

### Trajectories of State Building and Peace Building in Ethiopia: The Role of Peace Settlements

Medhane Tadesse, Dade Desta and Alagaw Ababu

#### *Integrated Field Research Report*

This paper is a part of an African Leadership Centre Research project supported by the International Development Research Centre. The paper was presented at the project's review and validation workshop convened on 18-19 April 2016 in Nairobi. The paper integrates the revised baseline studies, field research notes and reviewers comments.

## Table of Contents

Trajectories of State Building and Peace Building in Ethiopia .....	3
Introduction .....	3
Theoretical Starting Points.....	6
The Ethiopian State: History of Strengths and Weaknesses .....	8
Fundamental issues of the Ethiopian state building enterprise .....	8
Insurgency in Tigray and the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF).....	16
Ideology, Organization and Mobilization.....	18
Path to Power and Paradigm Shift in State Building .....	21
The Transition And The Making Of A New Political Order .....	23
The transition process .....	23
Chapter Five .....	29
The state of state building and peace building in post-transition Ethiopia .....	29
Legitimizing and territorializing ethnic nationalism .....	29
Democratization and Decentralization.....	33
The Economic dimension of state-society interactions .....	37
Evolving gender praxis .....	44
Concluding Remarks .....	46
References .....	51

## Chapter One

### Trajectories of State Building and Peace Building in Ethiopia

#### Introduction

In a region that is characterized by minuscule and diminutive span of statehood, Ethiopia nonetheless stands out. For many in Africa and much of the developing world, foreigners appropriated the period of entry into modernity, and the course of history had to be *restored*. But the Ethiopian case is just the opposite. The sole African state to defeat European colonialists and retain its independence through the 19<sup>th</sup> century scramble for Africa, its people have an understandable pride in their history, which informed their peace and state building trajectory in a distinct way.

The starting consideration of this paper is the fact that though Ethiopia has existed as a nation and a state for thousands of years, it remains unstable and its nation-state building project continues to be contested. It explores what factors and historical journeys contributed to Ethiopia's distinctive state building trajectories and its fragile peace. It also assesses if the political praxis its elites have been pursuing over the long political history militated against the consolidation of peace and the institutionalization of a viable state. It particularly seeks to interrogate the extent the state and peace building trajectories of the country have been mediated by three overlapping factors that are embedded in its peculiar past: 'the nationality question', the extractive and exclusionary nature of political and economic institutions vis-à-vis the people in general and the peasantry in particular, entrenched culture of unquestioning obedience to authority. It aims to show how contradictions generated by these factors radicalized the intelligentsia, and subsequently led to bloody civil wars that brought 'two revolutions' just within two decades. As will be clear, progress in peacefully managing ethnic diversity, democratizing state and society, and improving the economy and empowering the people has been challenging for successive regimes rendering them rather similar in many respects. Our analysis indicates that the specific features relating to the winning party's ideology, membership discipline, organizational effectiveness, leadership qualities, ethnic base, and political ambition are

much more important in shaping the 'state' of post-settlement state and peace building than the way a settlement is arrived at.

In arguing this way, our research interrogates Ethiopia's distant history of state formation. However, the main focus remains to be on the early 1990s political settlement and developments of the recent past. A major area of discussion is thus the nature and dynamics of the 1990s political transition and its peace and state building ramifications. It certainly follows that the issue of ethnicity and/ or nation and nationalities and their place in the organization of state power and (de)democratization processes; and political actors contention over it constitute the major themes of the study.

The research report is divided into five chapters. The first chapter introduces some of the assumptions and observations guiding the orientations of succeeding chapters, which is reinforced by theoretical starting points. The second chapter discusses the historical trajectories of state building conversations that led to the armed conflict with a focus on underlying factors embedded in Ethiopia's past. The causes, ideologies, organizational structures and mobilization strategies of the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) are presented in the next chapter. The Fourth chapter focuses on the post-1991 period, and its role in peace and stability of the country and the ethnic based political system in light of national issues, democratization, economic relations, and gender issues. Finally, the last section offers some concluding remarks.

Like all states, Ethiopia's journey has been characterized by defining strengths, and weaknesses assessed in terms of their effects on forging a peaceful and sustainable state. Peace, as an oversimplified concept for this purpose is understood as a political good the existence of which implies the absence of war challenging central authority and institutions. Critical to the success of peace building is a parallel process of state building which in turn presupposes a parallel process of nation building, an often violent and coercive process as manifested in Ethiopia and many other countries.

Again, before we specifically trace the political trajectories of Ethiopia and the nature of peace (or the lack thereof) underpinning it, a brief description of key concepts such as state building and nation building is in order. State building refers to the creation of tangible

institutions—armies, police, bureaucracies, ministries, and the like— and their capacity to install the habit of obedience to and willing acceptance of its authority by the populace – in short their legitimacy. Nation building, by contrast, is the creation of a sense of national identity to which individuals will be loyal, an identity that will supersede their loyalty to tribes, villages, regions, or ethnic groups. Nation building in contrast to state building requires the creation of intangible things like national traditions, symbols, shared historical memories, and common cultural points of reference. National identities can be created by states through their policies on language, religion, and education. They are also just as often established from the bottom up by poets, philosophers, religious leaders, novelists, musicians, and other individuals with no direct access to political power (Fukuyama 2014).

Literature on political settlements has to date included limited analysis on the relationship between structured attempts to transition from violent to less violent forms of political settlements and dynamics of state and peace building. Current analyses on political settlement view peace agreements as formal settlement events. However, they misunderstood the contingent nature of such documents, ignore the prior bargaining processes, and underestimate the continuous processes of adjustment and readjustment in the processes of forging political and legal institutions. Peace processes are perhaps best understood as processes of containing fundamental disagreement on how to divide and manage political, economic and symbolic resources without a resort to violence. Better understanding of transitions is vital to understanding the different regimes of inclusion and exclusion and the resultant trade-offs in peace and violence.

This research and analysis of state and peace building trajectories in Ethiopia is informed by a number of assumptions and observations: First, the central strength, and also weakness, of state and peace building in Ethiopia, derive from its distinctive, though not necessarily unique, mode of organizing and exercising power embedded in its peculiar past. Second, entrenched and contradictory nationalist and class narratives have been at the heart of the wars and insurgencies, which resulted in a beleaguered state. Third, because of this, almost all regimes with varying ideological colors are unable to break clean from past practices and transform the manner they exercise political power and hence continuities outweighed the desire and at times the popular demand for change.

Fourth, unlike many in Africa, the trajectory of state and peace building in Ethiopia has primarily been decided and continues to be molded by actions taken by Ethiopians themselves and external influences remain minimal. Whatever the ills of the Ethiopian state external actors are not to be blamed.

This research, in the first instance, is based on years of analyzing historical and political developments in Ethiopia and the region by the research lead (see Medhane, 2003). Against that background the research began with a review of the literature, which constituted a baseline for the study. The paper mainly relies on the following three methods: 1) Desk research of literature and documents; 2) Visits to and interviews with more than 12 political leaders and independent analysts. 3) Years of observation of, and research on, political developments in the country.

### **Theoretical Starting Points**

A long noticed impediment of peace and stability in Ethiopia, as in the rest of Africa, is the nature of the state. The state does not reflect both the interest and the character of the society as a whole. While ethnicity might be the starting point of revolts against the state it is a product of the mere domination of the states of the Horn by particular communities who use the state for their personal enrichment and that of their ethnic cohorts that harms collective memories of state and peace building. This has negatively impacted on the nature of governments. Governments run by small groups with partisan agendas and narratives are incapable of generating either a strong constituency for themselves, or a political structure for their respective countries as a whole that could offer any plausible prospect of managing their countries political problems (Medhane, 2003:3). Indeed, the non-participatory nature of political systems as well as the lack of democratization has further contributed to both instability and socio-economic decline.

Second, because of the dominant role that the states in the region, particularly Ethiopia, have in allocating resources in general conditions of scarcity, they become the focus of dissent (Markakis, 1994; Young, 2006). In this regard, it can be concluded that the political economy of Ethiopia mirrors that of other countries in the Horn of Africa in terms of the poverty of its people, a fierce competition for resources in conditions of scarcity, and the

role of the state in controlling the allocation of such resources. Finally, added to this is the often-overlooked political culture of militarism both at the level of the state and ethnic groups. The governments in the sub-region, with the exception of Kenya, have their roots in militarism. They spring either from armed insurrectionary movements or from military coups, or a combination of the two. State militarism comes in a number of appearances. Its common manifestation in independent Africa has been military nationalism, with a populist or leftist tinge as is the case with the Tigray peoples Liberation Front/TPLF/ in Ethiopia. The legacy of this remains in many countries, but the Horn has no government that lay direct claim to this tradition. Instead, there are several former liberation movements now in power (deWaal, 2006; Medhane, 2006). It is no accident that the political language is colored with threats to 'crush' opposition actors and narratives in all its forms, and 'wage war' on social problems and competing narratives.

Most importantly, use of force is considered a legitimate option at any time to squash contending narratives rather than a last resort complicating the search for common ground of peace and state building. Probably an extension of this is the prevalence of 'divide and rule' militarized strategies for control in the Horn's frontier regions, which has implications for interstate relations and repercussions for domestic state and peace building agendas. Coupled with imposed partisan narratives any particular instance of 'divide and rule' creates losers with grievances. The proximity of these groups to borders, and the fact that the borders usually cut through the homelands of these groups, provides an opportunity for the neighboring state to support the other side. Hence, a long detected characteristic of state and peace building processes in the Horn of Africa is the doctrine of mutual proxy destabilization, or the practice of governmental or other forces supporting opposition groups in neighboring states (Cliffe, 1999). Peace and state building in Ethiopia, and in much of the Horn of Africa, cannot be fully documented without considering the nature of 'mutual interventions'. These theoretical starting points are key in understanding the underpinning of peace and state building trajectories in Ethiopia and accentuate the peculiarities and similarities of the successes and challenges the country faces as opposed to the Horn of African region and the rest of Africa at large.

## Chapter Two

### The Ethiopian State: History of Strengths and Weaknesses

#### Fundamental issues of the Ethiopian state building enterprise

Heir to an ancient state, Ethiopia has a long and uninterrupted political history with its own unique literary system, nationalist ideology, and social organization. Though its territory has been expanding and contracting as the power of the Christian Highland Kingdoms waxed and waned, the political, territorial and ideological core of the system remained intact and further buttressed when it successfully defeated a European Colonialist. Hence, unlike other African countries which were, for the most part, formed by the imposition of an external power, resulting in the creation of bizarrely artificial units, but at the same time generally subordinating all of their constituent ethnic groups equally to the colonizer, Ethiopia was formed by the imposition of an indigenous imperial regime on the country's numerous ethnic groups, many of which had previously had little if any association with the imperial regime. In short, Menelik succeeded while Osman Danfodio failed.

This historical peculiarity marked both the strength and weakness of the Ethiopian state in the subsequent decades of state and of peace building. In this regard, three apparent trends stand out: The inheritance of institution of control and extraction together with their normative justification, the superimposition of Abyssinian socio-political, economic and cultural order over newly incorporated groups, and blatant disregard for liberal values of citizens rights and submissive political culture. First, this distinctive history enabled the builders of modern Ethiopia to inherit a centralized, highly extractive state that presided over a sufficiently integrated society akin to a modern nation-state. Subsequent processes of state building were characterized by a further entrenchment of these aspects, notwithstanding the marked differences in the ethno-cultural and religious compositions, experiences of political authority, the livelihood of peoples of historic Ethiopia and the modern one forged at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hence, whatever the nature of a regime in power, and whatever its ideological proclivities, state building viewed as expanding the territorial reach of the state through establishing and institutionalizing apparatuses of control and extraction, and introducing elements of modernity suited to that end has been



a continuously improving project. It gets stalled during periods of transition only to be followed with greater vigor and energy by those succeeding the previous order. The policy measures and regimes of control and extraction undertaken by emperor Hiale Selassie, the longest presiding emperor ruling Ethiopia for 40 years starting from 1930, and the 17 year military regime as well as the current EPRDF rule followed a distinctly similar path in this regard. This dimension of state building in Ethiopia, it can be said, followed a linear path, as was the case for state making process across Europe. This endowed the Ethiopian state the capacity to fairly ensure law and order in much of its highland areas and the capacity to effectively plan macro-economic policies, capacity that is lacking in much of Africa but at the same time without which economic growth, let alone its fair distribution, will be much more difficult.

