various types of landholding systems exist depending upon history and the farming systems that prevail in the different regions of the country or the existing agro-ecological zones. In spite of these differences, researchers have tried to come up with certain basic principles with the aim of formulating a land policy that helps generate higher levels of productivity in agriculture while also maintaining the important consideration of equity. These principles change through time, as more information is gathered from country experiences. All these differences and patterns are expected to have a significant effect on environmental factors, in general, and land tenure regimes, in particular.

A World Bank study identified three criteria for the efficient management of land. These are (a) owner-operated family farms as being efficient and thus desirable, (b) freely operated land markets to permit land transfers to more efficient and productive users, and (c) the need for a more equitable distribution of assets (Deininger and Binswanger, 1999). While the three different approaches may have different effects on productivity and investment, their effect on the environment, in general, and deforestation, in particular, has not been articulated.

One of the few African countries that made no significant changes in their land reform policies is Ethiopia, where the state nationalized land and distributed it to the peasantry. This was meant to eliminate the highly skewed landholding pattern. Before 1975 most of the fertile arable land belonged to the absentee landlord; peasants were forced to surrender as much as two-thirds of the produce to the former. Even though the 1975 land redistribution act may have practically addressed equity consideration, its effect on agricultural productivity was not substantial. As a result, famines keep on recurring and deforestation continues at an accelerated pace. The newly established EPRDF-led government in 1991 chose to keep intact the 1975 rural land proclamation, thereby exacerbating continuing land fragmentation, the extended use of marginal land, and continuing deforestation (Shimelles et al., 2009). The justifications behind the absence of interest on the part of the government to

consider discussing alternative tenure regimes emanate from a belief that the recent land policy essentially serves the interests of agricultural development in the country better than its alternatives. This belief has never been empirically tested. Moreover, the present land policy in the country vis-à-vis its effect on the environment has not been addressed at all. The fact that there is substantial variability in the landholding system in Ethiopia has made it impossible to reach some consensus on the interaction between land and the environment. To this end, we can arguably conclude that the peasant farmers of Gambella fall prey to variation in landholding systems in the entire country as policy-makers cannot reach a consensus on the interaction between land tenure regimes and the environment.

4.1. Landholding systems in the study area

In many cases, it is recognized that Ethiopia's pre-1975 land tenure system, which has not been researched, is considered to have been the most complicated in the world (Dessalegn, 1984; Dejene, 1999). Thus, little is known of the land tenure system in Gambella and very little study has been done so far. An attempt that could have shed light on the existing tenure system with different dynamics across the region, given that different ethnic groups of different livelihoods inhabit Gambella, has not been undertaken. Therefore, I will highlight three ethnic groups, namely, the Nuer, the Anywaa, and the Majangir; the remaining two ethnic groups (Komo and Opo), constituting less than 5% of the total population of the Gambella region in Ethiopia (Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia, 1994), have similar backgrounds as the three others and will not be discussed.

Sedentary agriculture has become the dominant form of supporting livelihood for some ethnic groups in the region, particularly the Anywaa, since ancient times. Other ethnic groups, such as the Nuer, are mostly "pure" pastoralists who always roam about the area with their cattle in search of grazing land. Among the Nuer, crop production is not the basic mode of livelihood, only a small plot of land is used for farming and women are engaged in this very small-scale farming. Fresh maize and sorghum are grown for temporary consumption. In the ancient days, farming was meant for women and men were engaged in cattle rearing; as farm size was limited, not much labor or other input was required.

4.1.1. Customary land rights among the Nuer

The process of land acquisition and the system of land tenure in the Nuerland (eastern Jikany Nuer) areas are not much different from the land tenure system in the other parts of sub-Saharan Africa and Ethiopia; communal ownership of land is widespread. The system came into an abrupt halt when the previous socialist government adopted the land proclamation of 1975 with the nationalization of all rural lands abolishing previous tenure arrangements in the country (Bereket, 2002).

In Nuer culture, land is communally owned according to the kinship arrangements. When new land is discovered, the village chief (*land master*) in collaboration with the council of elders plays a pivotal role in making the necessary arrangements

to perform the ritual ceremony by slaughtering the bull, a symbol of acquiring new land. Children of future generations are entitled to inherit the newly acquired land. The soil of that particular area is blessed after the land master performs the activities and the land is recognized as theirs; from the time of the ceremony, no other person can claim rights to this newly acquired land.

The process of land acquisition leads to the individual ownership of farmland and homestead through forest clearance, followed by necessary investments to prove one's ownership rights. For centuries, investment in Nuer culture has not meant planting trees but piling up the burnt cow dung. It is also true that even the great-grandchildren do the same and that continues for generations, particularly in the upland areas. Investment in tree planting is relatively new in Nuerland; they plant new trees to acquire land for the coming generations. In earlier times, there was a taboo against planting trees. In other words, there was a belief that if a tree was planted, there was a likelihood that the persons who had planted the tree would die before the tree grew. This belief was taken as an impediment to tree planting for a long time.

According to the Nuer, settlement patterns based on kins/kiths have a stabilizing effect on land ownership; whenever a conflict/dispute arises, it can be easily settled with no further complications. Though the Nuer are pastoralists by their very nature, their livelihood patterns have changed from being "pure" pastoralists to being farmers and cattle rearers as well. They have two types of settlements: those at the bank of the Baro River and upland settlements. When the water level of the rivers drops, the Nuer move to the bank of the Baro River to do all the necessary farming and planting. Soil preparation and the planting of the crops take place when the soil is wet, which tends to help the germination of the newly grown crops; then the soil dries out again, which is followed by cattle camp settlement. The roads of the settlement are passable only when the water level is low and until the next season begins, that is, when the rains fall. This implies that settlements at the bank of the river are less permanent. Upland settlements are thought to be permanent since all the valuable belongings are kept in the uplands where cattle mangers are built.

4.1.2. Customary land rights among the Anywaa

The land tenure system in the Anywaa setting has some similarities with the Nuer land tenure system of communal ownership. According to the Anywaa, chiefdoms have their own kings who manage the matters related to land allotment/allocation or disputes arising from unclear boundaries. Even if the ownership right is given to individual owners, the king has the ultimate power over the land as he is the ruler of the whole land. In ancient times, the Anywaa king played a key role in managing the resources; his permission was required if someone was to acquire land. Without him (*the king*), there was no reason for a single community to take initiative to find new land and give a name to it. Members of the community carried out all discoveries and innovations through him (*the king*). Anywaa kings are powerful and well-respected, which is a sign of their legitimate power over the land vested in him by the com-

munity and God. They take control of vast areas of land and no action can be taken without their knowledge. Each chiefdom has boundaries and the king helps resolve disputes relating to land titles. This is the true indication of the fact that Anywaa kings are the landlords and have the power of allotting land to the inhabitants. They have the right to institute laws and orders. Given all the powers vested in their kings, peasants have no choice but to work for the rulers, and they are compensated with a part of the produce.

The preceding discussion of the landholding system among the Anywaa was put in a historical perspective by a national proclamation in 1975 that made the landholding system rather communal and limited the king's power to settling disputes related to land; otherwise, after the implementation of this act, land has been communally owned and periodically allotted.

The Anywaa have two types of settlements: those at the riverbank and the upland settlements. The patterns are almost the same as those of the Nuer, but the Anywaa are purely sedentary agriculturalists. A riverbank is more devoted to agricultural activities and it is more demanding than an upland; however, the former is more fertile. As the riverbank is more susceptible to flood damage, many settlements are found in the uplands. Settlement and farming at the bank of the river are feasible only when the water level falls. Such settlement continues to exist until the next season sets in.

Like in the case of the Nuer, an informal land market operates also in the Anywaa territory with no involvement of the government bodies. Land market transactions are made haphazardly at the bank of the river where demand of the farmland is at its peak.

4.1.3. Customary land rights among the Majangir

The customary land tenure system of the Majangir people is almost the same as that of the Nuer since land is owned communally. Land is a common property for all the indigenes, especially the Majangir. People who rule over the lands are the council of elders who have the right to allocate land to the lineages and, at the same time, settle disputes arising from land-related conflicts. The Majangir people believe that land belongs to the Majangir and the community in question. It is also true that there is no tradition of planting trees as a way of acquiring title deed.

