
Dr. K. E. D. Taha*

Abstract:
This paper focuses mainly on the communal conflict which plagued Ethiopia during the period that followed the collapse of the Mengistu Regime between 1991–1998. During this period, Ethiopia faced the most violent communal conflict which put the country at the brink of disintegration. The time frame of the paper is not extended beyond 1998 due to the eruption of the Ethiopian – Eritrean war in that year and the devastating impact it had on the political map of Ethiopia.

The paper argues that the policies of exclusion and repression pursued by the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) Government as well as the enactment of the controversial self-determination law during the period 1991-1998 have been the major factors behind the precipitation of communal conflict. It became very evident from the start that the hazardous strategy of involuntary integration adopted by the EPRDF regime was much orchestrated to usurp political power rather than to share it with the other groups. This was achieved through the infiltration of mass organizations of public and collective life, the establishment of satellite political parties, the rigging of elections, the harassment of political opposition, and the intimidation of the press, and the enactment of the controversial self-determination law. It is obvious that such repressive measures would antagonize the political opposition and, in turn, precipitate into a wider communal conflict.

In the introductory section of the paper, basic information regarding Ethiopia is highlighted. The second section of the paper addresses the underlying causes of the communal conflict namely the adoption of the hazardous strategy of involuntary integration

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symbolizes by the perpetuation of EPRDF’s hegemony and power monopoly, the harassment and curbing of political opposition and the enactment of the controversial self-determination law. The last section focuses on the eruption of communal conflict. Concluding remarks are drawn regarding the future political developments of the Ethiopian political system.

1. Introduction

Ethiopia is an ancient country located in north-east Africa, or, as it is generally known, the Horn of Africa, so called because of the horn-shaped tip of the continent that marks off the Red Sea from the Indian Ocean. It is bounded by Sudan in the west, Eritrea in the north and north-east, Kenya in the south, Somalia in the south-east, and Djibouti in the east. To the outside world, it has long been known by the name of Abyssinia. This appellation apparently derived from 'Habashat' one of the tribes that inhabited the Ethiopian region in the pre-Christian era.

It is generally stipulated that African societies are the most highly diversified and heterogeneous ones. This element of diversity and heterogeneity is much pronounced in the case of Ethiopia. This country presents a mosaic of nationalities speaking a multiplicity of languages. Of the 76 nationalities and 286 languages in Ethiopia, the Oromo are considered the largest ethnic group, followed by the Amhara and the Tegreya speakers. Linguists have divided the 286 languages into four groups, three of them tracing a common ancestry to a present language called proto-Afroasiatic. From this parent language sprang not only the languages spoken in Ethiopia but also a number of languages spoken in the northern half of Africa and in south-western Asia. The three language groups of the proto-Afroasiatic family spoken in Ethiopia are known as Cushitic, Omotic and Semitic. Cushitic and Omotic are the most ancient in the Ethiopian region; the Semitic languages are the most recent. A fourth group of languages belong to an independent family known as Nilo-Saharan.

The Nilo-Saharan are situated in a more or less continuous line along the western fringe of the country (See Linguistic Map of Ethiopia Map-1). The Kunama in south-western Eritrea form the
northernmost group. Further south, in Matakal in western Gojjam, are to be found the Gumuz. They spill over into the adjoining region of Wallaga, home of the Barta and the Koma. The southern end of the Nilo-Saharan corridor is composed of the Majangir, on the escapement leading from the Oromo-inhabited highlands to the Baro plains, and the Anuak and Nuer, who dwell in the plains, some sections of the Anuak and even larger section of the Nur are to be found on the Sudanese side of the boundary.

Of the Cushitic speaking peoples of Ethiopia, historically the most important in ancient times were the Agaw and the Beja. The Agaw have now been largely assimilated into the dominant Semitic culture, with a pocket waging what looks like a rearguard fight for survival in the Gojjam administrative region. An Agaw pocket, the Belen or Bilen, is also found in the Karan district in Eritrea. The Beja are now to be found largely in Sudan. The Oromo now constitute the largest single nationality in Ethiopia; they began to migrate from the south in the sixteenth century, and later settled over large parts of the country. Linguistically closest to the Oromo are the Somali, a predominantly pastoralist people now found scattered in Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia and Kenya. Other Cushitic-speaking peoples are the Afar, inhabiting the hostile environment at the north-eastern end of the Rift, the Saho on the escapement to the north, the Hadiya and Kambata in Shwa administrative region and the Gedeo (Darasa) and Konso further to the south.

The Omotic-speaking peoples derive their name from their location on both sides of the Omo River. Situated exclusively in south-western Ethiopia, they have been distinguished by two important features—the large-scale cultivation of eniset and the evolution of highly organized politics. The Dorze, Janjaro, Kafa and Walaya were of particular significance in the latter regard. Showing comparative levels of complexity were the Dizi (Gimira) and Maji, found in the extreme south-west.

The Semites have played the most dominant role in the country's history. The kingdoms and empires that successively emerged in the region have invariably been under their control particularly that of the Tegregna and Amharic-speaking peoples of northern and central
Ethiopia. The oldest of the Semitic languages, Ge'ez, now confined to ecclesiastical use, has served as a sort of lingua franca of the Semitic-speaking peoples. The most akin to Ge'ez is Tegra, spoken by the inhabitants of the northern and eastern Eritrea. The Tegregna-speakers are found in highland Eritrea and in Tegray. Amharic, which is the official language of the country, is the native tongue of most of the inhabitants of the north-central and central highlands. Two Semitic language pockets in a predominantly Cushitic environment are Gurahe in south-central Ethiopia and Harari in the east.

Despite a national census in 1994 the precise total population figure remains uncertain, as only partial results have been released. In late 1994 a figure of 55 million was being used for economic planning purposes. This makes Ethiopia second only to Nigeria as the most populous country in sub-Saharan Africa. With a growth rate estimated at 3% per year, Ethiopian population is projected to reach 67 million by 2000 and 131 million by 2020. Partial results taken from the 1994 census indicated the population sizes of the principal regions: Region 4 (Oromo) at 19.5 million, Region 3 (Amhara) at 14.4 million and Region 1 (Tigray) at 3.3 million. (see Map 2). It put the population of Addis Ababa at 2.2 million. Less than 10% of the total population lives in towns, although this is likely to rise sharply in coming years. Apart from Addis Ababa, only the south-east trading centre of Dire Dawa is currently estimated to number over 100,000 people.

About 40% of the population is Christian, mostly of the Ethiopian Orthodox church, although there are significant numbers of Protestants, particularly among the Oromos. About 45% of the population is Muslim.

2. The Underlying Causes of Communal Conflict

It is generally asserted that the hazardous strategy of involuntary integration adopted by the EPRDF regime has been mainly responsible for the communal conflict which plagued Ethiopia between 1991-1998. This hazardous strategy is apparent first in the perpetuation of EPRDF’s hegemony and power monopoly, secondly the harassment and curbing of political opposition and thirdly the enactment of the
controversial self-determination law. Below we shall address first the perpetuation of EPRDF’s hegemony.

(i) The Perpetuation of the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front Hegemony and Power Monopoly.

It has been argued that the chances of building a viable democratic system in Ethiopia – through widening the avenue of political participation – has always been a remote possibility due to formidable obstacles, namely historic and contemporary. It is attested that there has never been a domestic culture, nor prior experience of genuine multi-party elections to fall back on. During most of the twentieth century, Ethiopia has had a legacy of the imperious rule of “big men”: the emperors Manelik and Haille Sillasie, and the dictator Mengistu. During the period of the latter (1975-1991) the country was subjected to instant socialist transformation coupled with a highly authoritarian system for a time span of 16 years. In the aftermath of this autocratic and despotic rule, the attempt was made to democratize the Ethiopian polity. This attempt, however, was not a genuine one since it became evident that the new Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) directed government is more interested in usurping power rather than sharing it with the other groups. In the beginning, the Ethiopian communal political pattern corresponded to the balanced pluralism pattern. This is reflected in the broad-based ethnic coalition which has dominated the Ethiopian policy since May 1991: the EPRDF, and other allied forces. The EPRDF is formally an alliance of four components: the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) which later replaced by the Oromo People’s Democratic Organization (OPDO), The Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), and the Southern People’s Democratic Front (SPDF). These groups respectively control the country’s four main regional states, Region One, Region Four, Region Three, and the Southern nation and nationalities people’s region (SNNPR), representing 80% of Ethiopia’s population and the bulk of the Country’s productive resources. An international conference was held in Addis Ababa in July 1991 for the establishment of a transitional government of national reconciliation. The transitional
government was initially intended to include all political groups including the EPRDF. In practice, however, many multi-ethnic political parties operating internally or externally were excluded. All participating political groups were singled out by the EPRDF, so were individuals representing different sections of the population (see Chart 1). The EPRDF was successful in stage – managing the conference in order to attain an unchallenged leadership position within the transitional government. This was apparent in its lion share of the newly appointed Council of Representatives: 32 seats out of 87, leaving 12 seats to the OLF and the rest distributed to the remaining organizations. The EPRDF control of the conference as well as the Council of Representatives has paved the way for: 1) The selection of Meles Zenawi as chairperson of the council as well as Head of State, and 2) the selection of his deputy, Tamrat Laini, as Prime Minister (who was later dismissed), and, in addition, control of the key ministerial posts (i.e., foreign affairs and defense).