Second, the manners of its formation or rather processes of transformation into a modern state resulted in a deeply unequal political structure in which power was derived from the Christians of the historic state (especially Amharas (currently 27% of the population), but also Tigrayans (6%) and others) that ushered in differing experiences and contrasting narratives of the state in Ethiopia. The process of incorporation doubled the size of the Abyssinian polity as it conquered dozens of ethnic groups. This rendered the Ethiopian society highly heterogeneous unlike the Abyssinian proper that had an integrated society adhering to similar social organizations and normative orders. The process also involves the superimposition of the socio-economic and political order of the north on peoples of the South, the South West and the East of present day Ethiopia that largely had egalitarian culture. The result was, as Markakis (1989:119) documented, 'a politically explosive conjunction of ethnic and class divisions' that give rise to ethnic self-determination demands dubbed as the 'national question' and a far cry for land distribution under the slogan of 'land to the tiller'. These served as a motto for national liberation movements who came to dominate the political landscape towards the beginning of the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Third, a problem that later afflicted contending political actors and is inevitably connected with the country's success in maintaining strong tradition of statehood is the state-society disjunction with regard to respect for citizenry rights. None of the regimes governing the

country so far, and the more so for the regimes preceding the current one, succumbed to liberal values of respect for individual rights. The imperial regime's 1931 constitution affirmed the inviolability of the power of the emperor and its subsequent revision in 1955 adds little to push the country along liberal lines. In short, the emperor's power remained absolute and inviolable. Its successor, being a military regime, had fared worse in putting state building agenda in line with popular demand and the current regime, notwithstanding its avowed acceptance of liberal precepts in its constitution, does not care less for such values in its governance practices (See, for example Amnesty International, 2014). Hence, what we are observing is more of the same for a century or so, which inevitably is the very product of the country's success in centralizing power and long held traditions of statehood that imprinted in a habit of unquestioning obedience to authority. These serve as a yardstick to assess progress and shortcomings in building peace and consolidating the state. Hence the paper traces the state and peace building trajectories of the country by focusing on these analytical lenses.

The forging of modern Ethiopia was started by Emperor Tewdros II of Gondar and Yohannes IV of Tigray and was accomplished by Menilik II of Shoa during which the country acquired its present shape. It is, however, emperor Haileselassie, the last emperor, who significantly consolidated the state with all its contradictions that in the end precipitated its eventual collapse through revolution. The imperial regime under his stewardship undertook a series of measures that strengthened the state, eroded the power of the traditional class, and generated social forces at the center of the empire that are against the system.

The expanding modern education generated students that filled the state bureaucracy that enthusiastically advocated reform of the imperial order, and at the same time supplanted the power of the nobility and aristocracy. The establishment and subsequent consolidation of a powerful army further strengthened the power of the monarchy vis-à-vis the nobility who used to be the source of military power. To finance all these, a number of reforms in the tax regime were undertaken so that greater resource would be collected from the peasantry. The emperor pursued a policy of blind assimilation with regard to ethno-linguistic groups and merged religious and secular power in his hand. This coupled with

political marginalization and economic expropriation generated violent resistance even in areas that constituted the heart of the historic Ethiopian. Some of the groups in the periphery, notably, the Oromos of Bale, the Eritreans and the Somali's of Ogaden had already rebelled against the regime. This resistance, however, is not limited to the periphery as it also entertained localized rebellion in Gojam and Wollo of central Ethiopia. An increasing number of educated elites, who got further radicalized, state bureaucrats and the military began to view the very imperial order as an obstacle to the country's progress. Given the emperor's reluctance to make reforms deep and wide enough to satisfy these forces, it was hardly possible to bring about progressive changes without overthrowing the emperor himself, which indeed happened in 1974 when a military council, which called itself Derg, seized power.

The Derg's answer to Ethiopia's age-old problems was socialist centralization that entails the nationalization of financial institutions, large scale manufacturing firms, and the distribution of land, which was declared to be state owned as it is currently, and a number of measures related to collectivization, resettlement and villagization of the peasantry. All the policy measures were top-down and implemented without the consent of the people at the grassroots level. While measures pertaining to villagization, resettlement, collectivization and expansion of the army, and the formation of mass-associations all indicate that regime's extraordinary capacity for mobilization, their coerciveness, poor implementation and ultimately failure alienated the peasantry from the revolutionary military regime. The war effort the regime has been undertaking was financed largely by scrupulous extraction from the peasantry of which the principal means includes taxes, varieties of fees and levies and above all the mandatory quota of grain to be sold to the state's Agricultural Marketing Boards with a price cap much lower than the produce's market price. To make it worse, these extraction policies were corruptly implemented to fill the pockets of party officials.

Like all communist parties, including the insurgents the Derg was fighting, the Workers Party of Ethiopia was organized in such a way that only few will have the power to control and steer the masses. At the top were the Central Committee elected by the Congress and who in turn elects the Politburo. The secretariat was elected from the CC and headed

various commissions paralleling state ministries. Membership in this organization was largely based on personal affiliation and loyalty to Mengistu, the party's chairperson, the president and chief of the army, than ideological conviction or political integrity. At the lower level most cadres were careerists, opportunists with only a few individuals who were convinced of the party's agenda. The operational principle was democratic centralism, which entails the submission of the individual to the party, the minority to the majority and the lower level to the higher level and hence while decisions flowed downward information would be transmitted upward. Mistakes were presumably to be corrected through evaluation though in actuality members never dared to criticize higher-level officials who in any case were not ready to accept criticism. Consequently, the party was fragmented, undisciplined and corrupt, features atypical of communist parties. This partly explains the failure of the regime's policy measures in various areas and its ultimate demise.

Though the party and the state were parallel they were neither clearly separate functionally and in terms of personnel nor equal. The party was hegemonic in their encounter and the two were fused together as party cadres manned top government offices. In terms of vertical organization of the state's reach, the Derg added a new layer of administration called Kebele system and introduced peasant associations. The associations were initially formed to facilitate the land distribution process but eventually acquired more political roles; this level of administration is still retained by the new regime. The Kebele administration and peasant associations were transformed from instruments of local self-governance to instruments of central control and resource extraction. Though the chairpersons of these institutions were nominally elected, they were almost always appointed by higher-level party officials. The party apparatus infiltrated these institutions and mass organizations with the goal of controlling every sphere of social life. To this end, the Derg increased the number of military and civilian bureaucracy. In the economic sphere, though its socialist policies failed to improve the economy of the country, the Derg increased its extractive capacity and the amount of resources it extracted from the largely peasant population increased thereby creating a strong state in terms of its capacity for control, extraction and mobilization (Clapham, 1989).

However, as an embodiment of militaristic governance, authoritarian political culture, and Marxism-Leninism the regime was exclusionary of various claimants for power. Therefore, it was not ready to accommodate the centrist multinational forces that had played an active role in the overthrow of the imperial order, and the ethno-nationalists demanding greater autonomy or outright independence. Its usual response to the problems posed by these forces was the unbridled use of force arguing that the class and national contradiction, these movements were based on, was over with the overthrow of the imperial order and the subsequent introduction of socialist policies. The various movements, it could be argued, were not ready to work in collaboration with the Derg and among themselves through negotiation and consensus either. This was a direct inheritance of Ethiopia's burdensome past supplemented with the dogmas of Marxism-Leninism. Most of these forces were the outgrowth of the Ethiopian Student Movement and individuals that had actively engaged in the student movement dominated the leaderships of the organizations formed by these groups and hence a brief digression to discuss the student movement and its progressive polarization is in order.

In their attempt to integrate the universal truth of Marxism-Leninism with the Ethiopian situation Ethiopian students touched the most sensitive issue that is the question of nationalities. As was feared the issue of nationalities turned out to be the most controversial political issue and threatened the unity of the students. So in the late 1960s and early 1970s more serious advocates of the question of nationalities emerged from the last hours of the Ethiopian Student Movement. Since almost all groups espoused Marxism-Leninism, they all accepted the principle of self-determination of nations and nationalities. However, they differed in terms of the level of self-determination they were ready to accept and their view of its primacy vis-à-vis class contradiction. Based on these, the Marxist inspired movements of the day could be categorized in to two blocks: groups that were organized on multinational basis, and ethno-nationalists that were coalesced around ethnic identity.

The former were convinced that the primary contradiction of the period was class rather than ethnicity and hence the response needs to be a nationwide class struggle. The two major groups in this camp were the All Ethiopian Socialist Movement (MEISON in Amharic)

and the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Party (EPRP). The relation between these two groups was not smooth as they competed to become the vanguard party, a struggle that had informed their subsequent strategies. MEISON decided to give critical support for the Derg whereas the EPRP, believing that a military regime is incapable of undertaking a socialist mission, called for the immediate establishment of a provisional People's government in the wake of the revolution. When its demand was not heard, the EPRP launched urban guerilla strikes against the Derg selectively targeting individuals that provided key support for the Derg. The PMAC swiftly responded by indiscriminately killing individuals and groups, mainly the youth, presumed to be either member or sympathizers of the EPRP, an event that marked the beginning of the red terror. Later the Derg turned its wrath against the AESM when it realized that the latter's intention was no more sanguine than the EPRP.

The ethno-national movements prioritized national contradiction over and above the class contradiction and hence advocated the resolution of 'national question' before multinational class struggle was to be undertaken. The relation between these competing ethno-nationalist movements was also tintured with tactical alliances, and outright hostilities and war fueled by their idea of what self-determination entails. The Eritrean People Liberation Front, from the outset framed its struggle as an anti-colonial one and its goal the total independence of Eritrea. The Oromo Liberation Front (claiming to act on behalf of the Oromo), and later the Ogaden National Liberation Front (struggling on behalf of Ethiopian Somali mainly the Ogaden clan) and the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia (claiming to act on behalf of Oromo Muslims) also framed their struggle as a colonial one though, on occasion, they appeared to vacillate between full independence and autonomy within the framework of Multinational Ethiopia. The Tigray People Liberation Front and others representing minority groups were of the idea that they would be satisfied if Ethiopia were to be restructured to give full autonomy to its ethnic constituents.

Though all these movements, multinational and ethno-national alike, were a product of the contradictions inherent in the formation of the Ethiopian state and the subsequent processes of political centralization, cultural discrimination, and economic exploitation and marginalization, they were to a significant extent radicalized by the then dominant

ideology of Marxism. This rendered them distinctive from previous rebellion against the imperial regime. The earlier rebellion in Bale, Sidamo, Gojam, Wollo and Tigray were not inspired and guided by revolutionary ideological currents. They were rather driven by a range of local concerns related with burdensome taxes and malpractices of central appointed governors. However, the revolutionary struggles that besieged Ethiopia following the fall of the emperor in 1974 were driven by the desire to realize an idealized vision, as they are products of dissatisfaction in the existing order (Gebru, 2009). Most account of the Civil war in Ethiopia underestimate the relevance of this ideological factor in radicalizing the student movement, their subsequent polarization and conflict amongst them and between them and the regime in power.