Majangir livelihoods rely mainly on shifting cultivation; maize, sorghum, hunting and beekeeping play a significant part in their subsistence. With respect to livestock rearing, they only raise chickens and sell honey; this is because the area is infested with tsetse fly. They also participate in gathering forest products and wild plants.

■ **The process of land acquisition leads to the individual ownership of farmland and homestead through forest clearance, followed by necessary investments to prove one's ownership rights.**

Land is considered to be losing its fertility on a yearly basis as the extent of weeds increases over the cycle. Among the Majang people, shifting cultivation is quite common; there exists a series of field types in a fixed sequence over space, with the provision for the renewal of the soil (Stauder, 1971). The fallow period is about 10-15 years until the forest regenerates. Abandoned fallow lands were normally seen around the Majangir settlements in the past. But due to population pressure from within and the settlers (highlanders) from the northern part of Ethiopia, the fallow period is reduced to zero, implying that there is constant farming on the same land, which results in land degradation. According to FGD, a resident of the Majangir zone said, “For the Majangir, the fallow system is just like a dream or an element of the ancient society’s history.”

Therefore, “the state ownership of land [in the past regimes and in the currently EPRDF-led country] is far from perfect since it restricts the different land rights of use, rent, lease, donation and inheritance for different reasons” to family members. (Weldegebriel Ambaye, 2012: 1) Such arrangement violates the rights of the local Gambella people who have been granted customary land rights for a very long time and now are deprived of the necessary investments on the land indirectly, by the fear of eviction.

4.2. Change in customary land rights in Gambella

In Gambella, internal dynamics, which bring changes in the customary land tenure system, are the same with slight variation among the different ethnic groups. (The extent and the speed at which the change takes place can only vary.) In addition to natural occurrences, population pressure contributes to the resource’s relative scarcity that culminates in deforestation. The explanation of natural resource scarcity in relation to population pressure dates back to the 18th century when Robert Malthus presented a new demographic theory (Malthus, 1798).

In his theory, Malthus predicted that the imbalance between population and the available scare resources would generate conflicts (and other ‘positive checks’) to countercheck the ‘excess’ mouth. Many academic researchers agree that significant population growth is the main drawback in contemporary less developed countries causing fierce competition over fixed natural resources. (Hundie, 2006: 15)

Principally, population pressure creates a lot of unnecessary burdens on the environment; such a pressure could easily invite conflict and put the security of land at risk. It is also believed that because of social ties the concentration of people in one location creates land shortage, which is the case regarding the Gambella peasantry households. The expected conflict is not only intra-ethnic but also inter-ethnic, and thus threatens the state of land tenure security. For instance, in Nuer areas, some villages have been evacuated due to the relative scarcity of natural resources; and people migrate towards Gambela city and its surroundings in search of green pasture, which in turn puts the Anywaa land (Gambela city and its surroundings) under pressure. Such potential fears among the Anywaa brought onto surface the 2002 Anywaa–Nuer conflict in Itang district, which was immediately transformed into a

full-scale confrontation. Such a contentious issue between the Nuer and the Anywaa appears to be exacerbated due to the government's siding with one of the two.

From the view point of the theories of institutional change, the emergence of new property rights in Gambella can be thought to be a result of strategic conflict between state-sponsored projects and the communities. Accordingly, Knight (1992: 107) argues that "economic actors produce institutions in the process of seeking distributional advantage in the conflicts over substantive benefits."

4.2.1. External factors

Another factor is the external one with different facets. The following are some problems created by the external pressure on land tenure security:

- (i) Environmental migration (north–south),
- (ii) Expansion of urban areas, and
- (iii) Conflict in South Sudan (refugees' settlements).

(i) Environmental migration (north–south)

Environmental migration (north–south migration) is made up of two types of migration: peoples' voluntary migration and government-sponsored migration; which put pressure on the land tenure security system. The involuntary migration of peasants from the north to the south started under the socialist government in the early 1980s and continues to the present day because of the settlement policy to escape the recurrent droughts in the northern part of the country. After peasants discovered the environment as being conducive for agriculture, they started voluntary migration, while those who had settled earlier began inviting their relatives from the north. The settlers built their own villages and gave them name, which goes against the custom of the indigenous community of giving traditional names. Investors from the north put a lot of pressure on the land tenure system, either with expanding the land allocated to them by the local government to the adjacent farmlands of the indigenous people or with purchasing the nearby farmlands from the locals at a very low price and clearing vast areas of forests. The expanded land is not utilized fully and keeps control over the land for speculative purposes.

(ii) Expansion in urban areas

Although the sub-Saharan region of Africa remains predominantly rural, its urban population has grown far more rapidly than its rural population and continues to do so. Africa's urban population increased nine-fold between 1950 and 2000, while its rural population increased by 265 per cent (United Nations, 2004). Africa, now, has more than 300 million urban dwellers and two-fifths of its population lives in urban areas. Much of the growth of urban population has taken place in informal settlements where land is occupied illegally or land ownership is unclear. In many urban contexts, land titling is not only complex but also involves competing claims, which include politically powerful groups demanding the ownership of informal settlements where large sections of the low-income population live.

“Rapid urban growth also produces a high demand for well-located sites, including those that are already densely occupied by illegal settlements. The rights of their inhabitants are frequently swept aside when more powerful interests want this land. Rapid urban growth is also having a major impact on peri-urban land values, with rising insecurity for those living on and working such land. Farmers near urban areas in Gambella, where land values are rising very rapidly, face displacement from the conversion of agricultural to building land. [...] Land speculation also disrupts farming and displaces farmers and agricultural laborers” (Toulmin, 2009: 30-31). It appears that the expansion of towns to the peri-urban areas as well as clearing forests for agricultural purposes push peasants and farmers to the margins. Such practice brings environmental degradation.

(iii) Conflict in South Sudan (refugees' settlements)

Of the 18 million refugees and an estimated 22 million internally displaced people in the world today, almost all are in developing countries, where they are associated with a heavy toll on the environment and forests. “The conventional reasoning is straightforward: by creating a sudden, sharp increase in population density, refugees and their herd animals impose a population shock on asylum communities which cannot withstand the strain on resources. Deforestation occurs as refugees seek out firewood and shelter materials, grazing land becomes denuded as refugees' herd animals strain the carrying capacity of the range, water sources cannot support greatly increased utilization and become polluted and depleted, and there is garbage and other waste accumulation around refugee camps (Black, 1994a; Jacobsen, 1994). In addition, refugees are seen as ‘exceptional resource degraders’ as a consequence of their poverty, short time horizons, lack of local environmental knowledge and traumatized psychological status (Myers, 1993)” (Haileselassie, 2007: 17). Figure 1 below depicts the influx of refugees to the Gambella region with severe consequences on the environment.

figure 1 missing

The UNHCR (2019) estimated that the study area had the total number of refugees of 16,455 in Bonga, 34,418 people in Pinyudo, and 10,547 people in Dimma in 1997. The influx of refugees certainly accounts for part of the population growth in the Gambella region. The pressure on land and the environment by the refugees is far higher than the census number would indicate, especially when considering that there has been an additional flow of close to 400,000 refugees in the aftermath of the South Sudan conflict of 2013. Practical problems have been seen and felt in the region with the heavy presence of Southern Sudanese refugees. For instance, the Uduk of the Southern Sudanese refugees in Bonga camp with the approximate number of 19,000, though they were repatriated back, were found to have imposed immense pressure on the environment and the ecosystem, which has been brought into the state of disequilibrium. Even though these refugees were provided with rations by the UNHCR, they cleared a vast area of land for agricultural purposes; and they complemented their rations by cutting trees for fuelwood and collecting charcoal, a source of energy for cooking and a product for sale. For instance, a significant change in the barren land was observed in the Bonga refugee camp, where the rate of deforestation increased from 0.2 percent in 1990 to 0.7 percent in 2006 (Alemu, 2007). Also hunting activities, which have been seen to be practiced by many residents of the Bonga town and the surrounding communities, pose a threat as apes and monkeys are no longer there and these refugees go as far as where crawling animals for consumption purposes can be found. This process is often negative because the environmental pressures imposed by an influx may lead to loss of woodland and rangeland, increased soil erosion, and a breakdown of soil ecology.