The fact that the Ethiopian polity became subjected later to domination and manipulation on the part of the EPRDF have, in fact, transformed the system from the balanced pluralism pattern to the center-periphery one. The EPRDF dominated the center of the political system, the resources, the apparatus of state power, and exercises hegemonic control over the other communal groups at the periphery of the system. The collapse of the balanced pluralism system was marked by the withdrawal of the second active communal group in the coalition, the OLF, from the State Council. When the EPRDF forces approached the capital Addis Ababa in May 1991, they co-opted the OLF leadership. The Oromos is the largest ethnic group in the Horn of Africa and used to hold the largest block within the Council of Representatives. Although ostensibly partners in the transitional government, friction and mistrust between the OLF and EPRDF often thrust the OLF into the role of official opposition. As we shall see later the disagreement over the regional election in June 1992 led to the withdrawal of the OLF from the State Council.

The transformation of the Ethiopian polity from the balanced pluralism pattern to centre-periphery one symbolizes the hazardous strategy of involuntary integration normally adopted in some multi-
Ethiopia: The Politics of communal Conflict

K. E. D. Taha

ethnic societies. Some scholars have expressed their concern over this hazardous strategy because the historical experience demonstrated that this process could precipitate violence. The tendency towards centralization would increase the level of political conflict because political authority becomes the prime target. Those groups who wield political authority apparently would have more power and influence which ultimately will lead to the resentment of the politically and socio-economic deprived groups. The fact that the core of the EPRDF, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) is a minority ethnic group which succeeds in maintaining its hegemony over majority ethnic groups did trigger violence. This is apparent in the Oromos's attempt to wage an arm conflict against the ruling elite and hence to secede from the country.

The technique of control employed by the EPRDF is a typical Marxist-Leninist style, which characterized the communist take over of Eastern Europe in the 1940's.

Participants of the July Conference
1. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)
2. The Beshangul People's Liberation Movement (BSLM)
3. The Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU)
4. The Ethiopian Democratic Coalition (EDC)
5. The Ethiopian National Democratic Organization (ENDO)
6. The Gambela People's Liberation Movement (GPLM)
7. Representatives of the Gurage Nationality
8. Representatives of the Hadiya Nationality
9. Western Somalia Liberation Front (WSLF)
10. Workers' Representatives
11. Representatives of the Addis Ababa University Instructors
12. The Sidamo Liberation Movement
13. Somali Abbo Liberation Front (SALF)
14. The Islamic Front for the Liberation of Orono (IFLO)
15. The Oromo People's Liberation Front (OPLF)
16. The Representatives of the Omotic Peoples
17. The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)
18. Afar Liberation Front (ALF)
19. Representatives of the Adere People
20. The Isa and Gedeburis People’s Movement

The EPRDF monopolized political power and transformed the country’s socio-economic substructure into a web of ideologically, correct alliances subservient to the party. During the political turmoil following the collapse of the Mengistu regime, the EPRDF went about dismantling or modifying the bulk of social organizations, which were created by the old regime. The very disciplined and highly regimented EPRDF cadre managed to infiltrate and swarm over many of the institutions and mass organization of public and collective life, such as trade unions, peasant organizations, professional bodies, grass-roots action committees, worker’s grievance committee, and local governments. When the EPRDF authority in such an institution or organization was challenged, the party usually resorted to intimidation – sometimes violence – until the opposition was quelled. The EPRDF militias have been recognized by the transitional charter, which was adopted by the July conference as the basic Law of the land governing the transitional period, as the country’s armed forces and the internal security apparatus was completely under the domain of the party. Commissions established by the Council of Representatives were too swamped by the EPRDF cadre. A good example to illustrate this was the Constitution Drafting Commission. This Commission was composed of 27 members having equal votes and elected by the Council of Representatives from among the various sections of the population and members of the Council of Representatives. All these political and social organizations came under the EPRDF umbrella. Hence, the membership selected in the
Constitutional Commission was either EPRDF members or EPRDF sympathizers. This explains why the drafted constitution submitted first to the Council of Representatives and later to the elected Constituent Assembly (1994) for discussion and ratification was a blue print of the EPRDF.

The core of the EPRDF, the Tigray People’s Liberation Front, (TPLF), who played a dominant role in the collapse of the Mengistu regime, managed to consolidate its power through the establishment of satellite parties in every region; parties that were likely to bring in votes for the new constitution and the national election that followed. The TPLF knew that it could not win a majority or even make a strong showing in a really free election because the country was deeply divided along ethnic lines, and the TPLF represented a small group. Far from trying to overcome the ethnic divisions, the TPLF encouraged them, first by forming the other ethnic parties in the EPRDF and then by insisting on the division of the country into ethnic regions (for EPRDF satellite parties see Table 3).

Under such conditions, the TPLF could maintain hegemony over the country by making sure that its satellite parties in every region won the election. The TPLF’s model of maintaining hegemony over the whole country seemed to correspond closely to the model devised by the Soviet Union in the past: the division of the country into ethnic republics and districts, enjoying a degree of administrative autonomy, but firmly held together politically by the domination of the communist party. The EPRDF affiliated parties were artificial organizations created from without and thus could not guarantee a landslide victory in competitive elections. This TPLF’s modality of political organization is best portrayed by Merera Gudina in his paper, The New Directions of Ethiopian Politics: Democratizing a Multi-ethnic Society:

“... The TPLF has been busy organizing one national liberation movement after another. At the end of the process, even the Amhara were given TPLF’s first child – the EPDM (Ethiopian People’s Democratic Movement) – to adopt as their liberator to fit into the new model, to make more senseless who is liberating from whom and the raison d’etre of having too many
liberation movements in just one poor country. The TPLF’s strategy is understandably to kill two birds with one stone, i.e. to destroy the social bases of its strong adversaries, the main multinational opposition forces, by applying a new model of political organization while at the same time they appear more democratic to the outside world by using the suddenly mushroomed liberation movement as a showcase for the flourishing of multi-party democracy in the country. The paradox of the TPLF’s ethnic politics is that it is the political organization, whose ethnic support base is far narrower than those which can be supported by the country’s two major nationalities, which is playing an ethnic card. The TPLF political calculation is that by speaking through the mouths of various liberation movements they have created, they can tilt the political equation in their favor. However, if the ossification of ethnic differences continues to grow at the cost of class or political programs, except for short-term gains for the EPRDF/TPLF leadership, there would be no long-term benefits to them, as sooner or later the comparative advantage of numbers can shift to those who can represent better the profound aspirations of the Oromo and the Amhara peoples.”

The EPRDF’s methods of subjugation were very evident in the district and regional elections of 1992. A ten Member National Election Committee (NEC) controlled by the EPRDF and its allies was appointed by the Council of Representatives to organize and administer the election. The NEC established at each administrative level, down to Kebele polling stations, “Multiparty” electoral committees swamped mainly by EPRDF supporters. The rules of the game were written by the NEC which prepared the EPRDF for what was to come while keeping other parties and the public uninformed until shortly before the expiration of deadlines. Disputes centered on the ambiguous role of the EPRDF army in the election period. It served as the national army, but was also a partisan force tied to one of the political parties – encampment of the OLF militias, and a large number of the opposition parties’ offices were closed. Nevertheless,
the process continued and local and regional elections were conducted on June 21, 1992. The process was marred by technical and, above all, political problems, including the withdrawal of the OLF and other parties from the process and the decampment of the OLF militias just before election day. On the day of the election on June 21, 1992, out of a total of 22,605 stations, elections were held in 19,148 polling stations (see table 1). Around 3,457 of the total were not functioning on the day of election. In many other areas the election was carried out during an extended time.\textsuperscript{21} The total turnout was estimated at more than 80\% on election day. According to the election results announced by the NEC, the EPRDF won 1,108 of the 1147 contested seats (about 96.5\%). The breakdown among the EPRDF parties and other parties were as follows:\textsuperscript{22}

1. Oromo People’s Democratic Front (OPDO) 433 seats 38.8\%
2. Ethiopian People’s Democratic Front (EPDF) 297 seats 24.3\%
3. Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) 243 seats 21.2\%
4. Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) (these were mainly Addis Ababa seats) 81 seats 7.1\%
5. Sidamo People’s Democratic Organization (SPDO) 36 seats 3.1\%
6. Keficho People’s Revolutionary Democratic Organization (KPRDO) 27 seats 2.3\%
7. Gurage People’s Revolutionary Democratic Movement (GPRDM) 9 seats 0.3\%
8. Benishangul People’s Revolutionary Democratic 17 seats
Table 1
Local and Regional Elections of 1992

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region No.</th>
<th>Total Polling Stations</th>
<th>Elections Held in Polling Stations</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,101</td>
<td>1,101</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>Postponed</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5,485</td>
<td>5,387</td>
<td>98.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>9,937</td>
<td>8,048</td>
<td>80.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>647</td>
<td>Postponed</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1,229</td>
<td>1,185</td>
<td>96.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>975</td>
<td>853</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1,121</td>
<td>1,005</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>67.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>661</td>
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<td>83.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>75.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Postponed</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22,605</td>
<td>19,148</td>
<td>84.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: An evaluation of the June 21, 1992 elections in Ethiopia, National Research Institute for International Affairs, African American Institute, June 1992, p. 132

The June 1992 election was subjected to many criticisms on the part of the International observers who were invited by the Transitional Government to monitor the election. In a statement issued after the election, the Joint International Observers Group (JIOG), which was composed of several diplomats and UN officials to co-ordinate the observers designated by the UN, the OAU, various governments and two non-government organizations concluded that
the June 1922 election represented a sterile, surreal, and wholly formalistic affair. Voter registration occurred, but it did not serve the goal of processing the voters correctly (democratically). The vast majority of the eligible voters did not get the chance to participate in an open and transparent process. Candidates were designated for specific offices, but no genuine competition among candidates or parties existed. Ballots were printed, but no meaningful control existed regarding their distribution. Voters went to the polls, some waiting in the inevitable long lines, but few understood the significance of the election or the difference between those elections and those that occurred during the previous regimes. According to the statement, the June 1992 election did not serve as an effective educational exercise. It further added that given these shortcomings, the June 21 election did not contribute directly to Ethiopia’s development as a democratic state.