To have a certain political vision, however, is one thing, and to build an army that is able to overthrow the incumbent and other rivals and realize this vision another. Among all the forces, the EPLF and the TPLF were the forces that successfully built the most disciplined insurgency army responsive to the political aspirations of their Fronts. This enabled the EPLF to sustain the struggle for thirty years and to ultimately succeed from Ethiopia while the TPLF was able to win successive military battles against the Derg and other battles against rival armed groups first in Tigray and later overthrew the central government. It did so by forming an umbrella coalition, called the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, EPRDF, with three other likeminded forces that were to a significant extent guided by the TPLF. After 17 years of bloodshed, EPRDF achieved full victory over the Derg regime, took power in Addis Ababa and held the responsibility of charting Ethiopia to a peaceful transition. As it is a force that finally was able to defeat the Derg and other insurgents, and thereby steer the subsequent processes of political transition, the origin, dynamics, ideologies and mobilization strategies of the TPLF insurgency and process leading to military victory is undertaken in the next chapter.

## Chapter Three

### **Insurgency in Tigray and the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF)**

The origin of the Tigray People Liberation Front is explained in terms of historical grievances and symbolism, conditions in Tigray during the period of emperor Haile Selassie, and the Derg's approach to the manifold problems of the region. An extensive discussion of these issues, is provided by Medhane (1992; 2015), Gebru (2009), Young (1996) and Aregawi (2008). Hence, the following discussion largely draws from these works. It has to be pointed out from the outset though that the conditions that give rise to the TPLF are similar to the factors driving all other not-so-successful insurgencies of the country. They all sprang from, as noted in the previous section, the autocratic imperial regime's centralization of power, expropriation and neglect of the society mainly the peasantry, cultural and social suppression, and above all the radicalization and politicization of the social forces, including but not limited to the students. These were aggravated by the regime's state driven half-hearted modernizing initiatives. The military regime did little to nothing to alleviate most of these drivers notwithstanding the initially wider acclaim given to its land distribution that faded sooner when the extraction exceeds the gain. Hence, the following is an illustration of how ethno-nationalists of Tigray manipulated the material situation to form one of the most disciplined insurgency that finally defeated the military regime.

Historically, Tigray was at the core of the Ethiopian empire; one of the world's most powerful civilizations, the Axumites, was based in Tigray. However, all these had been just history for most Tigryan who were languishing in poverty, famine and political neglect on the eve of Ethiopian revolution. Before the outbreak of the 1974 revolution, Tigray possessed almost no industry, no commercial agriculture, no mines, and only a few secondary schools. Most of the existing industries were concentrated around Addis Ababa and Asmara, and the commercial farms were concentrated in the south and the Awash valley. The Tigrayans had to move to relatively better areas such as Addis Ababa and Asmara in search of work, which gave them derogatory names that wounded their pride. This period of Tigray's marginalization was also accompanied with the political and



economic dominance of Shoan rulers. In his bid to centralize power, Emperor Haile Selassie imposed Amharic as the national language, banned Tigrigna from court, school, and administrative use, and replaced most of the local lords of Tigray by his own nominees of Shoan origin.

Tigray's petit bourgeoisie felt marginalized in terms of access to education and employment opportunities. They compared their situation with the number of schools opened during the period of Italian occupation and the preference given to Shoan Amhara. These cultural suppression, political domination and economic marginalization, though by no means unique to Tigray, were beginning to stir nationalist sentiments among the elite of Tigray to a higher extent due to Tigray's historical prominence. Schools in Tigray became center of resistance and dissidence in which discontents were expressed through protests and strikes. These emerging elites associated the problems in Tigray with the dominance of the Shoan Amhara. The Tigrayan elites' grievance against the Shaon emperors was centered on the latter's neglect of the region. Many Tigrayan elites came to believe that the neglect and marginalization of Tigray was a systematic and deliberate action by the Amhara to demonize and demoralize the Tigrayan. Thus like all nationalist movements Tigray's ethno-nationalism was inculcated by elites and historical narratives had to be reinvented if necessary.

Tigrayan students, were an active participant of the student body during which they used the opportunity afforded by University life to raise regional and national issues of concern. The students compared the situation in Tigray with the situation in other parts of Ethiopia, which they perceived to be worse in Tigray. This increased their grievance especially when it was seen in light of the historic role of Tigray as the core of the Ethiopian Empire. In 1972, Tigrayan students established the Tigray University Students Union (TUSU) with the purpose of promoting Tigrayan culture and historical pride, identifying the problems of Tigray and facilitating the formation of a Tigray Nationalist Organisation/TNO/ and later the Tigray Nation Progressive Union/TNPU/. With the demise of the Haile Selassie regime in September 1974, the TNPU was already recruiting members to leave for rural Tigray in order to start the armed struggle against the *Derg*. Tigrayan students were already pointedly determined to create their own political organisation and decided on a Tigrayan

nationalist movement separate from multinationally-oriented formations. The uncertainty generated by the overthrow of the emperor and the coming to power of the Derg triggered the formation of many armed movements among which one was the Tigrayan National Organization, which was later transformed into Tigray People Liberation Front. The TNO started its task of mobilizing the people of Tigray in earnest to embark an armed struggle from rural part of the country. The TPLF formally announced its formation in 1975. The timing of the transformation of the TNO into an insurgent force is presumed to have been affected by factors related to the weakening of the regime, the danger of being pre-empted by other organizations, the Derg's red terror campaign (Young, 1996).

### **Ideology, Organization and Mobilization**

The ideology of the TPLF as an offshoot of the Ethiopian Student Movement was rooted in Marxism-Leninism. Three central issues informed its ideology, mobilization strategies and operational modalities: the national question, democratic centralism and revolutionary democracy. The national question was introduced to the discourse on Ethiopian politics during the 1960s by the Ethiopian Student Movement. As noted earlier, the students argued that Ethiopia was a prison house of nations and nationalities and that these nations and nationalities should be granted the right to self-determination including and up to secession. The TPLF also subscribed to this ideological current and claimed that the Tigrayan nation should be granted the right to self-determination. Although the TPLF advocated independence as the only way of self-determination in manifesto-68, it later modified its position that it would be satisfied by political and cultural autonomy within a multi-ethnic Ethiopia (Aalan, 2002). Affirming the idea that secession was not the only option, the TPLF stated that '[b]eing part of a democratic multi-ethnic Ethiopia based on equality, where there are no oppressor and oppressed nations; where the rights of every nations without distinction is constitutionally and in practice safeguarded, where democracy and social justice prevail, and where the fundamental human rights of the peoples are not violated, is also acceptable to the people of Tigray' (quoted in Vaughan, 1994:9). This insistence on the pre-eminence of national contradiction and the subsequent imperative to be first organized along ethnic lines leads it on a collision course with other

organizations, and it successfully defeated all the contenders. In fact, this would seem the central issue compromise of which was never entertained.

The other guiding ideology embedded in its Leninist orientation was democratic centralism. The party considered itself a vanguard party that represents and liberates the people of Tigray. According to this Leninist principle, once the top leadership makes democratic decisions the lower level cadres need to implement it without any form of question. In this model, idea would always flow downward from the Central committee to the lower level structures and its cadres are expected to owe absolute obedience dissension of which, has fatal consequences (Aregawi, 2008; Gebru, 2009). Aregawi (2008), who had been in leadership position for several years, indicated the power monopolized by the Central Committee stating that the central committee could make any type of decisions concerning the life of the masses. At the core of this ideology was the Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray, a highly secretive party within the Front, which aimed to ideologically guide the TPLF struggle to the achievement of socialism (Tronvoll and Vaughan, 2003). Aregawi recounted that those members of the MLLT that showed even slight deviation from the party line were considered class enemies, and those comrades that posed even tough questions were accused of revisionism. Likewise, those who failed to comply were accused of empiricism or opportunism.

The third ideological pillar of the TPLF was revolutionary democracy, which was derived from the Marxist-Leninist ideology. The precept of revolutionary democracy, as formulated by the TPLF, is that after some leveling measures the peasantry would constitute a homogenous mass with similar interests and political orientations (Tronvoll and Vaughan, 2003). Under such circumstances, pluralism and its institutional underpinnings are irrelevant except for arriving at consensus. Decisions are made based on consensus to the end of which concerted effort would be exerted. As Gebru (2009) indicated the centralizing, hierarchical and order obedient nature of the organization exceeded its participatory and democratic aspects like all other Marxist-Leninist forces. Hence revolutionary democracy does not leave room to alternative parties that would come up with alternative agenda. Medhane (2015) reaffirmed this when he contended that TPLF might have had several plans for Ethiopia but political compromise with any group or entity was not one of them.

Participation at local levels meant airing opinions, decision on which was to be made by the higher party officials, a measure applauded to be quite impressive for a country that had no tradition of democratic governance.

In line with its ideological orientations and with the goal of militarily overthrowing the Derg, the TPLF employed a range of mobilization techniques and a tightly hierarchical organizational structure. Organizationally, at the top of the organizational ladder was the fighters' congress that elected the executive committee. The Executive committees in turn developed the organizational structure necessary to execute the armed struggle. The TPLF had three major committees that comprised members of the central committee: military committee, political, and socio-economic committees. These committees were structured to institute a vanguard party that aimed to control and transform the society from above. The TPLF used this organizational structure to effectively execute mobilization strategies required for the war effort. The organizational structure enabled the TPLF to reach deep into the smallest unit of social existence and enabled it to overthrow the military regime and restructure the Ethiopian state accordingly. The various sections of the society of Tigray were organized to have their own mass organization, which operates under the oversight of the TPLF in one way or the other. Operating from isolated areas in the largely marginalized northern territory of Tigray, the student-led TPLF was avowedly Marxist and committed to Maoist-like notions of protracted people's war based on the peasants. It must be stressed that unlike most African governing groups the TPLF, profoundly ideological of a Stalinist variant, came to power by a lengthy armed struggle, on the basis of peasant support, and committed to a revolutionary transformation of society. Notwithstanding this fact, the specific political character of the TPLF heavily impacted on its relations with other political/armed groups.

The people of Tigray were mobilized to associate their deprivation with Amhara dominance and to think that the removal of Amhara dominated government would alleviate their suffering. Moreover, mobilization was accompanied by promising a bright future in which the manifold problems of Tigray would be alleviated. These promises were rendered credible by opening clinics and schools in remote villages during the period of insurgency. Moreover, the TPLF avoided lawlessness and eliminated banditry that was

rampant in the region. All these indicate the level of organizational effectiveness of the TPLF. It not only waged guerilla and conventional war against the Derg but also undertook development initiatives to secure the support of the peasant population. However, those individuals that were reluctant to support the Front or showed sympathy to either the government or other fronts were ostracized, coerced and on occasion even murdered (Gebru, 2009)

### **Path to Power and Paradigm Shift in State Building**

Since the mid-1980s the military balance began to shift towards rebels operating in the Northern part of the country. Bedeviled by numerous crises including an impending loss of global ally, the military regime was forced to entertain defeat. Consequently, the Derg opened itself for negotiation with the rebels and a number of negotiations that were facilitated by external powers were attempted. One of the negotiation efforts in this regard was the 1989 negotiation attempt between the Derg and the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front. The main negotiator, Jimmy Carter, was later replaced by Herman Cohen and the negotiation was extended to the TPLF because of the latter's success in controlling the whole of Tigray and beyond. However, none of these efforts bore fruit as they were not entered into with a good faith. Parallel to these negotiation efforts with the Derg, the TPLF was forging alliance with existing movements and organizing new ones. The TPLF forged alliance only with forces that would not fundamentally jeopardize its strategic and ideological goal of remaining a hegemonic actor in the politics of the country. Consequently, the alliance was essentially achieved through the replication of the ideology, organizational structure, and operational modalities of the TPLF (Aregawi, 2008).