4.2.2. Urban and rural linkage

It has been known for many years that the urban and rural linkage takes several forms: economic, administrative, socio-cultural, and political. This is part of the complex relation, which includes a rural–rural link, a small town–small town link (horizontal), a rural–small town link, and a small town–large town link. In an interdependent economy, a sector is linked to other sectors by its direct and indirect purchases and sales.

4.2.2.1. Forward linkage

The southwestern part of the Gambella region has a great potential for the expansion of agriculture and the agro-industry through irrigation. The total cultivable area is 1,209,164 ha and the net potential irrigable area is about 480,000 ha according to the Baro-Akobo basin study by Selkhozoprom Export (1989). There is a large potential to produce enough food for the inhabitants to achieve self-sufficiency in regions struggling with food deficiency and in the diaspora and to generate export earnings. These days only smaller quantities of corn, rice, beans, palm oil, coffee, tea, tobacco, cassava, sugarcane, etc. are produced. For instance, the area planted for cereals, pulses, and oilseeds was 20,034.51 ha in 2001, while it declined to 16,032.9 ha (according to the information obtained from the records of the Bureau of Agricul-

ture). Thus, the capacity of rain-fed agriculture to support the urban sector is very low. The usage of old farm equipment along with a small average landholding size of 0.5 hectare results in meager production, which may not produce enough food for the families. The productivity of farmers with the existing arable land has to be enhanced and if this increased productivity leads to a higher supply of food products in the urban sector, farmers' income will increase; in other words, there will be less need for deforestation and more need for leaving some land fallow.

4.2.2.2. *Backward linkage*

This is a type of linkage that all higher-level sectors/firms have with the lower level sectors or firms. It refers to the inputs and services provided to the agricultural sectors and the agrarian population from various sources including the urban sectors. These inputs can be labor, fertilizers, pesticides, and machinery (e.g., tractor plow). There is no large-scale industry that provides services to the rural economy. The only limited services provided by the government are the provision of fertilizer input to rural people via development agents and the assistance of veterinary technicians and antenatal care and midwifery professionals. The provisions of such services are politically motivated. People with more access to political or party leadership seem to be the ones with preferential treatment.

Most of the backward linkages between industry and agriculture deal with input supply and the services that affect the supply of inputs. An important element of these linkages is the origin of the source of those inputs, i.e., whether they are manufactured or produced locally, or imported.

The nature of the input considers both the long-term and the short-term implications of sourcing via imports versus the local production of raw and intermediate inputs. The larger the portion of inputs produced locally, the greater the multiplier effect from an increase in exports. If a significant portion of the inputs can be produced cost-effectively, at an equal or higher quality than that of the imports, this will have a ripple effect throughout the economy and will lead to greater employment and economic growth. The implication here is that if the employment-generating capacity of the urban or modern sector is high, the rural population will be induced to migrate to nearby urban areas. This will, in turn, reduce high dependency on land and on farming, which helps decrease deforestation.

The nature of the input considers both the long-term and the short-term implications of sourcing via imports versus the local production of raw and intermediate inputs. The larger the portion of inputs produced locally, the greater the multiplier effect from an increase in exports.

Thus, population pressure due to the refugees' settlements and migration from the northern part of Ethiopia to Gambella has been seen in many places in the region to have caused stresses on the land reinforcing resource depletion, poverty, and conflict. Moreover, the rapid rate of deforestation, as a result of the conversion of marginal land for agricultural purposes, causes soil erosion, the associated problems lead to the decline of soil fertility, and the loss of biodiversity makes livelihood improvement a very challenging task for the Gambella region that relies heavily on agriculture and natural resource products. The enhancement of employment opportunities in urban centers helps lessen the burden on the environment in rural areas.

4.3. The impact of socio-cultural practice on physical environment perception

4.3.1. Grazing land

Due to the existence of extensive grazing lands in the region, free-grazing is rampant, except in Godere district and the outer fringes of Gambela city. In parts of Godere district, where mixed farming is practiced, there is a shortage of grazing land and each farm household has a plot for practicing controlled grazing. In Abobo, where there are settlers, people have the tradition of protecting grazing land so that it should not be used for other purposes. Due to the shortage of grazing land in the outer fringes of Gambella district, farmers graze cattle on crop residue.

4.3.2. Water

Settlement along the rivers is the norm for indigenous people living in the region since their livelihood depends on cultivating flood-recession crops and fishing along the banks of the rivers. A "free watering right" of washing, boating, drinking, and watering the animals is guaranteed to the community but with some restrictions in fishing activities. In fact, there is ethnic tension among sedentary farmers and agropastoralist communities along big rivers. Among other implications, the right to water usage has an impact on settlement patterns. If the human right to water is not guaranteed, people will not be able to settle in certain areas or undertake long-term investments, such as the plantation of perennial crops to maintain tenure security.

4.3.3. Forest

Forests are accessible to the local people, and this enables them to cut trees for cooking purposes, construction, and selling wood. Even the naturally intact forest that belongs to the government in Gog and Godere is accessible. Farmers burn off the forests in need of farmland and timber from big trees. The practice of shifting cultivation by the Majangir allows the preparation of land for cultivation. Although most rural people benefit from the forests, the inhabitants are not in favor of the state's forest plantation efforts due to the fact that they have to face the problem of the shortage of grazing land, the 'shrinking of land,' and the proliferation of crop fields.

Grazing land, water, and forests are the primary resources of agricultural production and are essential to maintain human life and well-being (FAO, 1995). As of

now, the Gambella region is believed to be confronted with an environmental crisis of huge magnitude, greater than ever before. The rate of land degradation, the loss of soil fertility due to erosion, and the depletion of organic matter and nutrients are faster than the rate of regeneration. In spite of all the attempts to reverse these trends, the forest resource and the vegetation cover of the region have been depleting alarmingly, which causes land degradation and a shortage of firewood and timber supply.

4.4. Land-use systems and indigenous practice

According to the Ministry of Agriculture (Woody Biomass Inventory and Strategic Planning Project, 2001), the land-use system of Gambella Regional State comprises five systems: four cultivation and one pastoral system.

4.4.1. The cereal cultivation system of the Anywaa, the Opo, and the Komo people

Different types of cultivation are being practiced by the indigenous communities inhabiting the region. The Anywaa, the Opo, and the Komo people cultivate the banks and levees of the main rivers rather than the woodlands in the interfluves. Maize, bean, and sorghum are produced. A maize parcel of an average size of 1-2 hectares is followed by 1 hectare of long season sorghum. First maize and bean crops are grown on the wetter soils where there is residual moisture. The second crop is grown during the rainy season on the high and better-drained levee soils along with sorghum and beans. Fishing is an important source of food. Hunting on the plains and in the forest edges is carried out in the dry season; fire is also used to frighten animals (ENTRO, 2008).

The Anywaa depend on cultivating flood-recession crops and shifting cultivation is their main livelihood strategy. In fact, the Anywaa are traditional agriculturalists who have taken advantage of their proximity to the Baro, Akobo, Gilo (Pibor), and Alwero rivers to cultivate flood-tolerant and rain-fed crops. Since they live above the levee, they rely on growing crops in the same place by harvesting rain-fed crops before the river swells and others after the flood recedes.

4.4.2. The agro-pastoral system of livestock production of the Nuer

The Nuer are predominantly cattle breeders; they also cultivate flood-recession maize and sorghum to supplement their diet of milk and blood. Families own the cattle jointly; a son may obtain permission from his father to use the cattle to pay the bridewealth. The Nuer are agro-pastoralists, practicing semi-sedentary farming. They also depend on the seasonal movement of the livestock during the dry and the wet season. During the rainy season they move to the upland areas in search of green pasture and evacuate the flood zone, and then return to the riverbank during the dry season to settle for a longer period. The Nuer also migrate to the frontiers during dry seasons in search of pasture for the cattle. Such movement concerns only youngsters (male and female), the elderly (men and women) remain at the riverbanks to take care of agricultural products and nurse the sick and the aged cattle around homesteads (ENTRO, 2008).