In a post-election statement, the African American Institute (AAI) delegation which contributed the largest contingent of the observers to the JOG effort, declared that the June 21 election fell considerably short of fulfilling the purpose of empowering through the vote of all of Ethiopia’s nationalities with a new pluralistic system. In a similar view, a German observer group sponsored by the Heinrich Ball Foundation concluded that given the observed harassment and administrative problems, the election results should not be taken as a fair and free election of the domestic will of the people.

The June 1994 election for the Constituent Assembly like that of June 1992 district and regional elections has not been a free and fair one. This election was conducted on June 5, 1994. A 547 seat Constituent Assembly was selected and its main task was to ratify the constitution already approved by the Council of Representatives. A total of 1,476 candidates, of which 42 were women, contested this election. During the election, private contestants occupied the largest number of candidates numbering 944. The remaining 532 contestants belong to 39 political organizations. The country was divided into 32,000 polling stations in 60 zones within 10 regions of the country, including Addis Ababa, in 525 constituencies. Twenty-
two constituencies were reserved for the minority ethnic groups in the country, each with a population of less than 100,000 numerically.

The opposition groups like the OLF, the All Amhara people’s Organization (AAPO), the Ethiopian National Unity Party (ENUP), and the Council of Alternative Forces for Peace and Democracy in Ethiopia (CAFEPDE) boycotted the election. Both AAPO and ENUP contended that the EPRDF had no mandate to rule and organize the election after its term of office of two and half years came to an end on January 22, 1994. The two parties disclosed that the harassment of their members and supporters had effectively kept their parties from taking part in the election.27

With the exception of region five where elections were carried out later, 15,162,725 electors had been registered to vote in 26,865 polling stations throughout the country (See table 2). This represents nearly 66% of the estimated total electoral according to the National Electoral Board.28 As expected the EPRDF has dominated the Constituent Assembly election. Out of the total 547 seats, the EPRDF and its satellite parties have won 460 seats which was 89.3 percent of the total. (See Table 3).
Table 2
Number of Voters in 1994 Constituent Assembly Election

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of Constituencies</th>
<th>Number of Polling Stations</th>
<th>Number of Estimated Voters</th>
<th>Number of Registered</th>
<th>% of the table</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1,135</td>
<td>1,552,162</td>
<td>1,226,208</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>355,196</td>
<td>342,761</td>
<td>96.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>6,743</td>
<td>6,392,052</td>
<td>3,916,118</td>
<td>61.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>11,164</td>
<td>8,072,722</td>
<td>5,130,517</td>
<td>62.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>332,929</td>
<td>155,494</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7,8,9</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>5,301</td>
<td>4,810,319</td>
<td>3,571,917</td>
<td>73.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>49,316</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>80,236</td>
<td>35,304</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Harer 3</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>80,750</td>
<td>35,728</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dere Dawa 2</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>1,118,766</td>
<td>592,946</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1,092</td>
<td>1,128,781</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>26,865</td>
<td>23,923,913</td>
<td>15,162,725</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3
The Distribution of Parliamentary Seats Among the EPRDF Member Political Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>EPRDF Member Political Organization</th>
<th>No. of Seats Won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM)</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO)</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Afar People's Democratic Organization (APDO)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Gurage People's Revolutionary Democratic Movement (GPRDM)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Hadyya People's Democratic Organization (HPDO)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Kembata People's Democratic Organization (KPDO)</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Tembaro People's Democratic Organization (TPDO)</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Alaba People's Democratic Organization (APDO)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yem People's Democratic Front (YPDF)</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Keficho People's Revolutionary Democratic Organization (KPRDO)</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Benishangul People's Revolutionary Democratic Organization (BPRDO)</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Shekicho People's Democratic Movement (SPDM)</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Sidamo People's Democratic Organization (SPDO)</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Welayta People's Democratic Organization (WPDO)</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Gedeo People's Revolutionary Democratic Organization (GPRDO)</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>Konso People's Revolutionary Democratic Organization (KPRDO)</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Gamo and Gofa People's Democratic Organization (GGPDO)</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>Kare Nationalities Democratic Organization (KND)</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Dawro People's Democratic Organization (DPDO)</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Gambella People's Liberation Party (GPLP)</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Seats Won</td>
<td>460</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of the total 547 seats</td>
<td>89.3%</td>
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</table>

One of the team observers which monitored the election was A-Bu.Gi-Da, Ethiopian Congress for Democracy. This organization which claims to be a non-partisan civic organization was created in 1991 to conduct a range of activities in support of the democratic process, such as civil education, monitoring, and public policy analysis. To realize its mission, A-Bu.Gi-Da, has organized a team of 69 monitors. The monitors covered 35 constituencies throughout Ethiopia. In its report of findings, A-Bu.Gi-Da observed certain irregularities and procedural problems.  

1. The existence of unnecessarily confusing ballots. Many ballots had more symbols than candidates, and consequently election officials had to provide explanations to the voters on which symbols could be selected. This, according to A.-Bu.Gi-Da, has opened up a possibility of influencing the voters' choice.  

2. The second count of the ballots at the Wereda level provided ample opportunities for fraud. The election law indicates that all ballot boxes will be counted once at the polling stations at the end of the day and once at the Wereda office a number of days later. The ballot box was under careful scrutiny throughout election-day, so one can be reasonably certain of the accuracy of the election day count. However, A-Bu.Gi-Da stated that it was not difficult to change or stuff the boxes, which were not labeled, after they had left the scrutiny of observers in the polling station. In addition, the second count was time consuming and unusual by international standard. Although A-Bu.Gi-Da did not detect fraud during the Wereda count it observed, it has concluded that the system as it existed could have made fraud possible.  

3. There was insufficient voter education. In 70% of the polling stations observed outside Addis Ababa, A-Bu.Gi-Da monitors observed some confusion on the part of the voters. In addition, some voters appeared ignorant of the basic ideas of choosing a candidate.  

4. In at least one instance, the electorate was threatened with repercussions if they failed to vote. In the town of Armania (Northern Shoa), A-Bu.Gi-Da observers heard local officials
announcing on a microphone, “If you do not come to vote, we will take some measures.” Although this may have been an isolated incident, A-Bu Gi-Da was concerned about the possibility that citizens were coerced to vote and recommended that the National Election Board to investigate their claims and, if they prove correct, should take corrective measures."

5. The presence of armed individuals in or near many polling stations. For the most part, A-Bu Gi-Da did not observe these armed individuals acting in an aggressive or intimidating manner, but their presence may have had an effect on voters. The A-Bu Gi-Da’s report also dealt with the political aspect of the election. It stated that:

1. The opposition parties, such as the Gurage People’s Democratic Front (GPDF) and the Southern Ethiopian Democratic Coalition, indicated in letters to A-Bu Gi-Da that among the many reasons for their boycott were that they had been prevented from operating freely and that they did not want to be a party to a predetermined EPRDF victory.

2. Due to the opposition boycott, no alternative view on the draft constitution was presented in an organized and systematic manner. The absence of organizational structures of a variety of political parties has limited the intensity of campaigning in the election for the Constituent Assembly.

3. In many constituencies monitored by A-Bu Gi-Da, voters did not have a choice among different views of the Constitution outside Addis Ababa. In 75% of the constituencies monitored, there was no candidate who offered a different view on the constitution. In 25% of the constituencies, only one candidate was running.

By securing an overwhelming majority in the Constituent Assembly (460 seats out of 547) the EPRDF was able to direct the debate and discussion of the constitution and later to dictate their own views. It is not surprising, therefore, that the voting behavior of the Assembly members has been identical and carried on the monistic view with regard to all the articles of the constitution. Although independent representatives, notably from Addis Ababa, did debate
and challenge many aspects of the draft, most articles passed, with more than a 95% majority.

Immediately after the constitution was approved by the Constituent Assembly in December 1994, it was decided that elections should be held within six months and that the Federal Assembly should consist of no more than 550 members and should sit for five years. This was the followed advice from the National Election Board, which was appointed to oversee elections for the regional assemblies and the Constituent Assembly during the transitional period. It was subsequently announced that elections were to be held on May 1995. In the Federal Assembly (The Council of People’s Representatives, CPR), one third of the 550 seats were allocated to Oromo representatives from Region 4, and a quarter each to Amharas from region 3 and the South-Western representatives from Southern Ethiopia People’s Administrative Region (SEPAR). Tigray has just 37 representatives in the CPR.

As anticipated, the EPRDF ruling coalition won a landslide victory in the May 1995 election. Of the 537 constituencies in the CPR, the EPRDF held 483. Around 46 seats went to other parties, the bulk of whom voted with the EPRDF, and eight to independents. Electoral success for the EPRDF was guaranteed chiefly by its dominance of the state institution and greatly aided by the political ineptitude of fragmented opposition groups which boycotted the polls. As had been widely expected, the Council of Alternative Forces for Peace and Democracy in Ethiopia (CAFPDE), a fragmented alliance formed in December 1993, boycotted the May elections. The decision came after strenuous efforts by western diplomats to ensure its participation. CAFPDE refused to recognize the legitimacy of the EPRDF dominated government or the constitution it created.