The TPLF facilitated the formation of the Ethiopian People Democratic Movement (EPDM) by providing it all the necessary material, political and diplomatic support (Aregawi, 2008). The EPDM, in return, promoted the propaganda and ideology of the TPLF, and copied the organizational structure and operational modalities of the former. It established its own Ethiopian People Marxist-Leninists Force that aimed to achieve objectives similar to the Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray. The two Fronts formed the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, the EPDM being a junior partner and being largely

dependent on the TPLF to administer occupied territories. In 1990 the EPRDF widened its coalition by organizing the Oromo People (OPDO) Democratic Organization from the prisoners of war. Thus, with the nominal participation of the EPDM (later transformed into the Amhara National Democratic Movement), and OPDO the TPLF triumphantly concluded the war with the Derg on 28 May 1991. After this, power sharing was attempted during the initial transition period, but it failed and the TPLF-led Ethiopian Revolutionary Democratic Front/EPRDF/ has since ruled alone. The bearing of this on the ensuing peace and state building terrain is enormous. Equally remarkable, the nature of the historical narrative, largely if not exclusively fitted to the TPLF, has become the basis for the new political system.

## **Chapter Four**

### **The Transition And The Making Of A New Political Order**

#### **The transition process**

A century ago Emperor Minilike II of Shoa concurred and imposed the political, socio-economic order of the Abyssinians on concurred people that, as we saw, strengthened state but also, at the same time, generated its own contradictions. We noted there that three issues have dominated the landscape of state building and peace building in Ethiopia right from its formation as a 'modern' state. First, issues related to the extractive, controlling nature of the state and measures of modernization bolstering this; modernization or any instrumentality used to bring about it that challenges this is unacceptable. Second, the issue of identity, mainly ethnic identity, which inevitably was connected to the manner of the formation of the Ethiopian state has been an issue of central concern begetting the national movements. This part of collective identity might have been over-inflated by the radicalized intelligentsia. From the perspective of the masses, however, economic conditions and the state's role in extraction and or improving the produce of agriculture was much more important, and it should be noted no revolution or for that matter civil war achieved its goal without the support of the peasantry. Finally, connected with the points introduced above is the issue of decentralized democratic governance and respect for the basic rights of the citizens. The success or otherwise of the transitional process need to be assessed to the extent these issues are confronted frontally and addressed directly. Hence, the coming discussion of the transition process and the subsequent political and social (dis)order has to be assessed along these lines. Our inquiry begins with a discussion of the manner the transition was navigated and a new constitutional dispensation molded, meaning that the procedure followed and the substantive issues enshrined in the (pseudo) settlement. We have to also state our assumption that these issues are tackled, as most other authoritarian political actors facing difficult decisions do, only to the extent they do not endanger the hegemony of the insurgent-turned government, the reasons for which are both ideological (dominant party is needed to realize the goals of revolutionary democracy) and the "sweets" that power generate.

Literature on post-transition and post-civil war political orders revealed that victory based transitions are said to be distinct from negotiated ones in their nature and consequences (Toft, 2010; Walter, 2004, Mason, 2007). The Ethiopia transition processes seems to reveal that whether a transition is negotiated or victory-based might be less important than the particular nature of the party that achieved victory. This is to say that the specific features relating to the winning party's ideology, membership discipline, organizational effectiveness, leadership qualities, ethnic base, and political ambition determine the nature of transition and the subsequent processes of (re)structuring state and society. Since the contending political forces that grew out of the Ethiopian student movement were consumed by internal rivalry from the outset of the revolutionary war, there was no major rival to give input to, and shape the nature of, the transition in the country once the Derg regime was overthrown by the TPLF and its Surrogate, the EPRDF. The EPLF, the Front that would be a major rival, was earlier convinced itself and gained the active support of the TPLF, to establish its own independent state of Eritrea. Hence, the TPLF/EPRDF charted the transition and identified and pursued issues and policies, its leaders thought, would entrench their hegemony, bring stability and attain *ethno-people* (the people in EPRDF's usage mostly refers to the ethnic groups qua groups, which are also vested with sovereign power not the individual as a member of the state) legitimacy---goals that are not always compatible. And whenever contradictions in goals arise the logic of political survival and hegemony takes precedent over other options and its own policies are implemented and principles adhered to, to the extent they do not seriously undermine the regime's hegemony and grip on power. This is invariably reflected in the actors involved or rather graciously invited to take part in shaping the transition process, the issues raised to be handled, the strategy deployed, and institutions crafted and the manner they are adopted and implemented or fail to be implemented.

First then who is in and who is out, with what consequence and for whom? Before the EPRDF/TPLF controlled Addis Ababa a conference was held in London in 1991 that the government's representatives and various nationalist forces participated in. The government's negotiator withdrew from the process as it was losing power. The liberation forces that participated in the conference were the EPRDF, EPLF and the OLF. The OLF was



invited though it did not take part in the discussion over substantive issues. With the facilitation of the US, the fronts agreed that the EPRDF would establish two months provisional government and would prepare an inclusive transitional conference that would lead to the organization of the transitional government of Ethiopia. Though the OLF participated in the conference willingly, the leadership later claimed that it was hard-pressed to participate in the transition process. It was assured by the United States that it would exert pressure on EPRDF to democratize the Ethiopian state (Markakis, 2011). Following the conference, the OLF and EPRDF prepared the draft transitional charter, which, it was noted, was not radically different from what the EPRDF had prepared earlier (Vaughan, 1994). Once the draft was finalized, the EPRDF discussed the document with organizations that were invited and willing to participate in the conference. Discussion was undertaken with most organizations though those who represented the university claimed that they had no idea of even the existence of a charter (ibid.).

In 1991, the transitional conference, the overwhelming participants of which were ethnic groups, adopted a charter that granted ethnic groups the right for self-determination including and up to secession with minimal reflection (Markakis, 2011). This is in a stark break with the past and in line with the TPLF's ideology, which was to be realized under a federal system that structured the country along ethno-linguistic lines. The issue of ethnic self-determination has been one of the most sensitive issues that divided the student body and later led to armed conflict among them during the 70s, and it still has been a central one. This also informed the selection of participants to the conference. The EPRDF selectively invited groups it deemed to have little political effect and deliberately excluded those established political parties that would challenge its hegemony on the pretext that they were 'warmongers and chauvinists' (Kassahun, 2003). These parties include the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Party, the All Ethiopian Socialist Movement (*Meison* in Amharic) and the Coalition of Ethiopian Democratic Forces (Kassahun, 1994). The transitional charter was already prepared before the conference by the EPRDF and to a lesser extent by the OLF and serious discussion on some issues was not held due to the fact that EPRDF discouraged such a move. Challenging the right to self-determination of the various nationalities was tantamount to challenging the core of the transition and

hence parties were warned either to leave the conference or accept such a provision (Vaughan, 1994). Thus, the process was essentially exclusionary both in procedure and content of those pro-Ethiopia forces vying for greater unity and who oppose the secession of Eritrea and the land-lockedness arising from this. These forces to a large extent represent the view of the Amhara elites and its Amharized counterpart.

Outside these forces the conference spearheaded by EPRDF was arguably fairly representative of various shades of opinion and organizations: there were some from the university, some organizations outside the country and many others within the country. The various ethnic based political movements that mushroomed to take advantage of the self-determination rights and the EPRDF had the common agenda of dismantling the ideological and institutional basis of the Ethiopian state and its historical legacy of centralization, and the EPRDF had the added interest of giving the process a semblance of legitimacy and inclusiveness. Hence, they both enthusiastically engaged in the common agenda of deconstructing the centralized state by granting ethnic groups the right to self-determination including secession, a measure which ultimately gave the process the appearance of inclusiveness and a democratic character (Aklilu, 2006). This, however, were to be dissipated once that agenda of deconstructing the centralized state was over and electoral contests were to be begin, the political consequence of which would be uncertain had the EPRDF stuck to its ideals. This is clearly reflected in the manner, one of the relatively powerful ethnic movements representing the Oromo, the OLF, was driven out of the process. The OLF had played an important but secondary role in the Addis Ababa conference, and being a party to the London conference, was given the next largest group of seats in the Council of People's Representatives after the EPRDF, and promised that its forces would be integrated with those of the national army.

The critical choice facing the TPLF-led EPRDF was therefore whether to accept the OLF as a partner in the new nationality-based political structure, or whether to construct another Oromo party, closely linked to the EPRDF, which would compete with the OLF to represent the Oromia region. Fatefully, it opted for the second course. This was the major political failure of the EPRDF in managing the transition. At the end of 1991 and early 1992, regional power struggles escalated into intense conflicts, predominantly in the Oromiya

and Ethio-Somali National Regional States where the armed wings of the respective regional political movements clashed both with each other and with the forces of the EPRDF. The OLF in particular had grown increasingly disenchanted with the TPLF's domination of the transitional government, seriously doubted the Front's commitment to the right of nation as to secede from the Ethiopian Federation, and after alleging intimidation and other irregularities in the elections, it withdrew from the government and launched a failed insurrection.

The political differences between OLF and the EPRDF were minimal and that they revolved mainly around the sharing of power in an ethnically-structured political system. And yet the eventual clampdown on OLF, in which around 20,000 combatants were captured against minimal army losses, closed the possibility of power-sharing in the post-1991 Ethiopia. The OLF would eventually be squeezed out of the transitional government but its powerful narrative remained among many Oromos who identify with the group. This could be considered as the single most important failure of the TPLF in setting state and peace building process in Ethiopia on a new basis. Once the two major political elites in Ethiopia, the Amhara and the pro-OLF Oromos and the narratives they represent were out of the political process the remaining course for the EPRDF was to continue consolidating its power and implement the political formula it had propagated. In particular, the inability to incorporate the OLF into mainstream Ethiopian political life would turn to be fatal. The OLF itself had serious organizational and political problems, including radical views, which could have fatally wounded the group in the face of normal politics and democratic dispensation. All that we can say with some certainty is that so long as the OLF is excluded, the Oromos will constitute a major alienated section of the population, centrally placed within the country, with a very high potential for serious conflict. Herein lie the pitfalls for peace building.

Thus, in its bid to control political power unchallenged by opposition forces, the EPRDF subtly and steadily de-emphasized its democracy building agenda, and a subtle process of recentralization and de-democratization was set in motion. While the government has continually limited the possibility for open competition, the opposition boycotted many of the elections with the goal of delegitimizing the government. The process resulted in the

steady consolidation of the government and the persistent exclusion of the opposition. In the June 1992 election, the opposition boycotted the election alleging that their members were being harassed, intimidated and their office closed. And in December 1994 the TPLF/EPRDF-led government approved a constitution, which led to the creation of a federal state of ten regions. The constitution vested sovereign power in the nations and nationalities of Ethiopia and entitled them the right to secede if they so wish. Those that do not yet have their own regional state are granted the right to form their own region and they are granted a full measure of self-administration, cultural and historical preservation, and determination of their own language of administration. This paved the way for national elections in May 1995 that in the absence of major opposition parties, produced a massive victory for the TPLF and its allies, and on 24 August the country was formally proclaimed the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia/FDRE. Upon assuming power the TPLF/EPRDF embarked on the demanding task of restructuring the Ethiopian state. Attempts by generations of rulers of Ethiopia to centralize the state were reversed in 1991, with the coming to power of the TPLF-led Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front/EPRDF, which facilitated the independence of Eritrea, and has pursued an innovative and bold experiment of transferring authority to ethnic based regional administrations. The EPRDF's great experiment wholly designed by the TPLF in giving legitimacy to ethnic nationalism, which has brought decades of war to Ethiopia together with the formation of ethnic based regional administration inevitably ensured its dominance.