The Nuer were originally “pure” pastoralists who at the later days of the diversification of agriculture have become agro-pastoralists. The agro-pastoralist Nuer inhabit the vast forests in the uplands, the savannah grasslands, and the seasonally flooded plains of Jiokow, Akobo, and Itang districts at the riverbank. It is to be noted that because of the scattered forests there is no serious tsetse challenge in these areas.

4.4.3. The shifting cultivation system of the Majangir

About some 2,400 farm families of the Majang people are found to practice a sophisticated system of weed mulching and forest fallowing. About 72% of them live mainly in Godere district, deep below the Keffa highland, and in the high forests on the escarpment and the adjoining foothills. Among these groups, the use of mulch to suppress weed growth extends the period of cultivation by some two to four years (ENTRO, 2008). Thus, the Majangir appear to have partially solved the problem of weed infestation.

The Majangir subsistence system depends basically on the shifting cultivation of maize and sorghum, hunting, fishing, and beekeeping. No livestock other than chickens is kept because of the high prevalence of the tsetse fly. They gather forest products, wild plants except for mushrooms, fresh greens, wild yam, and wild coffee (only leaves and twigs, not berries).

The most consumed staple crops are maize and sorghum, with some taro, yam (several species), and pumpkin. Crops cultivated for consumption include sesame, beans, peas, pumpkin, taro leaves, and some introduced crops including sweet potato, sweet cassava, enset, and sugarcane, but none of these latter crops are important. Spices are grown to flavor coffee (ENTRO, 2008).

Due to constant floods and the clearing of vast tracks of forests, soil erosion is the most dangerous ecological process observed in Gambella. Soil resources are the basis of agricultural production and provide several ecosystem services and food for the region’s people. Therefore, traditional conservation measures such as tree-planting and leaving the land fallow are being considered to help maintain the fertility of the land (ENTRO, 2008).

5. Conclusion and policy implications

This paper considered the effect of land tenure policy on the environment, in general, and deforestation, in particular; three desirable properties of an appropriate land tenure system were also identified. This was followed by the analysis of the land tenure systems of the various ethnic groups that reside in the study area. The overall impression is that the prevailing land tenure system in the study area is not conducive to the retention of forest cover; nor is it appropriate for tree-planting. Besides ethnic differences, external factors that affect forest cover and reforestation were highlighted. These external factors include migrants from the Ethiopian highlands, the expansion of the urban areas as well as migrants from South Sudan, who came as a result of conflicts within Sudan and after the eruption of violence during the 2013 South Sudanese Civil War. Related constraints include issues of both urban–rural

and forward–backward linkages. The availability of and the accessibility to water, forests, and grazing land were also indicated. In general, in this paper, I have tried to consider various socio-economic and cultural settings in the study area as one should have some knowledge of the socio-economic background of this area.

The population of Ethiopia has increased rapidly over the past fifty years, and according to the Federal Central Statistical Agency (CSA), the current estimate is about 100 million people. The impact of this high population growth on the demand for farmland has not only intensified but has also coupled with a fragmented policy on the land tenure regime that has led to high deforestation and land degradation with far-reaching implications on the environment. Ethiopia's federal government should formulate and implement economically viable land reform policies to ensure that the farmers feel an emotional attachment to the land they cultivate. Therefore, regional governments should direct their attention toward designing a clear policy on land tenure security that acknowledges private ownership, enhances the positive relationship between man and the ecosystem, and encourages peasants and farmers to make long-term investments in land that can lead to improved living conditions for the poor and increased agricultural investment. ☀

References

- Benneh, G. (1987). Land Tenure and Agroforestry Land Use Systems in Ghana. In: Raintree, J. B. (Ed). *Land, Trees, and Tenure*. International Centre for Research in Agroforestry, Nairobi, 163-138.
- Bereket K. (2002). Land tenure and common pool resources in rural Ethiopia: a study based on fifteen sites. *African Development Review* **14** (1), 162-164.
- Berhanu N., Berhanu A., and Seyoum G. S. (2003). *Current Land Policy Issues in Ethiopia*. Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute, Addis Ababa.
- Beyene C. (2017). Contending views on land tenure system in Ethiopia: historiographical essay. *African Journal of History and Culture* **9** (1), 1-6.
- Binayaw T. (2015). Historiographical review of the current debate on Ethiopia land tenure system. *African Journal of History and Culture* **7** (2), 44-51.
- Black, R. (1994). Forced migration and environmental change: the impact of refugees on host environment. *Journal of Environmental Management* **42**, 261-277.
- Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia. (CSA). (1994).
- Crisologo-Mendoza, L. and Van de gaer, D. (2001). Population growth and customary land law: the case of Cordillera villages in the Philippines. *Economic Development and Cultural Change* **49** (3), 631-658.
- Deininger, K. and Binswanger, H. (1999). The evolution of the World Bank's land policy: principles, experience, and future challenges. *The World Bank Research Observer* **14** (2), 247-276.
- Deininger, K. and Feder, G. (2002). *Land Institutions and Policy: Key Messages of the Policy Research Report*. Workshop on Land Institutions and Land Policy Consultations for a World Bank Policy Research Report. Kampala, Uganda, April 29-May 2, 2002.
- Dessaiegn R. (1984). *Agrarian Reform in Ethiopia*. Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala.

- Dessalegn R. (1999). *Land and Rural Poverty in Ethiopia*. DEFID Workshop on Land Rights and Sustainable Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: Lessons and Ways Forward in Land Tenure Policy. Sunningdale, United Kingdom, February 16-19, 1999.
- Eastern Nile Technical Regional Office. (ENTRO). (2008). *BARO-AKOBO-SOBAT and White Nile Multipurpose Water Resource Development Study Project – Annex 1*. ENSAP-IDEN-ENTRO, Addis Ababa.
- Ethiopian Economic Association/Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute (EEA/EEPRI). (2002). *Land Tenure and Agricultural Development in Ethiopia*. EEA Publication, Addis Ababa.
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. (FDRE). (1995). The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Proclamation No. 1/1995. *Federal Negarit Gazeta* **1 (1)**, 1-30.
- Food and Agriculture Organization. (FAO). (1995). *The State of Food and Agriculture*. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome.
- Haileselassie G. T. (2007). *The Need for Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM) in Refugee Settlement Areas: the Case of Eritrean Refugees in and around Shimelba Camp, Tigray National Regional State, Ethiopia*. Unpublished MA Thesis. Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa.
- Hosaena G. (2010). *Land Policy Reform and Land Rental Markets in Ethiopia: Equity, Productivity and Welfare Implications*. PhD Thesis. Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Ås.
- Hundie, B. (2006). Property rights among Afar pastoralists of northeastern Ethiopia: forms, changes and conflicts. *SAGA Publications*. <https://www.saga.cornell.edu/saga/ilri0606/35hundie.pdf> [01.31.2020]
- Jacobsen, K. (1994). *The Impact of Refugees on the Environment: a Review of the Evidence*. Refugee Policy Group, Washington DC.
- Knight, J. (1992). *Institutions and Social Conflict: Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Laws, S., Harper, C., and Marcus, R. (2003). *Research for Development*. SAGE Publications Ltd., Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Malthus, T. R. (1798). *An Essay on the Principles of Population, as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society*. J. Johnson, London.
- Myers, N. (1993). Environmental refugees: how many ahead? *Climate Alert* **6 (5)**, 2-3.
- Place, F. and Otsuka, K. (2000). Population pressure, land tenure, and tree resource management in Uganda. *Land Economics* **76**, 233-251.
- Quisumbing, A. R. and Otsuka, K. (2001). *Land, Trees, and Women: Evolution of Land Tenure Institutions in Western Ghana and Sumatra. (Research Reports 121)* International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Washington DC.
- Quisumbing, A.R., Payongayong, E., Aidoo, J. B., and Otsuka, K. (2001). Women's land rights in the transition to individualized ownership: implications for tree resource management in western Ghana. *Economic Development and Cultural Change* **50**, 157-182.
- Selkhozoprom Export. (1990). *Baro-Akobo Basin Master Plan Study of Water and Land Resources of the Gambella Plain*. Ethiopian Valleys Development Studies Authority, Moscow.
- Shepherd, G. (1991). The communal management of forests in the semi-arid and sub-humid regions of Africa: past practice and prospects for the future. *Development Policy Review* **9**, 151-176.
- Shimelles T., Islam, K. M. Z., and Parviainen, T. (2009). *Effects of Land Tenure and Property Rights on Agricultural Productivity in Ethiopia, Namibia and Bangladesh*. Discussion Paper No.33. Department of Economics and Management, University of Helsinki, Helsinki.