The principal western donors funded an innovative Donors Election Unit to monitor the preparations for, and the implementation of the elections. Although the report, which was not formally published, praised the voting and campaigning procedures, the Ethiopian government appeared irked by its mention of the fact that the boycott by opposition groups left voters in most areas with no real choice. Nevertheless, the US embassy declared that “in our opinion
the elections were conducted in manners that was, on the whole, free and fair,” and expressed regret that some organizations boycotted the polls, stressing that the “the boycott does not invalidate the election exercise.”

It thus refuted the claims of many US-based Ethiopian exiles who rejected the current settlement and viewed the polls as cosmetic and an expensive exercise to reinforce EPRDF dominance. The statement reinforced the impression that the US embassy in Addis Ababa was less guarded about the EPRDF’s successes than some European diplomats. Parts of the European Union’s (EU) evaluation of the elections were more critical. The French press quoted the EU as having declared that the ‘near monopoly’ of the ruling party created “a system where democratic evolution is not assured.”

(ii). The Harassment and Curbing of Opposition

The EPRDF Government has been widely criticized for human rights abuses. Although the EPRDF government has endorsed a number of International Conventions that support various rights, nevertheless there appears to be a big gap between theory and practice. A number of reports have talked about the failure of the EPRDF government to honour its commitment to human rights principles.

The EPRDF government has justified action against its adversaries on the grounds of ‘no infringement’ clause in article one and the ‘all legal and political responsibility’ clause in article eight of the transitional charter. The EPRDF government has warned that ‘enforcing the, law’ with regard to those who are trying to destroy human rights and fundamental freedoms by forcible means is not a violation of these rights and freedoms, but a necessary and legitimate step to protect them.

It was alleged that the EPRDF engaged in a number of illegal measures in order to consolidate its power. These measures included: the EPRDF harassment of political parties, including the National Democratic Union (NDU) in December 1991, the Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU) and the Kefagn Patriotic Front (KPF) in September 1993; the All Amhara Peoples’ Organization (AAPO)* in December 1994; continued harassment of parties leading up to the
June 1992 elections; attacks upon the OLF and the complicity of attacks upon Amhara living in Oromo areas (i.e. in the three sub-districts of Arsi, in the east of Ethiopia) in which 500 were killed, 300 wounded, and 50,000 livestock destroyed or looted; the Hararghe Massacre in which 26 Oromo peasants presumably sympathetic to the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia (IFLO) were killed; the military's killing and wounding of student protestors at an anti-government demonstration at Addis Ababa University in January 1993 and of worshippers at a non-state endorsed religious gathering in Gondar; as well as firing on a crowd of protestors in Mehal Meda, Northern Shoa, who opposed changes in land policies; the assassination of two leaders of the Islamic Front for the liberation of Oromia (IFLO), Sheikh Abdel Rahman Yousif and Izzeldin Mohammed Ahmed in Dira Dawa in Eastern Ethiopia; as well as the deliberate assassination of an OLF Commander in Sidamo by the EPRDF in mid 1991 and at least two commanders in Herarghe who have similarly been killed; the government dismissal of Addis Ababa University's president, two vice-presidents and 31 other faculty and administrators in early 1993 for allegedly expressing anti-government views and using their classrooms for political purposes; the detention of five opposition leaders who had arrived in Addis Ababa to attend the December 1993 peace and reconciliation conference; the detention of 1,500 former government officials and other prisoners of conscience for two years and the imprisonment of 2000 individuals without due process.37

A further series of arrests of public figures critical of the EPRDF suggests that the government's tolerance of opponents, particularly those able to attract foreign attention continues to shrink. In June 1996, police arrested the general secretary of the Ethiopian Teachers Association (ETA), Taye Wolde Semayat, charging him with an improbable string of offenses.38 The offenses included being the head of a clandestine political group allegedly dedicated to urban terrorism and rural insurrection, the kidnapping of foreigners and extortion racketts. The trade union leaders and six co-defendants attended a preliminary hearing on August 5 and were refused bail.
The tendency to resort to the courts to silence political critics appears to reflect the government’s inability to come to terms with criticism. Urban trade unionists and independent professional associations have often been challenged by the creation of pliable, surrogate organizations less likely to criticize ministerial decision.  

As in the case of the arrested leader of the ETA, government tactics have consisted of accusing the elected leadership of hostility to federalism. This was also the fate of the confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions, whose office in Addis Ababa was closed in December 1994. The crimes of those in charge of the ETA were compounded in the eyes of the EPRDF by publicizing repression in Europe and seeking allies among the European trade unionists. Taye Wolde was arrested on his return to Addis Ababa in the company of European trade unionists. He was charged, along with four accomplices, of having formed a clandestine body called the National Patriots Front, allegedly in collusion with former Derge army officers.

A former leader of the Ethiopian Teachers’ Association (ETA) Assafa Maru, was killed following a siege of the ETA office in Addis Ababa on May 8, 1997. Assafa was shot at close range after police surrounded the ETA office, although his wife was initially informed that he had died in a car crash. The state-run media made no reference to Assafa’s affiliation with the trade union, claiming only that the deceased had been a member of the phantom “Ethiopian Patriot Front,” in which he had been killed in a shoot-out and that seven others had been arrested and a cache of weapons seized.

The private press too was the victim of the government harsh policy. The chair of the Ethiopian Free Press Journalists’ Association (EFPJA), Kifle Mulat, was arrested on February 11th 1998, bringing the number of journalists arrested between 1994 and 1998 to 25. Ironically, Mr. Kifle was arrested for issuing an EFPJA press release listing those journalists previously detained. These arrests have prompted the London-based human rights organization Amnesty International, to step up its campaign highlighting human rights abuses in Ethiopia, notably abuses against journalists and Oromo intellectuals. According to Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF), the Paris-based journalists’ group, Ethiopia had the dubious distinction of having the
largest number of journalists in detention of any African country during 1997. RSF released their report shortly after a detained journalist, Abay Haile, died in custody. His death on February 9th 1998 was said officially to have been caused by pneumonia. Mr. Haile was one of a group of reporters detained in April 1998 during a series of arrests of journalists and editors. The arrests prompted the closure of several private publications while the offices of Tobia, one of the publications most critical of the EPRDF authorities, were burned down following the arrests of its editors in January 1998.

A US pressure group published a report on Ethiopia’s fledgling independent press in October 1996. The 37-page report by the New York based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) focuses on the contradiction and limitations of the media law in force since 1992. It calls on the Ethiopian government to release jailed prisoners, scrap the criminal libel clauses of the press law, and halt the use of both indefinite pre-trial detention and punitively excessive bail, both tactics which are frequently used against critical private publications. The report’s release deliberately coincided with the visit of the former US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, thus highlighting the ambiguous US stance over restrictions on human rights by a government with which it is forging closer ties. The CPJ subsequently claimed that publicity surrounding the report prompted Mr. Christopher to cancel a planned joint Ethiopian-US press conference in Addis Ababa because of the lack of access for private media journalists. While stressing that the government had made progress over human rights since 1991, Mr. Christopher emphasized that “one of the areas of our concern is the freedom of press.”

From the above survey it is evidently clear that the EPRDF government, in order to monopolize political power and maintain hegemony over the whole country, has employed various political tactics ranging from the creation of satellite political parties, the rigging of elections, the harassment of opposition parties, the mass killing of protesters, the assassination of prominent political figures and the intimidation of the private press. These nasty political tactics have shattered all hopes to build a genuine and viable democratic political system in Ethiopia. The government’s authoritarian trend is
contrary to earlier statements made by President Meles Zenawi, "the freedom of assembly and expression is not a privilege, but a right, and I look forward to the day when we can take such fundamental rights for granted. The people of Ethiopia have achieved democratic rights, the right to express themselves freely without fear, the right to organize, to demonstrate. A new democratic culture has begun to flower in our country." These promises contradict the government's stern measures against the opposition.

(iii) The Controversial Law of Self-determination:

The new Ethiopian constitution was approved by the Constituent Assembly in December 1994 and it came into effect in August 1995, creating the second republic. It provides for an independent judiciary and a parliamentary federal form of government with two federal assemblies: the Legislative Council of People's Representatives (CPR) and a smaller supervisory senate known as the Federal Council. The new constitution is based on the EPRDF's blue print for ethnic federalism which first established 14 regions and was later reduced to 9. (see Map 2) Five regions are clearly identifiable linguistic groups—Tigrinya, Afar, Amharic, Oromo and Somali—each of which is associated with a territorial region although in several cases there is a good deal of overlap between regions and each contains numerous minorities. The Western states numbered 6, 7 and 8 are ethnically mixed, with the Southern Ethiopia People's Administrative Region (SEPAR, number 7) being particularly heterogeneous. The ninth member of the federation is the South-eastern town of Harar, a metropolitan area amid the troubled region 5.

For the first time in the constitutional history of Ethiopia the right of self-determination including secession found its full recognition and adaptation in the new 1995 constitution. Article 39 provides:

1. Every nation, nationality and people in Ethiopia has unconditional right to self-determination including the right of secession.

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2. Every nation, nationality and people in Ethiopia has the right to speak, to write and develop its language, to express to develop and promote its culture, and preserve its history.

3. Every nation, nationality and people in Ethiopia has the right to full measure of self-determination which includes the right to establish institutions of government in the territory that it inhabits and to equitable representation in state and federal governments.