## Chapter Five

### The state of state building and peace building in post-transition Ethiopia

#### Legitimizing and territorializing ethnic nationalism

Ethnic nationalism or rather the perception of cultural discrimination, and domination and marginalization along ethnic lines and hence the desire to uproot that through establishing some sort of self-governance by the identity group has been the driver of the insurgencies in revolutionary Ethiopia. The new force that overthrew the regime itself is not only an ethno-nationalist force that desired to have autonomous governance in its home region, but also aims to restructure Ethiopia along that line assuming a one-to-one correspondence between ethnic identity and geography. Whenever, the two are not congruent and whenever awareness of such identity is minimal, it has to be manufactured through the incentive structure the new constitutional dispensation created and, at times, the decisions of state officials in their act of delineating group boundaries both cultural and geographical. The federal restructuring was primarily designed along ethno-linguistic lines and those ethnic groups were given a range of rights pertaining to self-administration, cultural rights, establishment of their own regions or special districts, if their number does not warrant so, and the full measure of self-governance. This, it is indicated, is done with the goal of laying the foundation for a peaceful social and political order in a country that has been besieged by complex, overlapping and protracted civil wars. The then president of the transitional government clearly indicated this goal when he said “A feudal monarchy and a repressive dictator couldn’t hold Ethiopia together. Now we are trying another way. If Ethiopia breaks apart then it wasn’t meant to be” (TIME 1991). In another interview much later he reaffirmed this point that “From a purely legal point of view, what we were trying to do was to stop the war, and start a process of peaceful competition... The key cause of the war all over the country was the issue of nationalities. Any solution that did not address them did not address the issue of peace and war” (The Financial Times 2005). Since then the political landscape has been dominated by ethnic based parties and only with a few of multinational parties that are often labeled ‘nostalgic of the feudal order’. Thus in their effort to lay institutional structures that reduce ethnic tensions, the Ethiopian social

engineer underestimated the fact that ethnicity is as much fluid, malleable, context dependent and negotiable as it appears to be hard wired in an immutable ethnic tradition or even genetic makeup of people. Being ethno-nationalist themselves, facing the full brunt of unmediated assimilation policy, and paying dearly in the name of an ethnic group, thinking otherwise perhaps could be a self-contradiction in terms.

The parties that subsequently emerged reflect this ethnic dynamics. They constituted the EPRDF, a coalition of Four ethnic based parties or/front representing the four major regional states, EPRDF affiliated parties representing the other regions, and the opposition parties. Only a handful of multi-ethnic parties operate across the major region, which partly reflects the ethnicization of politics and at the same time sustains this very process. The formation of EPRDF began when the TPLF was thinking of operating outside its ethnic base. The Front carefully weighted the desire for hegemony and the need to work with other parties, and inculcated alliance with weaker parties fighting the Derg and organized others where there has been none. Thus, instead of working with the EPRP with whom it had a bitter war, it chose the EPDM, which later ethnicized itself to become the Amhara National Democratic Movement, and, instead of developing alliance with the OLF, it organized the Oromo People's Democratic Front. In this way it won political control of the core of Ethiopia's federal system, namely the four key regions of Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, and SNNPRS. In the peripheral regions lying outside this core area, it facilitated the establishment of political organizations, which have become allies rather than members of the Front. Thus in the regions of Afar, Somali, Harar, Benishangul-Gumuz and Gambella, the governing parties are non-member affiliated organizations to the EPRDF-umbrella. EPRDF might have chosen this arrangement also for reasons that have to do with its class approach to political orientations. The undeclared political inclination of the EPRDF is that its approach to identifying supporters is based on economic class stratifications, considering itself a favorite party to the poor and farmers. The five regions listed above are considered to be class-flat societies where modern economic class differentiation is yet to happen; hence EPRDF chose to impact those regions and societies through its ally parties rather than through direct administration.

The majority of opposition parties legally operating in Ethiopia are regional parties, confined to rally for support within one ethnic group only. Thus, only a handful of registered opposition parties may have the potential to play a role influencing existing power relations at the national level. Southern Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Coalition (SEPDC) (chairman Dr Beyene Petros) is a multi-ethnic coalition, composed of a dozen smaller ethnic parties from the Southern region. The party was a strong competitor for EPRDF in the 2000 and 2001 elections during which it won a number of seats. The All Amhara People's Organisation (AAPO) has its main support base in the regional towns of Amhara region and in Addis Ababa, with offices in Gondar and several other towns of Amhara. The Oromo Federal Congress (OFC) was established by Addis Ababa University professor Merera Gudina (current chairman) as yet another Oromo alternative, between OPDO and OLF. Both SEPDC and OFC together with many other ethnicity based political organizations formed a common coalition umbrella known for short "Forum". There are also a few other nationwide registered and active parties such as the Ethiopian Democratic Party (EDP) and the Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ). Altogether, the National Board for Ethiopian Elections has registered and recognized 50-65 parties as legally operating, though the capacity of each varies significantly.

The differences in political programs and interests between the EPRDF and the opposition parties center on two issues: land, and ethnic federalism. Some of the opposition parties criticize EPRDF's ethnic based federal model, and are arguing for either a modified geographical federal system, or a unitary state model. Most object to the EPRDF policy on land, which disallows private ownership, and call for one form or another of land privatization. With this stand they have earned the approval of much of the international community. The opposition parties are very weak in terms of organizational capacity, numbers of members and outreach (particularly amongst the rural peasantry), and material and human resources. Consequently, their prospects as individual parties are weak and with little chance of forming durable coalition. Hence, the political party structure in Ethiopia is characterized by the extreme asymmetry between the power of the ruling parties, and the weakness of the opposition parties.

This being the case, the question is whether such an arrangement addresses and the extent it would address the challenge of ethno-nationalism, an issue that has been the driver of civil war in 20<sup>th</sup> century Ethiopia. The debate is still not settled as to the normative value of such an arrangement even after well over two decades. On the one hand, a not-so-insignificant number of analysts and political actors argue that the constitutional dispensation nourishes ethno-nationalism that is inherently expansionist, exclusionary and separatist. On the other hand, many argue that the arrangement has not been implemented unfailingly and hence viewed it as a divide and rule device than aiming to ensure genuine autonomy and self-governance. Empirical works indicate that apart from the granting of cultural autonomy and a modicum of self-government, the ethnic based federal arrangement has not fared well in many areas as the architect hoped for (Assefa, 2012, Abbink, 2011). It not only nourished ethno-nationalism but also reified an otherwise malleable identity marker and generated a new wave of ethnic self-consciousness that often caused or accentuated already existing conflicts and led to the displacement of groups that live outside their home region. These new conflicts are related to identity, resources, administrative delineation as well problems of definition and self-definition at the local and regional level. Where a boundary has to be fixed, this is rightly seen as giving rights of permanent possession to the group that succeeds in establishing its claim to a given area, and this has become a prize worth fighting for, a historically unparalleled spectacle.

Hence, twenty five years now since the new ethnic federal system has been in practice, low level sporadic ethnic tensions continued here and there, and the continuation of some unsettled old liberation movements continue to exist, new narrow identity based questions are observed popping up a few times. On the other hand, the secessionist questions that were at high visibility prior 1991 seem to have rescinded contrary to the fear commonly sensed with the introduction of the new system. The fear of disintegration appears to be withering away as time goes. But the fear of failure on harmonization and integration appears to grow with more visibility of ethnic-identity based assertions and pushbacks. A good example is the current violent disturbances still lingering in many parts of the Oromia region invoking protection of the Oromo interest from excesses of the federal government and challenging the inadequate delivery of the Oromia regional government. While these



may not endanger central authority, most local conflicts in the Horn are interwoven with national contradictions and hence their insecurity potential need not be underestimated. In fact, for some opposition leaders these trends are harbinger of the worst that could happen when and if the tight and centralized party structure begin to unravel. That said, some of these predicaments obviously are manifestation of the lack of democratic governance and respect for basic human rights than reflecting the flaws of the system, which directly lead us to the discussion of the (de)democratization process and the dispersion of power both vertically—federal-regional-district-kebele—and horizontally among the three organs of government.

### **Democratization and Decentralization**

The centralization of power and the denial of basic rights has been the hallmark of both the imperial and military regimes which has been inextricably linked with other factors to drive the complex civil wars and armed insurgencies that afflicted the nation for much of its modern history. Hence, the extent the post-1991 restructuring ensured the protection of basic rights and the level of autonomy lower level governance are granted or rather achieved could be taken as indicative of the extent aspects of state and peace building has fared in the country. The discussion of democratization in Ethiopia would have to confront the complex interplay between the regimes desire for hegemony, its ideological orientation that generated a different notion of what democracy entails, and the authoritarian culture of the nation and the poor socio-economic bases for democracy. While success and failure in the democratization process could largely be the making and unmaking of the contending political actors, and in this case mainly the ruling party, these other structural and cultural factors need not be underestimated. And similarly the level of decentralization is equally linked to the history, nature and ideology of the regime in power and the desire of actors at the local level demanding decentralization. These all again brings to the fore the linkage between the state and the party, which, as we saw in chapter two, were fused together in the previous regime, the party being supreme over the government for all intents and purposes and hence a fruitful analysis of the issue, begins here.

The EPRDF as a front of four parties is more monolithic than the unified workers party of Ethiopia. The Front at the national level has a council and Central committees that involves making policies in areas assigned to the federal government which regional governments are required to adhere to (Kassahun, 2012). And it should be noted that the constitution gives the power to make broad policies and develop national standards on socio-economic issues to the federal government, major areas that affect the lives of citizens and that requires tailoring according to the specific circumstances of the regions. Once EPRDF's council and its respective committee makes policy decision it will be forwarded to the Council of minister almost all members of which are either member of the EPRDF or its affiliate parties. The council approves the policy measures and forwards it to the House of people Representative for discussion, a house that is controlled by the EPRDF as all but few members are members of the Front. A similar procedure is followed at the regional and local levels that have a more or less similar three branches of government. Adhering to its Marxist-Leninist past the Front subscribes the principles of democratic centralism meaning that the party's council and committees make decision based on consensus and in the absence of that based on the principle of majority votes. Once a decision is arrived in this way all member parties need to be strictly abided by it and implement it. Hence, though regional governments are give a broad range of power with regard to matters of regional and local importance, it is taken by the party's principle of democratic centralism requiring the lower level party structure to adhere to the higher level (Aalen, 2002). Consequently, there has been little dynamism and diversity in regional governments policy making; the usual trend being adopting policy priorities and sectoral directions developed at the center to the regional level (Paulos, 2007). Evaluation based on loyalty, rampant central government intervention, hidden patron-client networks all undermine formal efforts of decentralization (ibid.)

The matter would have been different had the national and regional parliaments been occupied by different political parties and had there been well-established countervailing forces in the civil society. This, regrettably, is not the case as the Front subtly but consistently eroded its democratic commitment and weakened opposing forces it perceived to erode its dominance of the political sphere. This desire for hegemony is made

clear at the outset of the transition during which an inside document prepared for training its members, which was eventually published in the Ethiopian Register in 1996, boldly stated that

We can attain our objectives and goals only if revolutionary democracy becomes the governing outlook in society, and only if by winning elections successively and holding power without let up can we securely establish the hegemony of revolutionary democracy. If we lose elections even once, we will encounter a great danger. So, in order to permanently establish this hegemony, we should win in the initial elections and then create a conducive situation that will ensure the establishment of this hegemony. In the subsequent elections, too, we should be able to win without interruption (pp.20-29).