- Stauder, J. (1971). *The Majangir: Ecology and Society of a Southwest Ethiopian People*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Toulmin, C. (2009). Securing land and property rights in sub-Saharan Africa: the role of local institutions. *Land Use Policy* 26, 27-54.
- UNHCR Gambella Registration Unit. (2019).
- United Nations. (2004). *World Urbanization Prospects: the 2003 Revision*. Department of Economics and Social Affairs, ESA/P/WP.190, United Nations Population Division, New York.
- Weldegebriel Ambaye, D. (2012). *Land Rights in Ethiopia: Ownership, Equity, and Liberty in Land Use Rights*. FIG Working Week, Knowing to manage the territory, protect the environment, evaluate the cultural heritage, Rome, Italy, May 6-10, 2012.
- Woody Biomass Inventory and Strategic Planning Project. (2001). *A Strategic Plan for the Sustainable Development Conservation and Management of the Woody Biomass Resources*. Ministry of Agriculture, Addis Ababa.

WHAT SHALL WE THINK ABOUT AN AFROCENTRIC VISION?

SZILÁRD BIERNACZKY, PH.D.

RETIRED SENIOR LECTURER, EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

BIERSZILARD@GMAIL.COM

Abstract

This essay was originally a lecture given in Hungarian in Pécs, Hungary, at a conference on African Globalities/Global Africans, the 4th Pécs African Studies Conference on June 9-10, 2016. It starts its analysis with the ancient Greeks, since when, and even more so since Hegel, we have known that in the fields of both thinking and actions, along theses and antitheses, then with luck, along syntheses, “welter” the phrasing of notions and conceptions and the debates over them as well as everyday and historical events. We also know that syntheses many times are born with difficulty. What is more, in many cases, series of theses and antitheses get to grips with each other for a long period of time without the hope of creating a synthesis. And of course, to open the gates elsewhere: this old-world syllogism, as a reflective model, is not sufficient for the interpretation of the realistic and mental entity that inundates us. However, nowadays we can pick up on the specific mental-interpretational ideology that stands out in the form of this model whose essence is Afrocentrism set against the Eurocentric approach (Biernaczky, 2017). This is discussed in the paper.

Keywords

Achebe syndrome, Afrocentrism, historical roots

Received: October 2019 | 1st Revision: December 2019 | Accepted: February 2020

1. Antiquity

If we look for its historical roots and we hold on to our syllogism that we use as a methodological crutch, we have to look back as far as the Antiquity. If we consider the wars of conquest of the Roman Empire, colonization, and the dominance formation that stretched over numerous areas and people far beyond the Latins, then we can state that one of the supposedly first manifestations of the European “thesis” can be grabbed here (the very first might be traced back to the conquests of Alexander the Great). Undoubtedly, the founders and governors of the empire (the Romans) were Rome-centric.

But how partial were they racially in point of colonized people (Germanic people, Franks, Hispanic people, people of the Danube region, Egyptians, North Africans, Middle Easterns, etc.) – had discrimination between the untamed and civilized been conceived? Unlike in the case of modern-day Francophonization, colonized people may have managed business more effectively (of course, they had more time for that too): prominent figures of the Roman civilization flowed from Latinized colonies to the center. Pointing at North Africa: numerous high-ranking soldiers, aristocrats, emperors as well as highly educated legists, historians, and thinkers came from the Arabs or Berbers. Among them was Saint Augustine, a significant person in human history. However, in the colonies, as learned from contemporary sources, a kind of colonial commonage was formed of a small number of Romans and a bigger number of locals (their traces can be seen in Hungary too; e.g., statuettes with black African features were also excavated). Without fail, the colonization of the Roman period could be described with at least as much if not more violence and barbarity than the modern-day colonization (not mentioning the Germanic Vandals’ age-long North African presence). Supposedly, extensive research and analysis would be necessary to discover whether the nowadays so many times emerging racism was present before, and if so, then in what form it was present in contemporary thinking.

2. Early modern history

Now let’s jump in time. In his excellent book (*Die “Wilden” und die “Zivilisierten”* [The Savages and the Civilized], 1976), essentially, Urs Bitterli tries to find the origin of racism (ethnic prejudice), marking the still remaining European behavior born through meeting the people of nature.

The inability to intellectually process archaic cultures – leading to violent measures in politics – reinforced the philosophical-psychological discrimination of other races. The Europeans’ uncertainty during the cultural encounter was tendentially not replaced by a serious endeavor to objectively research the alien culture. Instead, they judged the indigenous people, disregarding any nuance in their culture, and finally, calling these peoples ‘barbaric’ and ‘savages,’ thus rendering them inferior once and for all.

To give an example of all these, we quote the book of John Lubbock (*The Origin of Civilisation and the Primitive Condition of Man*, first published in 1870), which is well-known by the Hungarian audience too, in which the author refers to the

gradually-accessed people of nature as modern-day barbarians, distinguishing them from the people of the Antiquity. His book is prepossessed by the 19th century's general superiority of Europe. Quoting a certain writing of Carl Lichtenstein (*Travels in Southern Africa*, 1803-1804), he emphasizes that an impartial comparative naturalist sees these people (the Bushmen, that is, the San people) in tighter connection with gorillas and chimpanzees than with Kant or Goethe.

Nevertheless, the first serious (European or white) thesis is, without doubt, the differentiation between the wild and civilized people, particularly in the context of the slave trade (even if it has significant Arab and Oriental respects as well as serious African connections). We can also say that grading non-European people (mostly Africans) as wilds (until the strengthening of abolitionism) serves as self-justification in this regard. The other (European or white) thesis that can be regarded as more widespread and longer-range than slave trade is colonialism itself. According to Gert V. Paczensky (1974), its history is nothing else but a series of disappointments caused by whites to the inhabitants of "colorful" continents. We can discover only distant traces of antitheses in those centuries. In this regard, it is worth thumbing through Giuseppe Cocchiara's book, *L'Eterno Selvaggio* (1961). He points out that, without fail, it is Michel Montaigne who – being in the possession of the knowledge about the people of the new world – first cautioned his readers in his notable *Essais* (1580) not to name everything barbarian that was nothing else but unusual. But the Italian scholar brings our attention to the attitude of Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Rousseau too, who – following Lafitau, the father of modern ethnology – professed the myth of the good savage, what is more, they even resonated with Lafitau's views according to which the cultural standard of American Indians was not low at all and could be compared to that of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Cocchiara also treats his countryman's, Giambattista Vico's (1668–1774) outstanding writing, *Principi di Una Scienza Nuova Intorno alla Natura delle Nazioni* (1725). Correcting Lafitau's deception, that he considered those wild people the first representatives of humanity, Vico states that primitive is a kind of "prior" that forever lives within and returns from time to time to our conscience. That is, Vico establishes an evolutionary theory that is true to all people.

Antitheses have a strange role in this series – either in the wake of the works of Cocchiara or also those of others from other Europeans to Johann Gottlieb Herder (1744-1803), whose name is connected to the solution of the myth of the good savage by turning it into the myth of the good people. On the other hand, his memento of centuries, that is, his first folklore collection (the *Volkslieder* of 1778–1779 that aims to "give sound" to the people of the world), of which second edition (*Stimmen der Völker in Liedern*, 1807) a Malgas folk song cycle was included into, is considered one of the first representatives of living African folk culture.