4. The right to self-government including secession of every nation, nationality and people shall come into effect:
   (a) when a demand for secession has been approved by a 2/3 majority of the members of the legislative council of the nation, nationality or people concerned;
   (b) when the Federal Government has organized a referendum which must take place within three years from the time it received the concerned council's decision for secession;
   (c) when the demand for secession is supported by the majority vote in the referendum;
   (d) when the Federal Government will have transferred its powers to the council of the nation, nationality or people who has voted to secede; and
   (e) when the division of assets is effected in a manner prescribed by law.

5. A nation, nationality or people for the purpose of this constitution is a group of people who have or share a large measure of a common culture or similar customs; mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identities, or a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit as identifiable predominantly contiguous territory.

Different views are expressed regarding the right of self-determination including secession. An Ethiopian scholar, Samuel Asseta argues that in Ethiopia there is little evidence of popular demands for secession. He says that the demands voiced are demands for equality of culture. This demand should be given full institutional realization rather than sticking to what is not demanded by the people. He adds: "why scratch where it does not itch? A state which is not
likely to be broken, may well be needlessly broken by establishing a rule for its dismemberment. Indeed by establishing a rule for how to break it up, we should have, in some cases, already broken it.\textsuperscript{46}

Another opponent of the principle of secession, Nuri Ali contends that secession is impracticable for Ethiopia. In his view secession cannot be implemented in Ethiopia because of the presence of some historical legacies that bind most of the Ethiopian peoples together.\textsuperscript{47} One of these legacies is the group of urban centres (Addis Ababa, Harar, Dire Dawa, the towns from Akaki to Nazreth etc). These urban centres are not inhabited by one Ethnic group. In these areas we do not find one dominant ethnic group as we do encounter in Gonder (region three) and in Tigray (region one). So when secession is contemplated what is to be done with the people living in these areas? Will they be forced to evacuate to their original homelands or will there be the other option? In addition to that these urban centres are generally viewed as the most highly economically developed in the country, a fact much illustrated by the availability of adequate infrastructures: airports, railway networks, and high-ways. Apart from these the urban centres are hosting the majority of the country's financial institutions. Due to these reasons it is difficult to envisage secession of these urban centres.

The other obstacle on the road to secession in Ethiopia is the existence of diverse nationalities and people. The Oromo and Amhara both constitute roughly two-thirds of the population of Ethiopia.\textsuperscript{48} The remaining one-third is made up of all the other ethnic groups, quite a sizeable number of which are less-than a million and inhabit an area smaller than a district. If these ethnic groups succeed in declaring their independence ending in a creation of many mini-states lacking the necessary viability to survive as a state—no communication networks, electricity, water supply, urban centres, military force, effective government etc, will result in international reluctance for diplomatic recognition. To put it differently, if these groups simply go ahead and establish their own states (lacking the requirement of statehood), the reaction of the international community would be such as to make the survival of these states very doubtful. The lack of diplomatic recognition by other states will make it very problematic.
for these entities to interact with these other states economically, politically or socially, and therefore make the existence of these states impracticable. This is best portrayed by Bietzke:

"After all there are manifest advantages in trying to stay together: each segmentary division into smaller and smaller groups—a major focus of the anthropology of equatorial Africa, involving up to 90 nations in Ethiopia—makes domestic and international politics more noisy, unstable, incoherent and deadly. The opportunities for a domestic and international development are reduced accordingly, most of the Ethiopian nations are too small to be politically, economically or militarily viable under foreseeable conditions." \(^{49}\)

Other critics of the adoption of secession in Ethiopia argue that it would lead to the country's fragmentation as an integral entity; Ethiopia would be broken into many smaller entities and the people would lose their common identity. This will curtail progress and disturb peace in the long run. \(^{50}\) Therefore, demand for secession, according to this group, is demand for the fragmentation of the country; demand for violence and bloodshed; and demand for retrogression and degeneration.

Against this view however, adherents of the right of secession—represented mainly by the law professor at Addis Ababa University Jemal—strongly argue that the right to secede does not encourage break-away but it will be a best tool to hold Ethiopian people together voluntarily. \(^{51}\) These adherents stipulate that a government is created by the will of the people of what Jean Jack Rousseau denotes as the 'social contract'. Alternatively put, a government is structured as a result of an agreement or contract between the society and the government that the latter will protect the life and property of each and every individual of the former. When the society is convinced that the conditions under which it entered into the covenant with the government no longer exist and when its rights are denied in violation of the contract, then there is no reason why the people cannot secede. \(^{52}\)

The issue of secession also surfaced as a hot issue in the Constituent Assembly which was elected in June 1994 in order to deliberate and ratify the new constitution. \(^{53}\) The Assembly was sharply divided over the issue of secession with each side forwarding
its suggestions on the principle of secession—one group was in favour and the other against. Among those who were in favour of secession was Ali Abu Issa from region 5 (Somali Ogaden). He said that opposing the right of peoples to secession is nothing less than standing against the unity of peoples of Ethiopia and the democratic culture then in place. He added that peoples right to choice must not be abridged because the respect for this right not only holds nations and nationalities together, but also invites neighbouring countries to join the union. He pointed out that, "forced unity is actually anti-unity. Our experience in Eritrea demonstrated that people cannot unite by force of arms. The only means to viable unity is to observe peoples right to self-determination up to secession." 54

A delegate from Oromiya, Mohammed Ali said that the right to secession is not dangerous as some have feared it to be, but it is a bell that reminds future governments that they are amenable to law and justice and must respect and protect the rights of peoples. 55

At the other end of the spectrum the views of the critics of the principle of secession were aired. Major Admasse Zeleke, the most outspoken deputy against the right of secession stated that unity of Ethiopia must be kept at whatever cost and should not be compromised or put on the table for negotiation. Guaranteeing secession for him is something like allowing one's bodily parts to fall apart. 56

Daniel Belaineh of region 14 (Addis Ababa) said that the Ethiopian peoples do not want to hear about the question of secession and the deputies of the peoples did not come to sign agreements of divorce but rather for strengthening the unity and integrity of the country. Hence as secession will have an imminent danger on the unity and integrity of the country it must not be incorporated in the future constitution, he added. 57

Other delegates also argued that secession is not a right to be constitutionally enshrined. Should this be recognized by the constitution, they said, any nation, nationality or group with relatively more resources than the other will immediately demand independence. In such a case, Ethiopia would cease to exist in its present form. Representative of Woreda 18 of Addis Ababa, Mekuria Tafesse even
went as far as suggesting that a national referendum should be held on the question of secession.\textsuperscript{38}

Despite the intensive criticism waged against the right of secession, however, the Constituent Assembly finally endorsed with an overwhelming majority—508 votes out of 516—article 39(1) of the draft constitution guaranteeing the unrestricted right of nations and nationalities to self-determination up to secession. The EPRDF's policy of endorsing the secession clause was rather ambiguous and paradoxical. While maintaining a policy of hegemony and exclusion of the dominant political forces—Oromo and Amhara—in addition to the centralization of political power and authority, the EPRDF is simultaneously opening the door for secession. It is very obvious in such situation that those communal groups who felt that they have been politically and economically discriminated against would resort to the motto of secession and independence. This will be discussed in the next section.

3. The Eruption of Communal Conflict:

The three factors analyzed above, mainly the perpetuation of EPRDF's hegemony and power monopoly, the harassment and curbing of political opposition and enactment of the controversial self-determination law had been mainly responsible for the communal conflict which plagued Ethiopia between 1991-1998. Those communal groups who were politically and economically marginalized and excluded in addition to being harassed and coerced felt that they have no option except to resort to the motto of secession and independence, and hence to engage in violent a communal conflict with the EPRDF's government. Below we shall focus on the insurgencies of two of these communal groups mainly the Oromo and the Somali Ogaden.

A. The Oromos Insurgency

As we have seen above, the EPRDF has resorted to illegal and undemocratic practices to consolidate its power because it realized that in a genuine, free democratic atmosphere it stands no chance to win political office. The "Ethnic Democracy." if it had been played fairly

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and according to the rules of the game, would definitely have favored Ethiopia’s largest nationality, namely the Oromos who constitute 45% of the population, about 22 million.59 This explains why the Oromos, and in particular its major representative, the OLF, has been the largest target of the EPRDF’s arbitrary action.60 Due to the fact that the OLF represents the major opposition faction, we shall give below a comprehensive account of its present animosity toward the EPRDF.

Historically, the Oromos were the last major national community to be conquered in the expansion of the Amhara Empire in the late 19th century when Emperor Menelik shifted the center of his rule from Gondar in the north to the new capital of Addis Ababa in the center of the country.61 Thus, the origins of the present conflict lie in the history of Oromo subjugation – a people nurturing a century of wrong. The contemporary seed of conflict lies in the liberation struggle which began in 1975 against Mengistu Haile Mariam.62 The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) was the third largest movement engaged in the armed struggle against the Mengistu regime, after the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Tigrayan People’s Liberation Front (TPLF). Although the EPLF and OLF at first cooperated in the struggle, they became divided over the precise definition of the right to self-determination, the common factor that united all three liberation movements.63

The OLF-TPLF antagonism goes back to the EPRDF’s May 1990 founding of the Oromo people’s Democratic Organization (OPDO) and also explains OLF’s underlying suspicion of the TPLF and the EPRDF.64 The TPLF and OLF held talks in the late 1980’s as the TPLF tried to find an Oromo element to incorporate into its united front, the EPRDF. The talks failed. According to the OLF, there were two main reasons: the TPLF’s insistence on the TPLF remaining the dominant group and the TPLF’s ideological line which, at that point, was still hard-line Marxist. The TPLF, on the other hand, found the OLF too wedded to narrow nationalism.