This was to materialize in the idea of the dominant party that continuously stays in power to sustain the economic achievement and transform the structure of the country's economy. Hence, it is not uncommon to hear top party officials referring to their party as a dominant party that pursues a revolutionary, democratic and developmental ideology. The opposition, however, portrays the party as neither revolutionary, nor democratic, nor developmental, and nothing else but typically a party of a dictatorial system.

In the regime's more than two decades of existence, there has been no election that is accepted to be free and fair by international observers except the 2005's pre-election process during which the fronts opened the space for free competition probably confident that it would win it in the face of weakly organized and non-programmatic political parties (Leyon, 2010; Lefort, 2012). To its surprise, the opposition used the space to quickly organize, form a coalition, and disseminate their programme and run election campaigns aggressively. The turn out on the election day was reported to be the highest in record. However, what happened afterwards is controversial as each side was involved in allegations of electoral fraud. International observers, both the European Union delegates and those from Carter Foundation, opined that the election fell short of international standards. According to official results declared by the National Election Board, EPRDF was

defeated in the capital city and elsewhere in some key cities by CUD and UEDF, while overall winning enough seats required for forming a government. The opposition parties rejected the official results claiming they could be winners if the election were not rigged. They accused the Election Board of being partisan and refused to go to the courts alleging that the ruling party controlled the courts. Instead, they called for public action and disobedience in the streets of Addis Ababa, the capital, causing the police and security agencies to panic. That led to a series of violent clashes between supporters of the opposition and the law enforcement agencies that claimed 193 lives including 7 policemen (Commission Report 2008).

The government jailed senior CUD leaders for nearly two years on the accusation that they were trying to change the constitutional order by unconstitutional means after which they were pardoned and freed. The crisis and the subsequent developments tarnished the image of the country's leadership. Once admired as a progressive leader, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's name was becoming associated with brutal repression and heavy handedness. Following the crisis, while the EPRDF tightened the political space, one of the leaders of the CUD organized an armed movement that aimed to violently overthrow the regime, yet another addition to the list of armed groups. Dr. Birhanu Nega, a professor who ran in the national election of Ethiopia in 2005 and who eventually was intended/elected to become the mayor of Addis Ababa, organized an armed movement from exile known as *Ginbot7* in 2008 which was later merged with an already existing armed movement called *Ethiopian People Patriotic Front* and formed *Ginbot7 Patriotic Front*, in short *G7PF*. *G7PF* is financed, trained and armed with the help of a neighboring country Eritrea, Ethiopia's arch enemy, and enjoys a huge political and logistical support from their Diaspora constituencies.

The ruling party also tightened the political space and the subsequent national elections were less and less competitive and less open. Measures directed against the media, civil societies, political parties and legislation that presumably aimed at countering terrorism all contributed, in no small measure, to curtail the political space in the country (Tronvoll, 2010). Moreover, the massive party recruitment campaign (it has expanded its membership from about 500,000 in 2005 to 7 million in 2011) deploying incentives and threats when necessary, denied the opposition their support base that challenged the

regime in the 2005 election. Also local level structures like Mengistawe Budin (government Group) and Limtawi Budn (Development Group) ensured tight control over and everyday monitoring of any suspicious activity. And when and if all these failed to bring the desired outcome the party intimidated, harassed and even prosecuted individuals presumed to harbor the opposition agenda. The yearly human rights report of the US state department, the freedom house rating as well as the reports by human rights organizations and think tanks like Amnesty International (2014) Human Rights Watch (2010) and Oakland Institute (2011) all document flagrant violation of basic rights especially against those dissidents and members of political parties that are perceived to have sympathy for the opposition. Thus, Ethiopia had been on a fledgling move towards democratization from 1991 to 2005 from which onwards, it was a course of reversal and de-democratization phase eroding some of the gains registered earlier. Until 2005 the party was navigating the political terrain of the country by situating itself in the middle of the political spectrum and portraying some of the opposition as narrow ethno-nationalist and others as national chauvinists (Gebru Asrat 2014, 412). Since then there has been a shift in the party's legitimizing discourse from democracy and respect for ethnic rights to the achievement of fast, sustained and broad based economic growth and this leads us to interrogate the political economy of state and peace (un) building.

### **The Economic dimension of state-society interactions**

The relation between society, mainly the peasantry, and the state was characterized by resource expropriation, state neglect and marginalization throughout the modern history of Ethiopia. Hence, the distinctive feature of state institutions pertaining to their relation with the peasantry had been their extractive character. This has been the driving factor of localized peasant rebellion as well as the long held revolutionary insurgencies. With the overthrow of the military regime in 1991, the EPRDF engaged in the task of restructuring the Ethiopian economy. Though the party had been espousing Marxism-Leninism before it overthrew the regime, the international circumstance following the fall of Soviet Union necessitated ideological reorientation and restructuring the economy along the capitalist lines. Accordingly, the regime pursued a cautious process of deregulation and privatization in the backdrop of an utterly failed, war shattered socialist economy. Resisting the pressure

from International Financial Institutions, the regime chose a gradual process of liberalization including privatization, tariff reduction, devaluation, and the state retained control over sectors it considered to be too sensitive and premature to be left for the market or foreign investors. These range from the telecommunication sector, the aviation industry, to the power sector. Eventually, even sectors left for private capitalists would be dominated by party owned endowments, party affiliated individuals which the front justifies by the fact that these are democratic forces that would advance the causes of revolutionary democracy (EPRDF, 2006). In a manner reminiscent of its ideological past, the EPRDF at the outset indicated that the economic arena would not be dominated by the logic of the market forces. A party document prepared for its members alluded earlier indicated that the political and economic policymaking will be dominated by the goals of revolutionary democracy. The primary concern, in the economic arena, therefore, would be commitment for the oppressed mainly referring to the peasantry with a focus on improving livelihood of smallholder farmers through modern input. which eventually serves as a springboard for industrialization. This policy is dubbed Agriculture Development Lead Industrialization Programme, ADLI.

Since then the regime has been pursuing state-led developmentalism, which, as critics argued, is inherently anti-democratic (Desalegn, 2014). To this end, and especially since 2005, a complex set of institutional infrastructures that are fairly efficient but exclusionary has been set that are hoped to increase growth, reduce poverty and garner legitimacy from, and implicitly extend state control over, society. The most recent of which includes the establishment of the Agricultural Transformation Agency, the Ethiopian Commodity Exchange, and a series of new federal cluster ministerial portfolios in the rank of deputy prime ministers, a number of these of which have been replicated at regional and local levels. According to the regime's model of development, the state acts as an agent of development by channeling resources to sectors and actors presumed to have high productivity. In the agricultural sector, it provides input like fertilizer and improved seeds, grants credit through the micro-credit institutions it control, and designs extension packages to be utilized by the peasantry.

This development model is formulated and recently further refined in opposition to the neo-liberal ideology that advocated a greater role for market forces as compared with the state. The party claimed that neoliberalism generates pervasive rent seeking forces that thrive through rent collection than value creation, and any force that advocates this model is to be relegated as rent seeker (EPRDF, 2006). Accordingly, the opposition which subscribe to such an ideology, are rent seekers and by extension anti-democratic. Hence, economic policies that bolster them or their constituency present a danger not only to the regime but also foreclose the chance for democratization of the country and thus the social forces that possibly support them needs to be weakened. One option for this is dominating key and profitable economic sectors by the state, the party or other private actors that have close alliance with the party (EPRDF, 1992; Abbink and Hagmann, 2011 ). Whether this dogmatic stance is genuinely believed by the party or just a camouflage to maintain power, is open to debate and hard to conclusively ascertain or repudiate. Critics often argue that this amounts to no more than a crude desire to stay in power (Batch, 2011), whereas others emphasizes the deeply ideological nature of the Front both in origin and development (Medhane, 2015).

Although until the early 2000s growth had been rather slow and sluggish, since 2003 there has been a robust and rapid growth accompanied with substantial reduction of poverty that has dropped from 38.7% in 2004/2005 to 29.6% in 2010/2011 (WB, 2012, 2013; ADB, 2010; IMF, 2010; Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, 2012). This reduction in poverty level is achieved in all regions of the country, which is also accompanied with a substantial investment in and expansion of education and health services. The government's pursuit of pro-poor policy by expanding infrastructure, boosting agriculture and food security programmes, increasing urban development effort, and expansion in health and education services, and facilitating private sector expansion is singled out as the main reason for this. This being the case, Ethiopia is still one of the poorest countries in the world and the gains achieved so far are by no means irreversible. A study forecasted that if the drought of the 2000 proportion to occurred poverty would increase from its current level to 51% indicating that a large number of people are still dependent on the vagaries of nature (WB, 2014).

The WB research also indicates that while the incidence of poverty has been declining, the severity has actually increased for the 2005/2011 period. Between 1996 and 2000 the gain from the slow growth was skewed in favour of the bottom 10%, and the next 5 years there has been pronounced increase in the gain from growth for all groups the bottom 10% still gaining higher than any other group. In the 2005-2011 year the trend was reversed as the annual growth rate of the bottom 10% declined by 1.9% whereas the top 60% grew by 1.1% (ibid.). Another apparent trend is that in spite of the growth figure recorded more than half of the people think that their condition got worsened than what it was the previous year when compared with the proportion of people that thought so in the year 2000. On the fiscal side of it, though government taxes and spending are progressive in the main, however, the balance sheet is such that people get impoverished as a result of fiscal policy. The aforementioned study indicated that 'fiscal policy impoverishes 25% of households, when considering disposable income, and 9% of households, when considering final income' (p.82). The former includes the net after direct tax and direct benefits are considered, whereas the latter entails the net after all taxes and all benefits are subtracted and added. Hence, the Ethiopian state does not completely eschew its extractive dimension and the poor, it seems, pays more than what they get when it is calculated in proportion to the share of their income. All monthly income above 150 birr or 1800 birr per year is taxable whereas the poverty line below which people are considered to be absolutely poor is 3781 birr; hence, the state taxes, and does so to a higher proportion, even those who are absolutely poor.

Thus far, the government is able and willing to devise policies that generate growth, reduce poverty, enhance human development and craft institutions capable of bringing these outcomes and this sets the macro-context within which a specific state-society interaction unfolds in a specific locale, which we expect and studies also assert (Dom, 2011), is variegated and complex characterized by state coercion, cooption, education, cooperation, resistance, subversion and at time outright violence. At the local level the agents of the state are development agents, health extension workers, teachers, Kebele administrators. And the issues that connect them with the peasant includes compulsory community work; utilization of government development packages consisting input such as fertilizers,



improved seeds, inbred livestock; health, nutritional and hygienic measures including use of latrines, family planning and safe delivery measures; meetings to educate and mobilize about government programmes; and borrowing from micro-credit institutions. The interactions between the agents of the state and the local population, complex as they could be, are mediated by a number of factors, underpinning principles and attitudinal orientations.

First, the government's theoretical emphasis on democracy and popular participation aside, the overriding nature of policymaking and implementation in Ethiopia is top-down. The state's personnel at the local level are out there to implement state policies and fulfill targets and quotas determined by the authorities higher up to whom local agents are accountable and in whose hand their future prospect is situated. This is pursued even when the local state actors understand that the measure being taken is not working. Interestingly, the people at the grassroots level understand that these local agents are not real decision makers and are not likely to transmit their desires and fears to higher authorities (Dom, 2011). At times, figures are fabricated to fulfill target on the basis of which the next target is set and decisions made. This basic top-down feature is apparent from regions as varied as Amhara (Teferi, 2012), Tigray (Laver, 2013), Souther nationalities (Dom, 2011), and Oromia (Chinigò, 2014).