The movement starting in the late 17th century that demanded abolition can be regarded as the most significant representation of big antitheses. Its unrivaled documents are the books of abbot Henri Grégoire (1970-1831) (*De la Littérature des Nègres*, 1808, and *De la Traite et de l'Esclavage des Noirs et des Blancs*, 1815), who

otherwise played an important role in the French Revolution too. Among his books the first is the one that introduces African and Afro-American personages known till then, straining for completeness together with rich annotations. Even though we only discovered their existence only in the 20th century, we cannot forget about those Africans who had been the indicators of a big change regarding the view and worldwide role of African history, culture, and literature. Let alone late-Christian literature and the rich learnings that lead us to Ethiopian scholars, first we need to mention the North African, Moroccan Muslim scholar and traveler Ibn Battuta (1304–1368 or 1369).

He, if that is true, traveled 121.000 km in his lifetime. In his “traveling book” (*Rihla*, published only from the 19th century), within Africa, besides Egypt in a longer chapter, we can see the world of the old Mali Empire, which matches any contemporary European court and is famous for the Epic of Sundiata, unfold.

Furthermore, we have to mention Leo Africanus (c. 1494–c. 1554), a Berber Muslim born in Andalusia, who later became a slave of the pope. He compiled a remarkable volume in Italian (*Della Descrittione dell’Africa et delle Cose Notabili che Ivi Sono*, 1550) about mostly North African territories and people that were unknown at that time for Europe. Later he left Rome and after returning to North Africa he disappeared in history. We cannot forget about the illustrious annals of Songhai scholars (Mahmud al-Kati, 1468–?, Ahmad Baba, 1556–1627, and Abd el-Rahman al-Sadi, 1596 –c. 1656). Finally, we have to mention the so-called, relatively late-discovered, slave narrative. Till now we know about dozens of freed slaves who, having received the opportunity for learning, created remarkable literature in the 18th-19th centuries. The Nigerian-born Igbo Olaudah Equiano (c. 1745–1797), who, after his kidnap to America, got into England, excelled among them. He might be the first African who stepped up against slavery in his memoir (*The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African*, 1789) that revives his childhood (that is, African) memories.

3. The ‘Achebe syndrome’

Let’s turn our attention now to yesterday’s and today’s reality. In his essay of 1977 (*An Image of Africa*) that, even today, kindles debates, Chinua Achebe states that Joseph Conrad reflects a racist approach in his novel (*Heart of Darkness*, 1899), which today is rated as a classic piece of literature. That time even his best friends denied the prominent Nigerian writer’s statement. It is a fact that Conrad’s novel first

Furthermore, we have to mention Leo Africanus, a Berber Muslim born in Andalusia, who later became a slave of the pope. He compiled a remarkable volume in Italian about mostly North African territories and people that were unknown at that time for Europe.

seems as if it is a version of the so-called ‘the civilized and the savages’ theme. But if we look deeper to understand the writing either in terms of semiotic research or according to the concepts of Clifford Gertz (1973), we will see that:

1. The protagonist captain, with whom the author does not identify himself (!), undertakes a voyage on the Congo River, which is meant to represent the actors of colonialism. He is a semiliterate, rude but not quite bad person, who turns to his white colonizer compeers with utter revulsion. He only shows human feelings when during the voyage a black fireman is shot next to him. (!)
2. The momentum that needs the most explanation is the misrepresentation of local Africans as savages (at the end of the voyage the description of savages who lurk in the forest). However, this is also part of the contemporary approach (that is sorely condemned by the writer in an indirect way) that helps legitimize the whites’ plunder, and if necessary, the murder of these African people.
3. But only in the deepest level of the novel can we find a continuous reminder: when putting into a specific semantic setting, the regular mention of ivory (elephant tusk) as a kind of semiotic sign shouts and warns about and refers to the Europeans’ utilitarian, devastating savagery that wades through everything.

The analysis could go on and on but for now, summing it up: in our view, Conrad’s writing is (one of the) first significant Afrocentric (or Euro-African?) work(s) that is an *antithesis* with advanced *synthesis*. To this will join then *Batouala* by René Maran (1921) intensified by André Gide’s guidebooks of the Congo and Chad (*Voyage au Congo*, 1927, *Le Retour du Tchad*, 1928).

Let us add straightaway that synthesis comes into being just in Chinua Achebe’s two vitally important novels that are placed into an Igbo setting (*Things Fall Apart*, 1958, *Arrow of God*, 1964). Why is that? Partly because, reminiscent of the works of Maran, a human-sized traditional African world stands out in them. However, transgressing Maran, Achebe introduces realistic white figures too and discloses everyday activities and celebrations of the local population who are torn between traditions and modernism, old beliefs and Christianity, black interests (subsistence, providing for the family at home and on the fields) and white interests (trade = exploitation). This seems to confirm Mandela’s message: Achebe “brought Africa to the rest of the world.”

I have mentioned at the start of this essay that reality often steps over the adaptability of syllogism: that is, Achebe created the synthesis of Eurocentric and Afrocentric approaches in both his two novels, where he introduced his evidently edifying but thought of as one-sided antithesis.

4. Afrocentrism – a movement and its limits

It might be surprising that the seedbed of the so-called Afrocentric worldview of the 1980s (that became popular mainly in the US and among the American blacks) might have been somewhere in Achebe’s failed attack against Conrad, which authors refer to a number of times recently. Beyond question, its roots must be looked for in the

Négritude movement. As we have been writing about it several times before, unlike Sartre, we do not consider this literary trend “racism against racism.” We see in it the search for the emancipation of a significant segment of world culture. In so far, the Négritude movement that was mostly founded by Senghor and Césaire can be graded simultaneously as antithesis and synthesis.

Now let’s see what M. K. Asante says, who covers the topic of a new African thesis in several books:

“...Afrocentrist seeks to uncover and use codes, paradigms, symbols, motifs, myths, and circles of discussion that reinforce the centrality of African ideas and values as a valid frame of reference for acquiring and examining data”

(Asante, 1990: 6).

Of course, this definition is acceptable on its own, but just in the Afrocentric “analysis-mass” that arose and grew into a movement under Asante’s influence can we discover substantial partiality (while the real and factual cultural values are little discussed). That is, we can say again what Sartre said in the case of the Négritude movement: racism against racism. So much the more, because by slightly stepping back in time, we encounter analyses like the also Nigerian Igbo Elechi Amadi’s book (*Ethics in Nigerian Culture*, 1982). He convincingly opens up how the European foray, white dominance, and their different culture destroy traditional “moral tethers” in both public and political spheres.

Into the sphere of a search for synthesis only Senghor’s old-new idea, that is, the *métissage* (“only the blending of cultures and people can create new values in the life of any society”) could be lifted, despite its not slightly confident and romantic nature. There are also positive and negative examples of his theses.

5. An epoch-making work: synthesis or a recent antithesis?

One of the last books of the outstanding British ethnologist, cultural anthropologist, and philosopher of history, Jack Goody (1919-2015), is entitled *The Theft of History*. In this, he aims to prove that both the Orient and Africa are a sterling part of world history even though Europe “actually stole” world history from the people of these continents.

The introduction precisely sums up what the author was thinking of when he entitled his book:

“The ‘theft of history’ of the title refers to the take-over of history by the west. That is, the past is conceptualized and presented according to what happened on the provincial scale of Europe, often western Europe, and then imposed upon the rest of the world. That continent makes many claims to have invented a range of value-laden institutions such as ‘democracy,’ mercantile ‘capitalism,’ freedom, individualism. However, these institutions are found over a much more widespread range of human societies. I argue that the same is true of certain emotions such as love (or romantic

love) which have often been seen as having appeared in Europe alone in the twelfth century and as being intrinsic to the modernization of the west (the urban family, for example)” (Goody, 2006: 1).