The TPLF then set-up the OPDO, using captured Oromo from Mengistu’s army. The OPDO members were identified by OLF as neo-Gobenists (a derivation from Ras Gabena, Emperor Menelik’s top military leaders who helped bring Southern Ethiopia under Menelik’s
control). The OPDO are also perceived by OLF as puppets of the Tigrayans and claim that OPDO does not represent the Oromo people's true aspiration and that they are obstacles to Oromo unity.\textsuperscript{65}

The EPRDF has also encouraged other Oromo groups: Wakiu Guta's United Oromo People's Liberation Front, which has little to show for itself, while the Oromo Abo Liberation Front (OAFL), also operating in Southern Oromo, is rift by leadership disputes.\textsuperscript{66} In February 1992, its leader, Mohammed Siraji, was ousted amid allegations he had agreed that the OLF could represent the OALF in some poll areas. More significant is the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromo (IFLO). The IFLO is reportedly one of the most radical movements in Ethiopia with a strong Islamic fundamentalist character. Despite its size (only a few hundred figures), it was originally given three seats on the representative's council. The main reason for this was not the EPRDF's support for Islamism, but the identity of the IFLO leader, Abdulkarim Ibrahim, better known as 'Sheikh Jarra,' an OLF military commander ousted in 1978 for being 'too feudal.' The EPRDF encouraged the IFLO in 1991 in the hope of weakening the OLF around Hara. However, the EPRDF's killing of IFLO Vice President Sheikh Ahmed Yousif Ahmed and the political head for the Dire Dawa area, Ibsa Gutu on 17 January 1992 had aroused the suspicion that the EPRDF was trying to provide support for the moderate secular elements in the front. This has forced IFLO to move closer to OLF.

Relations between the OLF and the EPRDF deteriorated to the point of armed conflict against each other. However, when the EPRDF finally marched into Addis Ababa as the victors in May 1991, its leaders held out the hand of friendship to the OLF which was accepted.\textsuperscript{67} Together they formulated the national charter establishing the basis for a new democratic constitution. By joining the transitional government, the OLF put aside its secessionist agenda for an independent Oromia eliminating a major political stumbling block for the EPRDF.\textsuperscript{68} In return, the OLF was given 12 seats in the Council of Representatives, four cabinet posts, and several ambassadorships.

From the beginning, relations between the EPRDF and the OLF had been tense in part because of the EPRDF's refusal to accept the
OLF secessionist agenda. OLF's participation in the transitional government was seen as a political breakthrough since previous attempts to forge an alliance had failed. However, relations once again were strained moments after signing the charter. The charter was the center of the political conflict. The charter provided explicitly that Ethiopia ethnic groups would have the right to self-determination, including secession if they should choose that course. However, as it became evident, no group except Eritrea would push for secession.

In late September 1991, the information minister, Dima Nego, a member of OLF who later resigned, disclosed that clashes between the OLF and EPRDF forces had taken place, some OLF offices had been closed, and some of its members harassed, intimidated, imprisoned and even tortured. Moreover, OLF officials accused the EPRDF of using its built-in majority to implement policies that contradicted the main principles of the charter. OLF officials referred to the deployment of EPRDF troops in Oromo areas which, according to the OLF, was a violation of the charter. They argue that the Tigrayan-led EPRDF army should leave all of Oromia including “Finfine” (Addis Ababa) and that since there were no Oromo troops in Tigrai, there should be no Tigrayan troops in Oromia. The EPRDF reaction was that Addis Ababa is the capital of Ethiopia and Oromia does not belong to the Oromos of the OLF. They also argued that the OLF signed the transitional government charter which gave the EPRDF forces the authority and responsibility for maintaining peace and order throughout Ethiopia.

In March 1992, an open armed conflict between the EPRDF and the OLF erupted in the east and southeast of the country. This involved ambushes, and mines, the blowing up of ammunition dumps, attacks on EPRDF bases, and clashes between OLF fighters and EPRDF troops. Several hundred people were reported killed in the clashes.

On 15 April 1992, in the Tigrayan capital Mekelle, the EPRDF and OLF made an attempt to patch up their differences under the mediation of the U.S.A (represented at the time by Robert Hondel, deputy of the outgoing Herman Cohan, Assistant Secretary of State for
African Affairs) and the Eritrean government. By virtue of this agreement the two conflicting sides agreed that.73

1. Within one week of the signing of this agreement all forces will return to their camps, thereby implementing in full the defense and security decision of the transitional government’s Council of Representatives.

2. To ensure that all forces have returned to their respective camps, the relevant decrees of the Ethiopian transitional government concerning the number of soldiers who should return to their camps, the number of camps in which the soldiers are to be deployed, and other related issues concerning these have been accepted by both parties.

3. All clashes or conflicts between the two parties will cease immediately.

4. In order to hold free and fair regional elections and to ensure free political competition, the relevant decision of the Council of Representatives of the transitional government, as well as the agreements reached between the EPRDF and the OLF in Mekelle, will be implemented.

   Both sides acknowledged that these agreements represented the last chance for peace, although many observers were doubtful of lasting settlement because several similar agreements signed before had collapsed.

   On the first of June 1992, the OLF issued a statement enumerating the conditions necessary for the electoral process which must be carried out in line with the above agreement.74

1. Representatives of the OLF must be able to go to all parts of Oromia, call public meetings, and explain their views to the people without any harassment so as to enable people to elect persons of their choice.

2. All those imprisoned by the EPRDF, suffering in the jails of the EPRDF must be immediately released.

3. All OLF offices which have been closed by the EPRDF must open immediately.

4. The forthcoming election will be successful only if the EPRDF soldiers are taken immediately to the camps assigned to them, in
line with the agreement reached between the OLF and the EPRDF. If this is done, the election will be held, but if all the points listed above are not implemented, "we would like to make it clear there will be no participation in the election."

Later the OLF claimed that, while it had observed the April 1992 agreement, the EPRDF had not done so - a claim strongly denied by the interim government. In late June 1992, conflicts between the EPRDF and OLF once again erupted, just days before the first multi-party regional elections were to take place. The OLF abruptly withdrew from the election alleging that the EPRDF was actively involved in the intimidation of its supporters. As we have seen previously, these charges were confirmed by both the Joint International Observers Group and the African American Institute. Following its withdrawal from the election, the OLF left the transitional government, increasing the prospects of a civil war. The OLF officials claimed that they were forced to withdraw from the government by the EPRDF after they boycotted the elections and decamped their forces from the special camps. They alleged that the EPRDF asked their ministers to leave the country.

The OLF withdrawal served only to marginalize the organization from the political process. In the latter half of 1992, a major military confrontation between the EPRDF and the OLF broke out with the OLF being roundly defeated and upwards of 20,000 troops falling captive. This military fiasco further marginalized the OLF.

The Oromo question is complicated by the fact that the movement is fragmented. The OLF's views on secession have mellowed a bit over the years. In a statement issued on February 1992, the OLF disclosed that:

"It is vital to emphasize at the outset that the OLF, unlike many others, has never made the promotion of the cause of secession as a prime objective. The OLF believes that neither unity nor secession should be imposed by force of arms. At the same time, it is not oblivious to the fact that demography, history, and geography have placed the Oromo people in a unique position to play a unifying as well as a democratizing role in Ethiopia. No other nationality
has forged such close cultural, historical, and blood ties as the Oromo people with almost all of the other nationalities in Ethiopia."

What is one to make of these conflicting statements? Clearly the OLF neither asserts nor denies its support for secession. This middle position on the part of the OLF leadership — which is mostly Christian from the Western Wollega Province — put it in a seriously challenging position with respect to the mostly east and south—eastern based OLF military apparatus. The latter called for the abolition of “Ethiopia’s Colonial type administration (EPRDF),” and the establishment of an Independent State of the Oromia. This view is maintained by other Oromo factions such as the Oromo People’s Liberation Front (OPLF), United Oromo People’s Liberation Front (UOPLF), and Oromo People’s Liberation Organization.80

The inability of the Oromos to settle the issue of unity or secession has weakened their position as an effective opposition movement. This is particularly true because the OLF, as well as some other Oromo factions, remain at odds with other parties in the opposition over the issue of Ethiopian unity. The opposition groups who believe in Ethiopia’s unity have found themselves confused vis-à-vis by the OLF stand.81 They assert that if the OLF admits that Oromia is part of Ethiopia, they would cast their lot with the OLF for Ethiopia Unity. Since the OLF members are fighting for the Liberation of Oromia one day, and for Ethiopian Unity another day, they maintain, they are unreliable.

However, given the fact that the Oromo is by far the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, this presents a potential challenge to Ethiopia’s political stability. Even though the OLF forces suffered a major military defeat at the end of 1992, in less than one year it was able to regroup its forces and resume fighting against the EPRDF forces. For instance, on the 10th of July 1993 it was reported that the OLF forces launched several attacks on the EPRDF forces in Hararghe province.82 According to the reports, there was fighting from June 28 to 30 around the villages of Kersa, Laangey and Wayber, and that the OLF forces had left some soldiers dead or wounded, and to had taken 28 prisoners from the government troops. It was also reported that
OLF forces had attacked two trains, apparently carrying military reinforcement – the first at the end of March 1993, 127 kilometers from Dire Dawa, and, the second, in early April 176 kilometers from Dire Dawa.83

In a communiqué issued in May 1995 the OLF claimed to have killed 400 government soldiers in a series of attacks in different areas of Region 4 (Orono).84 An arms depot in Borana was raided in June and attacks against travellers in the south-west of the region had been reported. Furthermore, during December 1996 and January 1997 regular reports of clashes between the OLF guerrillas and the Ethiopian army in various areas of Region 4 appeared in the private press.85 In early December, the Oromo language paper, Urji, reported that two days of fighting in Eastern Hararghe had left over 100 people dead and that additional troops had been sent to garrisons in the region. Urji also reported extensive troop movements around NeKempe in the west of Region 4. In a manifest shift in policy, government officials acknowledged the extent of threat from armed Oromo groups, which were previously dismissed as bandits. For instance, the head of national police and deputy interior minister, Hassan Shiffa, said that the threat from the OLF continued, but was containable. The resumption of these military activities, no doubt, has created a state of political turmoil in the country, and raises doubts about the EPRDF’s iron fist.