Second, at the local level, as they are at the national level, the state and the party are fused together, and in the face of the peasantry there is not any difference in the various actors engaged at the local level. They all are perceived to be government agents, which in their view is one and the same with the party. In this situation it is not unusual for government officials to use state services to punish political opponents or favour political allies. In fact, the tendency is that local officials tend to see those who accept their development packages as political allies and those who oppose it, which is unlikely in most circumstances for reasons discussed elsewhere (Lefort, 2007), as opponents even if they have valid reason for doing so (Teferi, 2012). This is underpinned by the regime at the center's framing of the opposition as rent seeker and the political economy structure they advocate as a structure of rent seeking (EPRDF, 2006), and by extension and as others observed, local level actors view of those outside them as all rent seekers that are out there to enrich themselves

(ibid.). The allegation in the human right circle that government is using development intervention including the donor provided one to entrench control and underwrite repression is rife (Human Rights Watch, 2010). The safety net programme introduced the poorest households from economic shocks is provided only for those that are ready to implement the governments development packages (Lavers, 2013)

Third, this state-peasant interaction has evolved, mainly influenced by the 2005 election, an election that shook and shocked the party forcing it to introduce varieties of measures that narrowed the political space and changed the regime's legitimizing ideology. Since then there has been a shift in reliance from the whole of the peasantry to those so-called model farmers. Before that period the regime was convinced that the peasantry would elect it for all what it had done for them since it came to power in 1991. However, in 2005 election the party realized, to its surprise, that even in rural areas its support base was rather shaky, a state of affairs to which the rural opinion leaders, often having connection with previous regime, are held responsible (Lefort, 2012). Thus in the post-election years the regime became pre-occupied with expanding its membership in the rural areas of which this involves massive recruitment of those individuals assumed to be opinion makers using various incentives, and that not working threatened denial of services including land and arrest (ibid.). Though theoretically model farmers are supposed to be those that are exemplary in their achievements, in actuality they are the ones who are able and most willing to implement the variety of government initiatives. These farmers along with development agents engage in a range of party activities.

The result of all these processes is bringing the state physically closer to the people (and some communities do not like this) and the expansion and institutionalization of its apparatus of social control and societal re-engineering. There has been an immense expansion of what Michael Mann called the infrastructural power of the state (Mann, 1984) in the last twenty years, the state's reach being wider and its control pervasive. This, however, does not always have positive development outcomes and at times it even proved harmful for the society in general and the peasantry in particular. The use of fertilizer, for example, was encouraged even at time forced on the peasants though a study recently indicated that it is productive and beneficial only when there is good weather (WB, 2014).

There has been no or little initiative to learn from locally generated ways of improving one's income by the state actors and to re-craft policies accordingly even in the face a number of studies recommending such courses of actions (Dom, 2011). Hence, the relation is not between equal and on principles of popular democracy contrary to what the party would have us believe. The malicious effects of this are somehow moderated by three factors. First, there are occasions during which the state's model of development is in line with the local's perception of how it is to come about and hence there are initiatives the peasantry want support from the local agents of the state the most important example of which is irrigation projects in areas characterized by shortage of rainfall. Second, there has been an entrenched culture of obedience to authority rooted in the long tradition of autocratic governance in the country and hence policy measures, no matter how unpopular they are, would be somehow passively accepted. Third, the insecurity of the regime somehow forced it to avoid the most flagrant acts and moderated the state's elite response to local resistance (Kassahun, 2012). Thus, though the regime boldly asserted that it would never compromise the interest of the peasantry as when, for example, the late Prime Minister declared that land would be privatized on EPRDF's grave, the actual interactions between the two is not and has not been as smooth as one would expect.

In the peripheral areas, the story of state-society relation has a distinct story of its own as the latter, has always been dominated by the former, throughout modern Ethiopian history. The usual feature of this has been more of state neglect and marginalization. However, recently a new dynamic is developing of which two specifically stand out: large-scale land sale for investors and villagization programme. First in the peripheral regions of Gambella, Benishangule, and part of the Southern Nations and Nationalities Region and Oromia Regions there has been an infamous practice of selling land to foreign and domestic investors that has reportedly endangered the economic, cultural and ecological livelihood of the local population (Makki, 2012; Dessaleg, 2011). Second, as part of its social protection programme the government has been pursuing a villagization programme mainly in Gambella and Benishangule Gumuz regional states, which studies at the local level indicate are undertaken forcefully (Temesgen, 2015). The result of this has been resistance of varieties sort which includes, but not limited to destroying investors

warehouse, protesting against local officials and killing migrant workers (Dessaiegn, 2014; Tsegaye, 2015). In whatever way it is justified the result is accumulation for the state and its elites on one hand precarious existence for the community whose land has been expropriated on the other hand.

This snapshot of state-society relations is by no means exhaustive of the nuances and details prevalent in a country so culturally heterogeneous and ecologically diverse as Ethiopia. Hence, the goal is not to demonstrate the details of that complex interaction; it is rather to draw possible lessons and assess trajectories of state building and peace building in the country. With regard to the former there has been an ensemble of institutions that are extended from the national to the local, often in the face limited associational groups outside it. However, the relationship between personnel running it and the society at large is authoritarian and suffocating that is not amenable to mutual transformation. The state aims to transform society without, in the mean time, having need to transform itself. Hence, what comes from the society is not valued whereas what comes from above is imposed and this would bring neither sustainable state nor sustainable peace.

### **Evolving gender praxis**

There potentially are multiple lines of categorizing and dividing society, some identities being more salient than others. While class and ethnic identity has been most prominent in the state and peace building discourse of the country, gender has been the invisible marker, the blueprint of which is not easily observable despite the immense role of women both during time of war and peace. In short, a gendered history of state and peacemaking and breaking in the country is lacking. The Ethiopian society is a patriarchal society with complex set of customs limiting women to the domestic level. Though there have been few elite women who have played prominent role in the country's history, Ethiopia's history, as documented by historian, is largely a history of men elites. The revolution had contributed in bringing the acknowledgement of women's rights by the military government and the establishment of the Revolutionary Ethiopian Women association. The insurgents had also a number of women fighters that might have effect over the post-war period. With the change of regime there has been further emphasis given to rights of women: the

constitution elaborately stipulates the rights of women including the need for affirmative action and the rejection of customs that compromise their rights. There has also been institutionalization of gender issues by establishing women's affairs ministry and other offices at lower level; mainstreaming gender in public institutions; and a thorough revision of the family law. However, much still remain to be desired in terms of the implementation of these normative orders. The number of women in government is not still on par with men, they are more unemployed and less educated. It took two revolutions for Ethiopia to constitutionally entrench ethnic rights and it might take much more of a different kind to achieve gender parity in the country.

## Chapter Six

### Concluding Remarks

State building and peace building in Ethiopia were set to be determined by factors that are embedded in its long history and the very process of its formation which constitute both its strengths and weaknesses. Its long history of statehood means that its leadership has repertoires of successful statecraft that has aided them not only to maintain a prudent economic planning and fairly effective law and order, but also enable them to pursue quite outstanding foreign policy. This has two implications: First, state building in the country has been primarily the making of the Ethiopian elite unlike much of Africa in which state building and peace building programmes are primarily initiated by outsiders. Even the most pervasive and far reaching external intrusion in post-colonial Africa in the form of structural adjustment programme has been modified when it comes to the Ethiopian milieu though this did not necessarily lead to any better economic and social outcomes compared to other African countries. Ethiopia is still at the bottom of the human development index. Second, long held traditions of statehood means that there has been an entrenched culture of obedience to authority, and a strong tradition of *rule by law* (not to be confused with rule of law) and a marked level of political centralization all of which are essential for state building projects. This, putting aside the side effects noted below, aided state building in various ways. To begin with, it facilitated the steady consolidation and effectiveness of apparatuses of control, mobilization and governance, no matter how oppressive they have been. The Haileselassie regime introduced and consolidated a number of institutions that consolidated the state and modernized pockets of the economy. In comparison to the imperial order, the Derg was unmatched in its mobilization capacity and structure of control while it pales when compared with the current regime that commands even more pervasive and entrenched architecture of control and governance. If these regimes fail to bring economic transformation, it can fairly be argued to be the result of lack of political will to make difficult reforms than lack of institutional capacity. In fact, this has enabled successive regimes to devise prudent macro-economic

policies the success of which was hindered by political instability caused by the extractive and exclusive character of political and economic institutions.

However, this tradition of statehood emanated from the northern society and its model was imposed on others groups that constituted more than half the Ethiopian population. Consequently, the country had to grapple with the class and ethnic contradictions this generated. In fact, this ushered in one of the most perennial and often violent conversations about state building in the country which was dubbed the 'nationality issue' or simply 'the national question', along Marxist parlance, propounded by the radicalized intelligentsia that saw no hope but radical break from the past. This intelligentsia, which sprang from both the oppressed and so-called oppressor nations, urged for the fair representation of all ethno-linguistic groups in national politics and the deconstruction of ethnic hierarchy. Though there were and are many potential avenues for empowering oppressed classes and ethnicity, the student movement opted for the Marxist way driven partly by the extreme nature of the contradiction inherent in the Ethiopian milieu and partly by the cultural makeup of the Ethiopian society, which renders ideologies that frame phenomena into either black or white quite attractive. Such is the Ethiopian dilemma that while a revolutionary government claims to rule on behalf of oppressed masses; revolutionary insurgents were fighting the regime and among themselves on behalf of oppressed (classes) ethnic groups. At the core of all these, but never explicitly stated, has been control over political power which has been not only the most essential means for personal and group security but also the best way to acquire wealth in the context of scarce resources where the state has been the primary allocator of resources. And thus centralization of power has been at the core of the civil war in the country and the progress in addressing it to date is dismaying to say the least.

Until 1991 power had been centralized both *de facto* and *de jure* and its exercise were largely mediated by the whims and caprices of emperor Haile Selassie, and later president Mengistu Hailmariam, the model envisioned, in both cases being a centralized unitary state. To be sure, this was not just the making of these two personalities: it was as embodied as ever in the psyche of Ethiopians and in the objective material situations of the country. The contradiction between the nobility and the modernizing elites that give

birth to the rise of Haileselassie as a progressive leader could not be resolved without centralization of power by the latter. Likewise, the uncompromising culture of the various revolutionary Marxist movements did not lend itself to democratic politics. Nevertheless, it has to be noted that democratization and decentralization or the lack thereof cannot be just reduced to the structural factors that, to a significant extent, shaped political developments in the country: They were as much a product of contingent circumstances and decisions of the political leadership which regrettably was used to strengthen its grip on power at the expense of the excluded. The post-1991 transition, though not inclusive both in procedure and substance, has introduced a number of reforms the actualization of which, and the trajectories they are leading to, are quite contested. The decisive military victory against the Derg and other armed groups enabled that the TPLF/EPRDF to pursue its policies and programmes unencumbered by countervailing forces. Those who could have influenced the political trajectories of the country were or allowed themselves to be driven out of the process to their own falling. As a result the party charted the transition process by carefully threading its long-term ambition for hegemony, its leftist ideological leaning, its desire for economic and political reforms that would transform the Ethiopian society in general and its core constituencies in particular. Therefore, the post-transition state of 'state and peace building' was the result of the very nature of the TPLF/EPRDF: its ideological inclination, organizational effectiveness, leadership quality, ethnic base and above all desire for hegemony. These factors interacted to various degrees, to shape the institutional model adopted, its level of implementation, the regimes legitimizing ideology, and the political and economic policies pursued. Had the military government or even another ethnic based party with similar ideology, say OLF, won the war, the nature and trajectories of state and peacebuilding would have been different, though we would not tell whether it would have been any better.