Appropos Africa, based on his one-time Ghanaian field work, he then notes:

“After several years’ residence among African ‘tribes’ as well as in a simple kingdom in Ghana, I came to question a number of the claims Europeans make to have ‘invented’ forms of government (such as democracy), forms of kinship (such as the nuclear family), forms of exchange (such as the market), forms of justice, when embryonically at least these were widely present elsewhere”

(Goody, 2006: 2).

Here Goody does not mention it but he formulates it many times later in his book: Asia and Africa are also part of world history. Africa also possesses history even if it is not written but oral history (see the works of Jan Vansina, to discover his prominently important role in this regard, that is, however, not touched upon by Goody this time, as well as Goody’s own importance regarding the question of oral and written traditions).

Now we only refer to the categories listed by Goody that are considered European “inventions.”

Regarding *democracy*, this concept actually does not exist in traditional Africa. But then we can mention a whole line of tribal formations where a kind of “tribal commonage” is justified and living conditions can be described as democratic. Not talking about smaller communities where people living within strictly controlled boundaries can live with decorum. Besides communal leadership/governance (tribal leaders were charged with lots of communal responsibilities), we can line up the rich network of kinship that was also to provide dignified living circumstances. However, this system was one of the main obstacles to the conception of feudalism based on land ownership in Africa.

Local and longer-term *commerce* (mercantile) was mentioned in 1963 in a large treatise that embraced numerous African people (Bohannan and Dalton, 1965). But we can quote from Eric R. Wolf’s volume, *Europe and the People Without History*, too to reveal the rich marks of North and West African trade that we can trace back even to the Antiquity (e.g., by Leo Frobenius):

“The trade routes through Western Sahara to Morocco and Algeria lay mainly in the hands of Mande-speaking Dyula traders, who had expanded southward from Jenne... to Bergo the major collecting point for gold and forest products on the edge of the forest zone. The eastern trade routes to Tunisia and Libya connected up with the commercial network of the Hausa, who traded south toward the forest from the city of Kano in northern Nigeria and from other Hausa towns” (Wolf, 1990: 39).

As democratism, so the African existence of the *foundation of the state* and a *viable society* (human or humanistic society) has been widely proven, analyzed, and richly

discussed subjects. From the end of the first millennium, we have known about greater or lesser principalities. The most interesting might be the first: presumably, the Soninke established the ancient Ghanaian (Ghanata) state (Aukar State, as mentioned by Wolf) in the 800s. A Senegalese scholar (Bathily, 1989) reports about its late survival. Regarding *justice*, West African empires (see the Ashanti Kingdom) had a refined, complex legal system that resembled western proceedings of which today we have libraries of materials at our service.

Capitalism in Africa did not evolve (see the works of Goody or Csaba Ecsedy). Conversely, in accordance with commercial needs, currency did exist: see the monetary role of cowry shells, the gold dust of the Ashanti Kingdom as well as copper (and in the royal court, gold) statuettes that served as measurements.

In the matter of *freedom and individualism* we present two examples from our own research: 1. Almost in every tribal kingdom, royal house or significant noble family we can find bards/storytellers (griot in West Africa or imbongi/orator in the South African Zulu culture). They served not only as a “storage” of the past but as kinds of advisors and critics when needed. 2. Regarding the subject of appearance and the development of personality, it is worth to look into the works of Emil Torday and read what he had to say about the enlightened Kuba kings who reigned during his field work.

The subject of romantic love also leads us to our own researches. I published a voluminous essay in 2007 about African love, eroticism, and obscenity, going along with Evans-Pritchard who states that in Africa there is no obscenity; words that might be indecent for the European ear are actually “ritual tethers” for Africans. But then I have found several amorous expressions in the early examples (and also those after the end of the 19th century) of both female and male poetry. An Ethiopian Galla (or Oromo) song will serve as an example here (translated into English by Cerulli):

*If I might be an ox,
An ox, a beautiful ox,
Beautiful but stubborn,
The merchant would buy me,
Would buy and slaughter me,
Would spread my skin,
Would bring me to the market.*

“The eastern trade routes to Tunisia and Libya connected up with the commercial network of the Hausa, who traded south toward the forest from the city of Kano in northern Nigeria and from other Hausa towns.”

*The coarse woman would bargain for me;
The beautiful girl would buy me,
She would crush perfumes for me,
I would spend the night rolled up around her;
I would spend the afternoon rolled up around her.
Her husband would say, "It is a dead skin!"
But I would have my love!*

(Cerulli, 1922: 78)

The collector notes that the singer longs to become a cloak of skin to be worn by his sweetheart.

6. Moral and suggestion

At the end of our essay, in which we have resorted to the tools of three fields of science (philosophy of history, ethnology, study of literature as well as folklorism), we think that the only viable route to introduce the facts and values of African history and culture into the circulation of world history (i.e., building these into world history, world culture, world literature, etc.) is to aspire, factually, without bias to the following goals:

- The exploration, collection, and inventorying of the multiple social and cultural values of Africa (see Senghor, 1988)
- Global cooperation for the “full” cognition of Africa
- A moderate, objective, and balanced Afro-centric vision to be enforced worldwide, with respect to the full introduction of African values into world culture
- Urging the shaping of a world view of both the European and the African side within which Africa can be inserted into world culture in a natural way. ✨

References

- Achebe, C. (1977). An image of Africa. *Research in African Literatures* 9 (1), 1-15.
- Achebe, C. (1964). *Arrow of God*. Heinemann Educational Books, London.
- Achebe, C. (1958). *Things Fall Apart*. Heinemann Educational Books, London.
- Africanus, L. (1550). *Della Descrittione dell’Africa et delle Cose Notabili che Ivi Sono*. [The Description of Africa] Edizione Ramusio, Venice.
- Amadi, E. (1982). *Ethics in Nigerian Culture*. Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria) Ltd., Ibadan.
- Asante, M. K. (1990). *Kemet, Afrocentricity, and Knowledge*. Africa World Press Inc., Trenton, NJ.
- Bathily, A. (1989). *Les Portes de l’Or. Le Royaume de Galam (VIII^e – XVIII^e Siècle)*. [The Gates of Gold. The Kingdom of Galam (8th-18th century)] L’Harmattan, Paris.
- Biernaczky, Sz. (2007). „Ha szárnyaló madarakat látsz valahol...” (Szerellem, erotika, obszcenitás – hagyományos afrikai költői műfajok). [“Where one sees birds in their flight...” (Love, eroticism, obscenity – traditional african poetry genres)] *Néprajzi Látóhatár* 1–2, 167–210.
- Biernaczky, Sz. (2017). *What Do You Think About an Afrocentric Vision?* Mundus Novus Kft., Érd.
- Bitterli, U. (1976). *Die “Wilden” und die “Zivilisierten”. Grundzüge einer Geistes- und Kulturgeschichte der Europäische-Überseeischen Begegnung*. [The Savages and the Civilized. Outlines of an Intellectual and Cultural History of the European-Overseas Encounter] Verlag C. H. Beck, Munich.
- Bohannan, P. and Dalton, G. (Eds). (1965). *Markets in Africa*. Northwestern University Press, Evanston, IL.
- Cerulli, E. (1922). *Folk-Literature of the Galla of Southern Abyssinia*. African Dept. of the Peabody Museum of Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
- Cocchiara, G. (1961). *L’Eterno Selvaggio. Presenza e Influsso del Mondo Primitivo nella Cultura Moderna*. [The Eternal Savage. Presence and Influence of the Primitive World in Modern Culture] Il Saggiatore, Milan.
- Conrad, J. (1899). *Youth: a Narrative, and Two Other Stories*. William Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh–London.
- Defrémery, C. and Sanguinetti, B. R. (Eds). (1853). *Voyages d’Ibn Batoutah*. [The Travels of Ibn Battuta] Imprimerie Impériale, Paris.
- Ecsedy, Cs. (1989). Formation of State and Landownership in Africa. In: Tókei, F. (Ed). *Primitive Society and Asiatic Mode of Production*. MTA Orientalisztikai Munkaközösség, Budapest, 143–199.
- Ecsedy, Cs. (1985). Politico-economic types and processes of transition from monarchic tribalism to traditional state in Africa. *Jahrbuch des Museum für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig* 36, 56–64.
- Equiano, O./Vassa, G. (1789). *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African*. Self-Published, London.
- Es’Sadi, A. (1900). *Tarikh Es-Soudan*. [History of the Sudan] Ernest Leroux, Paris.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures. Selected Essays*. Basic Books, New York.
- Gide, A. (1928). *Le Retour du Tchad*. [Return from Chad] Gallimard, Paris.
- Gide, A. (1927). *Voyage au Congo*. [Travels in the Congo] Gallimard, Paris.
- Goody, J. (1963). Feudalism in Africa? *Journal of African History* 4 (1), 1-18.
- Goody, J. (2006). *The Theft of History*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Grégoire, H. (1808). *De la Littérature des Nègres*. [Negro Literature] Chez Maradan Librairie, Paris.
- Grégoire, H. (1815). *De la Traite et de l’Esclavage des Noirs et des Blancs: Par un Ami des Hommes de Toutes les Couleurs*. [Trafficking and Slavery of Blacks and Whites by a Friend of Men of All Colors] Adrian Egron Imprimeur, Paris.