B. Somali Ogaden Insurgence

It is not only the Oromo’s insurgency that had destabilized Ethiopia, but also that of the Somali Ogaden (Region 5). The Ogaden insurgency dates back to 1991 when the victorious EPRDF troops moved to Eastern Ethiopia following the Derge evacuation of its garrisons there.86 Many light weapons disappeared after the evacuation of these garrisons. Security broke down. Not surprisingly, in view of the repression suffered in previous decades, the Somalia - inhabited region looted and destroyed many governmental facilities including clinics and schools. Yet only a few revenge killings of ‘Highlanders’ took place. Some ‘tribal’ conflicts, notably between the Jarso and Giri close to Jijiga, and between the Red Barre and Ogadeni
pastoralists close to Kalaffo, escalated and led to new displacements of people. Armed militiamen rode around in the mainly Gadabursi Camps of Derwonaji and Teferiber. Simultaneously, Oromo fronts, notably OLF and IFLO, fought the EPRDF troops for control of the main road for all relief goods from Djibouti and Addis Ababa. For about a year, between June 1991 and June 1992, eastern Ethiopia was generally in a very insecure state and all relief efforts had to rely on airlifts and armed protection by EPRDF escorts.

When the regional election, first scheduled for October 1991, took place mostly in June 1992, those of the Somali Ogaden Region 5, were delayed till the spring of 1993. These elections brought Somalis to power in the area for the first time since having come under Ethiopian, British, and Italian influence a hundred years before. According to the election results released by the Election Commission, the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) (which was established in 1986 and is well known for its advocacy of the separation of the Somali Ogaden, rejoined with Greater Somalia) won 38 out of 107 seats, the Western Somali Liberation Front took 22. The remainders were won by independent candidates and eight other parties mainly representing smaller clans. Unlike in most other regions, the dominant EPRDF had no satellite party organized in Somali Ogaden to defend its agenda. The first prolonged debate between the Somalis was over the location of the capital of the region. The contest was between Dire Dawa, which is inhabited mainly by Somalis belonging to the Issa clan, Jijiga which is populated mainly by Gadabursi and Issag, and finally Gode, which is dominated by the Ogadeni clan. Nevertheless, the numerical predominance of the Ogadeni clan in the new region won them Gode as a capital, and the presidency and vice-presidency of the new regional government.

In the first year of its existence, the Somali Ogaden regional government has been far from stable. As early as August 1993, the regional president and vice-president were deposed and later arrested when $1.2 million provided by the Central Government to start up regional administration, could not be accounted for. They were replaced by two other Ogadenis, which the simultaneous reshuffle of the regional parliament led to a somewhat better representation of the
smaller clans. Whereas the overall security situation improved significantly between the late spring of 1992 and the end of 1993 allowing rehabilitation activities to go ahead, it broke down again in January 1994. The ONLF and some other Ethiopian Somali political parties started accusing the EPRDF of being just another ‘colonizing’ force from the highlands that had betrayed its own promises and the charter calls rang out for secession and an independent ‘Ogadena’.

On the 5th January 1994 five Ethiopian Somali organizations: ONLF, the Democratic Movement League, the Western Somali Ogaden, the Islamic United Party, the People’s Democratic Movement, and the Democratic Unity Party, reached an agreement in a meeting in Dire Dawa to form a united organization to represent all Somali political organizations. During the meeting they resolved to form a united political committee; they resolved that the Somali people of Region 5 should be given the right of self determination and to be governed by Sharia. They agreed to hold a general meeting.

In response to the calls for a referendum on secession, in Feb. 1994, 11 parties set-up the Ethiopian Somali Democratic League (ESDL), mainly representing the Issag, Gadbursi, Gaboye, and Red Bare. The ESDL, chaired by the ex-minister of External Economic Co-operation, Abdul Majeed Hussein, distanced itself from the ONLF, which it stated represented only one clan and did not, therefore, reflect the will of the majority of the region’s residents. The ESDL said that its aims were to co-operate with the forces promoting democracy in Ethiopia, including the EPRDF. Although it wants to see the possibility of self determination up to the point of secession retained in the new constitution, it recognized that regionalization had potentially altered the political scene in Ethiopia and that in any case the present was not an opportune time for secession. The priority for the ESDL is recovery and investment in the development of Region 5.

Proponents of a quick referendum on secession responded by forming the Western Somali Democratic Party (WSDP) in March 1994, of which the then-Regional President was elected Chairman. The notion of a ‘Greater Somalia’ was consciously evoked at the founding meeting. The ONLF, with its main support among the Ogadeni Clan, managed to mobilize smaller Darood clans such as the
‘Jidwaq’ alliance of Bartirre, Yeberre, and Abasqu. Thus, two blocks had formed which ostensibly differed over political programs and priorities.

Nine political organizations in the Ogaden, spearheaded by ONLF, called on the central government to respect the right of self determination and independence to the ethnic Somali people of the province. According to an ONLF source, as many as 53 people were killed and 412 others detained since January 1994 in clashes between the local population and security forces. In response, Amnesty International expressed concern over the safety of many people who were being detained in different parts of the region and called for an impartial inquiry. A statement by the London-based International Human Rights Organization, said its fears were increased by ‘reports of killing, wounding, and torture or ill treatment’ of some of those detained.

Until mid-March 1994, the EPRDF government had remained very diplomatic in its public statement, but an increasing spate of attacks on EPRDF forces and bases in the Ogaden eventually provoked it into a full scale military offensive in April and May. Officially this was targeted at the bases and supporters of Al-Ittihad rather than the ONLF or the Ogadenis. Al-Ittihad, or Muslim fundamentalist, had already been active in the Ogaden since 1992. In March 1994, Al-Ittihad and the ONLF made a tactical alliance. As a fighting force, they were quickly defeated by the EPRDF, dispersed, and driven into the El Kerre area.

This political instability obviously causes problems. In particular, it has impeded the establishment of a functioning regional administration with which aid agencies co-operate. The EPRDF government was accusing some Middle Eastern countries, (i.e., Libya, Iraq, and Syria) of backing the secessionist ONLF. The ex-Minister of External Economic Co-operation, Mr. Abdel Majeed Hussein, claimed that these foreign powers were intended to destabilize Ethiopia. He alleged that the ONLF had written to the World Bank warning against proceeding with a multilateral funding gas project in the Ogaden.

During 1996, Al-Ittihad movement transferred the scene of the fighting to the capital city, Addis Ababa. Al-Itthad masterminded
bomb attacks which targeted two state-owned tourist hotels namely, Ghion and Wabe Shebelle. The explosion at the Ghion hotel, which took place on January 18, 1996, killed three people and left more than 20 injured. While the bombing of the Wabe Shebelle on August 5, 1996, killed one person and 17 seriously injured.

In retaliation, the Ethiopian government troops raided the military bases of Al-Ittihad lying 50 km within western Somalia, and close to the international boundaries with both Kenya and Ethiopia on August 8, 1996. On August 10, an Ethiopian government source claimed success of what it termed “limited counter-offensive aimed essentially at destroying the bases and sanctuaries of the multinational terrorist force.” In these raids 200 people were reported killed, mostly Somali fighters. These raids, however, seemed to exacerbate political violence in the region. The clumsy efforts, of the EPRDF to co-opt Somali clan-based groupings to the Region 5 administration, has alienated Ogadeni clans within Ethiopia. The physical permeability of the vast pastoral borderland with Somalia and the intense political conflict within Somalia, also suggest that even high profile and costly military raids, such as above, are likely to provide only temporary solution to attacks from Somali sources. Although Al-Ittihad is a self-proclaimed Islamic group, its strategies arise out of the intense conflict over territory and resources between rival Somali clan-based militia in both, Somalia and Southern Ethiopia, rather than any religious motivation.

The threat posed by Al-Ittihad was cited as a factor in the latest twist to the complex and long running saga over control of Ethiopia’s own Somali designated Region Five. On January 14, 1997, the ex-minister of external Economic Co-operation and the head of the EPRDF’s Somali surrogate, the Ethiopian Somali Democratic League (ESDL), Abdul Majeed Hussein, announced the imminent fusion of the ESDL and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) into a National Somali Council (NSC), claiming that “the interest of Ogadeni Somali is best served by a unified political organization.” As we have seen previously, the ONLF called for immediate independence of the Ogaden of Region Five and full implementation of the Sharia law in the region, incapacitating the regional administration. The group
was subsequently split by internal clan rivalry, with the leadership of the new, moderate wing apparently rallying to the support of the ESDL. The US ambassador to Ethiopia participated in the press conference announcing the imminent formation of the NSC, and was quoted as saying that he hoped the move would contribute to peace and stability in Region Five. In the light of the current volatility of Somali clan leadership in Region Five, this was just wishful thinking.