Formally, the current dispensation laid down a full measure of individual and group rights, decentralization of power and accountability of those in power. The constitutional envisioning of a range of individual and group rights has given the Ethiopian people and those who agitate for change repertoires in their struggle for political emancipation and control over their life. Nonetheless, this has been attenuated by the regime's constantly



evolving counter discourse related to terrorism, anti-peace elements, anti-development, rent seeker all of which are attributed to and when necessary applied against those who are sympathizer of the oppositions. Hence, political institutions in Ethiopia are still exclusionary though they might not be as intense as they used to be compared to what was prevalent in previous regimes. Currently regional and lower level administrators have a modicum of control over regional affairs to the extent this does not contradict the interest of power at the center, which could at least reduce the cultural and social distance between the rules and the ruled.

The situation appears to be somehow different pertaining to economic institutions and situations. Driven by the ideology of developmental state, the government has been not only the central decision maker affecting the life of ordinary people but also the primary economic actor. In short the state is at the same time economic actor engaging in economic activities and an instrument for accumulation. The modern economy of the country has been dominated by the government, the party or party affiliated elites. While this does not hinder the achievement of robust economic growth in the short term its sustainability is questionable. Probably this might explain Ethiopia's dilemma: unlike other African countries like Rwanda and Uganda which combine growth with structural transformation, Ethiopia's economic upturn is not accompanied with its structural transformation. The top down nature of economic governance in Ethiopia means that state-society relation is still to large extent characterized by dominance and obedience and at times expropriation. This has generated a range of localized resistances in addition to the already existing insurgent movements the direction to which they lead is quite uncertain. In this, we cannot help but draw scenarios. The best-case scenario will be that the government gradually liberalizes the economic and political sphere and this leads to progressive inclusion of social groups from various circles of life. In fact, the regime appears to consider economic growth as the only way out from this unsustainable mode of governance that is much reliant on control and repression. This is reflected when it states that development is a matter of life and death and when it frames the development discourse in militaristic tones. It might be the case that sustained and fairly broad based economic growth, as is recorded currently, will increase the legitimacy of the regime thereby laying ground for the liberalization of the

political space and the democratization of state-society interactions. However, such securitized understanding of development might be used as an instrument to justify action that would contradict the basic rights of citizens a trend of which is apparent.

A middle case scenario, which seems most likely, is that the regime would continue with the governance trend for years to come. The regime so far is comfortable with the current political trend and sees no reason to shift political course so long as the economy continues to grow. This might further strengthen the ethno-nationalist sentiments and mobilization notably, but not exclusively, in Oromia. The small-scale localized conflicts in different part of the country would continue to simmer sometimes intensifying and sometimes receding. This would create to reiterate Johan Galtung (1996) a penetrated, fragmented and marginalized society: A society the consciousness of which is shaped from above by the power that be; a parochial society unable to see the structural roots of its problem and hence with little solidarity if not outright hostility; and a society in which some communities in some areas are down trodden and isolated from the national political and economic system. Finally, in the worst case external and internal factors could combine to result in an outcome where conflict will intensify, where state fragility increases, and the chance for progressive change foreclosed. Only history will tell us what will come and as Hegel said the owl of Minerva springs its wings only with the down of the dusk (Avineri, 1994).

## References

- Aalen, L. and Tronvoll, K. (2009). The End of Democracy? Curtailing Political and Civil Rights in Ethiopia. *Review of African Political Economy*, 36 (120), 193-207
- Aalen, Lovise (2002). Ethnic Federalism in a Dominant Party State: the Ethiopian experience 1991-2000. Bergen: Chr. Michelsen Institute.
- Abbink J. (2011). Ethnic-based Federalism and Ethnicity in Ethiopia: Reassessing the Experiment after 20 years. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 5:4, 596-618
- Aklilu Abraham (2006). Ethnicity and Dilemmas of State Making: Ethnic Federalism and Institutional Reforms in Ethiopia. *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies* Vol. 2, No. 1/2, pp. 77-119.
- Aklog Birara (2010). Waves: Ethiopia's Endemic Poverty that globalization won't tackle, but Ethiopians Can. Signature Books: USA
- Amnesty International (2014) because I am Oromo: Sweeping repression in the Oromia region of Ethiopia. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/006/2014/en/>
- Aregawi Berhe (2008). A Political History of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (1975-1991): Revolt, Ideology and Mobilization in Ethiopia, PhD Dissertation, Vrije Universiteit,
- Assefa Fiseha (2012). Ethiopia's Experiment in Accommodating Diversity: 20 Years' Balance Sheet, *Regional & Federal Studies*, 22:4, 435-473
- Avineri Shlomo (1994). Hegel's theory of the modern state. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Bach Jean-Nicolas (2011). Abyotawi democracy: neither revolutionary nor democratic, a critical review of EPRDF's conception of revolutionary democracy in post-1991 Ethiopia, *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 5:4, pp. 641-663.
- Board, National Electoral. 2005. Official HPR and Regional Council Results <http://www.electionsethiopia.org/Election%20Results.html>
- CIA Fact Book. 2007. The World Fact Book: Ethiopia. Updated April 17, 2007 <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/et.html#Intro>
- Chinigò Davide (2014) Decentralization and agrarian transformation in Ethiopia: extending the power of the federal state, *Critical African Studies*, 6:1, 40-56,

CUD Manifesto, 2006. Kinijit Manifesto: Unofficial Translation Version 1.0, January 2006 Universal resource link located at: <http://www.kinijit.org/static/KINIJIIT-MANIFESTO-English-ver-1.0.pdf>

Dessalegn Rahmato (2014). The perils of development from above: Land deals in Ethiopia, *African Identities*, 12:1 pp.26-44.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2011) Land to Investors: Large-scale land transfers in Ethiopia, IS Academie, Land governance for Equitable and Sustainable Development.

Dom (2011). The roles of government go-between in changing rural Ethiopia.

EPRDF 2001. EPRDF: Political Program. Universal resource link located at: [http://eprdforgans.org/ad/P\\_folder/PDFfiles/Megazines/Addis%20Raiy\\_002.pdf](http://eprdforgans.org/ad/P_folder/PDFfiles/Megazines/Addis%20Raiy_002.pdf)

EPRDF (2006a), *Limat democracy ena Abiyotawi Democracy (Development, Democracy and Revolutionary Democracy (2006))*. Addis Ababa: Birhan and Selam Printing Press.

FDRE. 1994. Federal Democratic Republic Ethiopia: Constitution <http://www.ethiobar.net/>

Clapham Christopher (1989). The State and Revolution in Ethiopia. *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 44, Ethiopia: 15 Years on, pp. 4-17

\_\_\_\_\_ Revolution Ethiopia. *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 63, No. 1, pp. 36-55.

Gebru Asrat (2014). *Sovereignty and Democracy in Ethiopia*, Amharic Edition.

Gebru Tareke (2009). *The Ethiopian Revolution: War in the Horn of Africa*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

Hagmann Tobias & Abbink Jon (2011). Twenty Years of Revolutionary Democratic Ethiopia, 1991 to 2011. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 5:4, 579-595

Kassahun Berhanu (2012). The political economy of agricultural extension in Ethiopia: Economic growth and political control.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2003) Party Politics and Political Culture in Ethiopia. In A. M. Salih (Ed.), *Africa Political Parties: Evolution, Institutionalization and Governance* (115-147). London: Pluto Press.

Lavers Tom (2013). Food security and social protection in highland Ethiopia: Linking the productive safety net with the land question, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 50:03, pp.459-485

- Lefort Rene (2012). Free-market economy, 'developmental state' and party-state hegemony in Ethiopia: the case of the model farmers, *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 50:04, pp.681-706.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2007), Powers --*Mengist--* and Peasants in Rural Ethiopia: the May 2005 elections. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol 45 No 2, pp. 253–273.
- Lyons Terrence (2010). Ethiopian Elections: Past and Future. *International Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp.107-121..
- Human Rights Watch (2010a), "One Hundred Ways of Putting Pressure" Violations of Freedom of Expression and Association in Ethiopia.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2010b), Development Without Freedom: How Aid Underwrite Repression in Ethiopia.
- Makki Fouad (2012). Power and property: Commercialization, enclosure, and the transformation of agrarian relations in Ethiopia, *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39:1, pp.81-104.
- Markakis John (2011). *Ethiopia: The Last Two Frontiers*. James Currey: UK
- \_\_\_\_\_ Markakis, John.' Ethnic Conflict & the State in the Horn of Africa.' Kuritu, Y. and Markakis, J. (eds.). *Ethnicity and Conflict in the Horn of Africa*. (London: James Currey, 1994).
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1989). Nationalities and the State in Ethiopia. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 4, pp.118-130.
- Medhane Tadesse (1992). "EPRP versus TPLF, 1975-78: The Struggle for Supremacy over Tigray". A thesis on the Ethiopian Revolution. History Department, Addis Ababa University.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2002). Turning Conflicts to Cooperation: Towards an Energy-led Integration in the Horn of Africa. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Bonn.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2015). The Tigray Liberation front/TPLF/. In *Understanding Contemporary Ethiopia: Monarchy, revolution and the Legacy of Meles Zenawi*. (C. Hurst & Co., London 2015)
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2006) Challenge to Security Sector reform in the Horn of Africa. ISS Monograph No. 135, Pretoria.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2012). "Meles Zenawi and the Ethiopian State"  
<http://www.currentanalyst.com/index.php/security-assessment/179-meles-zenawi-and-the-ethiopian-state>
- \_\_\_\_\_ (1981). The Military State and Ethiopia's Path to 'Socialism'. *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 21, pp. 7-25

- Messay Kebede (2008). The Civilian Left and the Radicalization of the Dergue. *Journal of Developing Societies* Volume 24, Number 2, pp. 159-182.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2003). From Marxism-Leninism to Ethnicity: The Sidelips of Ethiopian Elitism. *Northeast African Studies*, Volume 10, (New Series), pp. 163-186.
- Mann Michael (1984). The autonomous power of the state: Its origin, mechanisms and results, *Archives europeenes de sociologie*, 25, pp. 185-213.
- Mason T. David (2007) Sustaining the peace after civil war  
<http://www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil/>
- Oakland Institute, (2011). Understanding land investment deals in Africa, Country Report: Ethiopia
- Paulos Chanie (2007). Clientelism and Ethiopia's Post-1991 Decentralization. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 3, pp. 355-384.
- Teferi Abate Adem (2012). The Local Politics of Ethiopia's Green Revolution in South Wollo. *African Studies Review*, 55, pp 81-102 doi:10.1017/ S0002020600007216
- Time Magazine (1991). Ethiopia: Return to Normalcy. Time Magazine. Monday, November 04, 1991. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,974184,00.html>
- Toft Monica Duffy (2010) Ending Civil Wars: A Case for Rebel Victory, *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 4, pp. 7–36
- Tronvoll K(2010). The Ethiopian 2010 federal and regional elections: Re-establishing the one party state,(Briefing). *African Affairs*, 1-16.
- Tsegaye Moreda (2015). Listening to their silence? The political reaction of affected communities to large-scale land acquisition, insight from Ethiopia. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 42:3-4 pp. 517-539.
- Vaughan, S. (1994). The Addis Ababa Transitional Conference of July 1991: its origin, history and significance. Centre for African Studies, Edinburgh University Occasional Paper No51
- Vaughan, S. and Tronvoll,K (2003). The Culture of power in Contemporary Ethiopian Political Life (Sida Studies No.10).
- Walter Barbara F. (2004) Does Conflict Beget Conflict? Explaining Recurring Civil War. *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 3, pp. 371-388
- World Bank. (2014). Ethiopia: Poverty assessment.

Young John (1996). *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia: The Tigray People's Liberation Front, 1975–1991*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge

Young John & Medhane Tadesse (2002). "TPLF: Reform or Decline": *In Review of African political Economy*, London. N.97.389-403.