- Herder, J. G. (1877–1878). *Volkslieder, 1-2*. [Folk Songs, 1-2.] Weygand, Leipzig.
- Herder, J. G. (1807). Zu den Liedern der Madagasker (Aus dem Französischen des Ritter Parny). [To the Songs of Madagascar] In: Müller, J. (Ed). *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern*. J. G. Cotta'schen Buchhandlung, Tübingen, 537-552.
- Houdas, O. V. and Delafosse, M. (Eds). (1913). *Tarikh el-Fettach ou Chronique du Chercheur pour Servir à l'Histoire des Villes des Armées et du Tekrour*, par Mahmoud Kâti ben el-Hâdj el-Motaouakkel. [Tarikh El-Fettach, or Chronicle of the Researcher to Serve the History of Cities, Armies, and Main Characters of Tekrour] Ernest Leroux, Paris.
- Lafitau, J. F. (1724). *Moeurs des Sauvages Américains, Comparées aux Moeurs des Premiers temps, 1-2*. [Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times] Saugrain–Hochereau, Paris.
- Lubbock, J. (1898). *The Origin of Civilisation and the Primitive Condition of Man*. D. Appleton and Co., New York.
- Maran, R. (1921). *Batouala. Véritable Roman Nègre*. [Batouala. A True Black Novel] Ed. Albin Michel, Paris.
- Montaigne, M. (1580). *Essais, 1-2*. [Essays 1-2.] Féret et Fils, Bordeaux.
- Paczensky, G. V. (1974). *Die Weissen Kommen. Die Wahre Geschichte des Kolonialismus*. [The Whites Are Coming. The True History of Colonialism] Hoffmann und Campe, Hamburg.
- Senghor, L. S. (1988). *Ce que je Crois*. [That Which I Believe] Grasset, Paris.
- Vansina, J. (1961). *De la Tradition Orale. Essai de la Méthode Historique*. [Oral Tradition. A Study in Historical Methodology] Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren.
- Vico, G. (1836). *Principi di Una Scienza Nuova Intorno alla Natura delle Nazioni*. [Principles of the New Science Concerning the Common Nature of Nations] Società Tipografica de' Classici Italiani, Milan.
- Wolf, E. P. (1990). *Europe and the People Without History*. University of California Press, Berkeley–Los Angeles–London.

Guidelines for submission of papers

(1) General requirements

All papers must be submitted in English.

The author should submit the final version of the manuscript, no major modifications (e.g., additional paragraphs, chapters) will be accepted after that submission. Of course, the blind peer review process may bring about other corrections and more work.

Prior to submission, all papers must

- have been submitted to a spell check
- have been examined by an English specialist (preferably a native speaker) who also speaks the language of the author. Papers that fail to meet a level of comprehension by the editorial board due to *poor English* will be returned for rewriting or, in severe cases, rejected.
- have a bibliography in the format specified below. The utilization of the proper referencing style is also crucial. Contributions not conforming to style will be returned by the Editors.

No cover page is needed.

Papers should be up to 40,000 characters (with spaces) in length.

Papers should be given 1.5 spacing, Times New Roman 12.

Paragraphs should be properly indented.

Do not split the text into separate columns.

Authors should state whether they are using British or American (or other!) English, and they consequently need to stick to the chosen variant. Please, pay attention especially to dates, verbs ending in –ise/-ize and –l/-ll, nouns ending in –isation/ization, etc.

After peer review, accepted authors will receive electronic versions of their edited papers to provide them with the opportunity to make final comments. Here deadlines may be tight, so the author must react quickly, or else editorial and language changes will be taken as accepted.

(2) Specific requirements

Sources (references) should be properly cited in the text and a bibliography at the end of the paper. Endnotes can also be added, however, they should be marked clearly in the text at a point of punctuation, and listed consecutively at the end of the paper. They should *not* be listed at the bottom of each relevant page. The use of notes, in general, should be kept to a minimum.

Citation

References should be cited in the text as follows: (Fischer et al., 1996) or (Kissinger, 1990) or (Kegley and Wittkopf, 1995: 23). See some examples:

1. If one examines the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Sustainable Development, 1987) or the Rio Declaration of 1992, to name just two major examples, the sustainable development approach represents a global response to problems or challenges that are themselves of a global nature (ecological, economic or social).
2. Thus, the Brundtland Report states that “sustainable development should be seen as a global objective” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987: 40). → this latter one indicates page no. 40 from where the citation was taken
3. This is the notion of “territorial sacrifices” considered by Nijkamp in different contributions (Nijkamp et al., 1991: 160; 1992: 41).

Bibliography

Each reference cited in the text must appear on the reference list.

Please, note that the order of names varies across cultures.

If the surname is the first element (like in the case of Chinese or Hungarian names), or in the case of, for instance, Ethiopian names (no distinction between family name or surname and first/middle names), do not place a comma after the surname (first name concerning Ethiopian names) in such citations.

To help you resolve the question regarding name order, look at how the author has been cited in other works, and follow that presentation of the name.

Examples:

1. Jackson, C. (2001). A model of spatial patterns across retail property markets in Great Britain. *Urban Studies* **38**, 1445-1471.

→ here:

- the name of the journal should be in italics
- the issue of the journal should be bolded
- the pages of the article/study referred should be given after a comma, then, closed with a full stop.
- If there is no author, the article title comes first.
- If there is no date, use the abbreviation n.d.

2. Pack, J. R. (2002). *Growth and Convergence in Metropolitan America*. Brookings Institution Press, Washington DC.

→ here:

- the title of the book should be in italics
- publishing house/publisher first, city/settlement of publishing second

3. Stiftel, B. and Watson, V. (Eds). *Dialogues in Urban & Regional Planning*. Routledge, London.

→ if the volume has an editor (or more)

4. Glover, D. (1994). Global Institutions, International Agreements, and Environmental Issues. In: Stubbs, R. and Underhill, G. R. D. (Eds). *Political Economy and the Changing Global Order*. Macmillan, Houndmills, Basingstoke, 277-288.

→ if a chapter is referred to from a book

5. If you quote from an **Internet source**, you are required to additionally provide (after the name, title, etc.) the full address of the site and the date of download in brackets.

Verjee, A. and Knopf, P. (2019). A year of change in Ethiopia. *United States Institute of Peace Online*. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2019/04/year-change-ethiopia> [10.09.2018]

Use the following style in British English: [DD/MM/YYYY]

Use the following style in American English: [MM/DD/YYYY]

6. **Tables** should be prepared on separate sheets; they should not be embedded within the text. Each table should have an appropriate caption.

Table 1.

Figure 1.

You need to cite the source below the table/figure.

All materials from other sources that may infringe copyright laws must have copyright clearance from that source before being included in papers for the proceedings volume.

Contributions will only be considered on the understanding that they have not been published previously, are not under consideration for publication elsewhere, and are not being simultaneously submitted elsewhere.

Send your papers to tarrosy.istvan@pte.hu

If any specific questions arise, please, contact also: tarrosy.istvan@pte.hu