In September 1997 two additional alliances of disaffected Ethiopian emerged, further confusing the already perplexing political equation along the Ethio-Somali border. First, the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia (IFLO) was reported to have linked up with estranged elements of the OLF and resumed armed activities in the Ogaden. Second, a new alliance of anti-EPRDF forces was launched in Mogadishu (Capital of Somalia) in September 1997. Calling itself the Oromo, Somali, and Afar Liberation Alliance (OSALA), the new group claims to represent six small factions intent on resisting what they term highland, Christian domination of Ethiopia. After its creation, little has been heard of this improbable heterogeneous alliance, prompting speculation that it was little other than a paper front created by Hussein Mohammed Adeed, one of the leaders of the major Somali factions who supported Al-Ittihad movement and who, repeatedly, denounced the Ethiopian government for intervening in Somalia.

CONCLUSION

From the preceding survey it has become evidently clear that the hazardous strategy of involuntary integration which was adopted in the post-Mengistu regime and which is apparent in the EPRDF domination of the centre of the political system, the resources, the apparatus of state power and exercising hegemonic control over other communal groups at the periphery of the system is directly responsible for the violent communal conflict which plagued Ethiopia between 1991 and 1998. The controversial ambiguous constitutional clause of secession is directly responsible for the precipitation of communal violence. It is very obvious that those politically and economically marginalized communal groups would raise the motto of secession and hence
engage in an arm conflict against the dominant political force. Political analysts are rather puzzled how come amidst the tendency towards centralization, the EPRDF government would constitutionally enshrine the right of secession.

As regards the future political development of Ethiopia we have to address the following questions. Would the present status quo be preserved? Would the EPRDF continue dominate and to monopolize the centre of political authority and by excluding other communal groups or are there prospects that the Ethiopian political arena would be open to much more transparency, and hence the emergence of multi-ethnic party democracy? In the view of many scholars the preservation of the status quo or the restructuring of the Ethiopian polity is a matter that depended entirely on the stand of the western countries notably the U.S.A., since they are the ones that provide the massive political and economic support to the EPRDF regime, and which is very critical to its survival. If that support is denied the EPRDF regime would collapse. It is generally observed that in the last fifteen years (1991-2006) the European Union member countries and the U.S.A had provided the EPRDF government with US$5 billions in terms of economic aid. According to the western strategy this massive economic aid is essential in order to neutralize the trend of Muslim fundamentalism in the Horn of Africa region (i.e. Sudan and Somalia). However, lately the European Union member countries started to reconsider their political position. These countries strongly criticized the May 2005 federal parliamentary elections. The European Union Election Observation Mission which were sent to Ethiopia to monitor the election reported that 'the EPRDF practices—in terms of the rigging of the election results—taken as a whole, are seriously undermining the transparency and fairness of the elections and also risk increasing the scope for manipulation, and consequently putting in doubt public confidence in the process.' The European Union even threatened to curtail its economic assistance to Ethiopia in the light of the election fraud. However as regards the U.S.A it remained adamant in its support to the EPRDF regime because it depends entirely on the latter on its fight against Muslim fundamentalism in the region while
at the same time giving less concern to the issue of democracy and human right abuses.

Some scholars have speculated that if the U.S.A denies the political and economic support to the EPRDF regime, it may force the latter to take the appropriate steps needed to build a viable genuine democratic political system. Furthermore there is the possibility that the core of the EPRDF government, namely the TPLF, would exercise the right of self-determination and hence declare region one (Tigray) as a separate political entity. Two reasons are given for that; first that in case of the genuine democratization of the Ethiopian polity, the two major communal groups, namely the Oromos and Amhara would emerge victorious while the minority communal group, the Tigray would be defeated. Secondly, since it wields political power in 1991, the TPLF directed all economic aid to region one. The rational given to that is that region one is the most economically depressed region during the Derge rule and apparently must be compensated for this. Now after fifteen years of massive economic aid been directed to region one, it has become a highly developed region. The fact that the region becomes economically viable would pave the way for its separation. It is in the context of this analysis that we can understand the EPRDF policy of centralization of political authority and the enshrining of the constitutional right of self-determination including secession.

Geographically Ethiopia is located at the centre of the Horn of Africa region. This aids Ethiopia to neighbour all the countries of the Horn region. Ethiopia's political stability is crucial and detrimental to the region's stability. Foreign powers' meddling is one of the prime factors of the region's instability. As indicated above, Ethiopia is a close ally to the U.S.A and it has often been used by the latter as a tool in its global war against Muslim radicals who are associated with Al Qaida. This is evidently clear in the massive military support given by the EPRDF government to the Southern Sudanese rebel groups (SPLA) who were fighting against the Muslim fundamentalist regime in Khartoum during the mid-1990's as well as in the current Ethiopian military intervention in Somalia. In the view of many political analysts if foreign powers' meddling in the Horn region is curtailed, the Horn countries would be able to reconcile their differences and hence enjoy peace and stability.
Endnotes

3 Bahru Zewde, op. cit., p. 5.
4 Bender, Bowen, Cooper and Ferguson, op. cit. p. 11.
5 Bahru Zewde, op. cit., p. 7.
6 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
10 Berhanu Tefra and Haile Arificio, “EPRDF’s Unorthodox Experiment”, Moresh, Feb-March 1993, p. 29
13 Theodore M. Vestal, op.cit. p. 197
14 Ibid.
15 Constitutional Commission Newsletter, Issue No. 3, May 1994, p. 3
17 Ibid.
19 Theodore M. Vestal, op. cit. p. 198
20 Marina Ottaway, op. cit. p. 8
21 The Ethiopian Herald, Addis Ababa Vol. XII, Sept. 29, 1992
With respect to this, the editor of Airmot, The Ethiopian daily newspaper, 1st year No. 31, Megabit 29, 1986, Ethiopian Calendar (7 April 1994) writes: "...Some evidences show that the constitution which is said to have lost popular support right from the start, is facing the same fate in the registration for the election of members of the coming Constituent Assembly. According to information we got from different Kebeles in region 14 recently, it is observed that dwellers are facing influences in the election for the Constituent Assembly. A certain dweller of Wereda 13 Kebele 02 explained to our reporter that the dwellers of the Kebele were systematically forced to go to election in a way no less than was used during the time of the Derge which says, ‘anyone who does not participate in a meeting will never get the service in the Kebele’s public shop’. Dwellers who did not want their name to be mentioned expressed through proclamation No. 64/85 article 38 stated that a candidate needed the support of 500 voters in its locality in order to be fit for registration. People in the indicated Kebele were influenced to give their support for candidates whom they are not familiar with. Some sources that observed the situation pointed out that while a lady (candidate in the election) is of Tigrayan origin, she was articulated as the representative of the Amhara organization in order to secure the necessary support from the dwellers. In another development, in the same Kebele 02, another dweller explained that members of the Kebele administration were distributing election cards in each house to each eligible member of the family and in each case securing their signature. The dwellers were also told, as the same person expressed, ‘If you want to elect, you may do it. If not you may leave it. But since the election card is useful to you, get registered and take the card’. In addition as an individual from Wereda 24 Kebele 11 expressed, the dwellers were told they would be registered for vaccination on condition that they took election card: in this way they were forced to sign and take the election card. While this is found from information gathered from the dwellers of Kebeles, generally the information which point out the fact that
the election for members of the Constituent Assembly was made without free interest of the dwellers of Region 14 administration."


Minutes of the Ethiopian Constituent Assembly, 4, 11, 13, 15, 16, 26, 19, 23 (November, 1994)


Country Report, Ethiopia, 3rd Quarter 1995, Economist Intelligence Unit, p. 10


Ibid.

Professor Asrat Woldeyes, leader of AAPO, was sentenced to three years in jail in late December 1994 on charges relating to a speech made in 1992. On December 19 three executive committee members of AAPO were arrested, accused with inciting armed violence and sedition. Six of the 11-member AAPO Central Committee were behind bars. On October 27 Asrat was condemned to an additional six months in prison for contempt of court, for having written a letter three weeks earlier in which he questioned the impartiality of the court. Goshu Moges, the editor of Tobia, which published the letter was also sentenced to six months in jail, although he was subsequently released pending appeal. (See Country Report, Ethiopia, 1st Quarter 1995, Economist Intelligence Unit, p. 11)


Ibid.


Robert Hovde, Ibid.


Ibid.


See page 24.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid. p. 1.


Ethiopian Review, July 1992, Ibid.


Ibid


Horn of Africa Bulletin, Vol. 4, No. 3 Ibid.


Theodrus Dagne, "The Oromos: Democrats or Secessionists?" The Ethiopian Review, August 1992.

Ibid.


Fikre Tolossa, Ibid.


Ibid.

Ibid.

Ibid.


See pages 18-19.

Theodrus Dagne, op. cit, p. 20

Robert Howde, op. cit., p. 239

Since November, 1996 Ethiopia had been hosting a series of negotiations aimed at reconciling rival Somali factions. Following a meeting on January 3, 1997 in the Ethiopian resort of Sodere 100km south of Addis Ababa, leaders of 26 factions agreed to form a National Salvation Council (NSC). Speaking on behalf of the new grouping, one of the major warlords, Ali Mahdi Mohammed, condemned Al-Itihad for having declared war on Ethiopia. However, in a thinly veiled attack on Ethiopia Mr. Ali Mahdi’s principal rival, Hussein Mohammed Aided, promptly condemned the creation of the NSC, thus forging a closer link with Al-Itihad.