





CONFLICT TRENDS

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Cover: Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) chief of staff, General Prince Siho (L) hands over his weapon to UNMIL force commander, General Daniel Opande.

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On 18 February 2010, the military in Niger, led by Major Salou Djibo and Colonel Adamou Harouna, overthrew the government of President Mamadou Tandja. The coup followed a year-long political crisis in Niger that arose from President Tandja's efforts to extend his mandate beyond December 2009, when his second term was originally scheduled to end. President Tandja dissolved the National Assembly in May 2009 and subsequently appointed a new Constitutional Court, enabling him to push forward with a constitutional referendum in August 2009 that extended his mandate for an additional three years. The new constitution also enhanced Tandja's power by scrapping the semi-presidential system of government in favour of a presidential system. Mr Tandja, a former army officer, was first voted into office in 1999, and was returned to power in an election in 2004. Niger has experienced long periods of military rule since independence from France in 1960.

The coup in Niger follows a series of coups and unconstitutional changes in government in Africa. On 6 August 2009, senior military officers in Mauritania, led by General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, overthrew President Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi, who came to power in March 2007. General Aziz had led the August 2005 coup that ousted President Maaouya Sid'Ahmed Ould Taya's, who had been in power for 21 years. Mauritania has a long history of coups, with the military involved in nearly every government since its independence from France in 1960.

On 23 December 2008, junior military officers in Guinea, led by Captain Moussa Dadis Camara, overthrew President Lansana Conte, who had come to power in a military coup in April 1984, immediately after the death of the nation's first president, Ahmed Sekou Toure, the leader of the ruling Democratic Party of Guinea (PDG).

On 10 March 2009, the mayor of Antananarivo, Andry Rajoelina, led the unconstitutional change of the government of President Marc Ravalomanana. Ravalomanana was first elected as the mayor of Madagascar's capital, Antananarivo, and was then declared the winner of the first round of a 2001 presidential election. However, he only took up the presidency in 2002, after incumbent Didier Ratsiraka gave up a violent struggle to keep power and fled the country. President Ravalomanana was re-elected in 2006.

These coups and unconstitutional changes of government mark a disturbing trend in Africa. It takes

Africa back to the post-independence days of the 1960s and 1970s when Africa, alongside Latin America, gained a reputation for coups and, consequently, the unwelcome and dangerous involvement of the military in politics.

The 1990s saw a decline in the number of coups in Africa, which also coincided with the dismantling of several one-party states and the resurgence of multiparty democracy. This positive trend in the 1990s culminated in the birth of the African Union in 2000, through the adoption of the Constitutive Act of the African Union. The African Union replaced the Organisation of Africa Unity, which was founded in 1963.

Given the history of coups and unconstitutional changes of governments in the 1960s and 1970s, the founding fathers of the African Union decided to address this issue by enshrining, as one of the principles of the African Union, the "condemnation and rejection of unconstitutional changes of governments". In addition, they set as one of the objectives of the African Union the need to "promote democratic principles and institutions, popular participation and good governance".

This principle and objective, among others set by the African Union, is commendable. However, as we have witnessed, after almost two decades of a decline in coups and almost eight years after the African Union made these declarations, we have not arrested this negative legacy. While we can and must condemn these unconstitutional changes of government, it is incumbent on us also to look at the causes of these unconstitutional changes.

Each of the four countries cited above are among the poorest countries in the world, yet all are endowed with sufficient beneficial natural resources. If these resources are managed properly through good governance, and their benefits accrue equitably to the nation as a whole, this will assist in addressing the underlying causes of these unconstitutional changes of government.

Therefore, we have to strive to build a set of normative rules and values and generate the collective political will of the people of Africa to hold our public officials accountable for the negative consequences of these unconstitutional changes. We must address both the manifestation of the problem and the cause if we are to move Africa forward. **A**

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FEDERALISM AND CONFLICTS IN ETHIOPIA

BY MEHARI TADDELE MARU

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Federalism in Ethiopia

At just over 77 million, Ethiopia is the third-most populous country in Africa. Since 1991, Ethiopia has been implementing an ethno-linguistic federal politico-legal arrangement. As per Articles 1 and 47 of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the country is a federation of nine ethno-linguistically divided regional states. These can be classified into three groups, based on (i) their population numbers, as minority or majority in the federation; (ii) ethno-linguistic diversity,

as multi-ethnic or homogeneous; and (iii) way of life, as settled or pastoralist.¹ The Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia and Somali regional states (taking the name of their majority

Above: Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) supporters reach for a party flag during a demonstration in downtown Addis Ababa. EPRDF is the ruling party in Ethiopia since 1991 and the architect of the Federal Constitution.



inhabitants) are more or less ethnically homogeneous, with a dominant ethno-linguistic community at regional level. Percentages of the population that are from their respective dominant ethno-linguistic communities in these states are as follows: Tigray 94.98%, Afar 91.8%, Amhara 91.2%, Oromia 85%, and Somali 95.6%.² The remaining four regional states (Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region or SNNP; Gambella; Benshangul/Gumuz and Harari) are multi-ethnic, without a *de jure* dominant ethno-linguistic community. This does not mean there is no

ethno-cultural dominant community in power, even if that community could be a minority in number.³ In an ethnic federal arrangement, a minority ethno-cultural community could have dominant power as a result of economic or/and political domination it exercises.

The Constitutional Rights of Ethno-cultural Communities in Ethiopia

Article 39 (3 and 5) of the Federal Constitution assumes that every ethno-cultural community has its own territory,

and confers the right to “a full measure of self-government which includes the right to establish institutions of government in the territory that it inhabits”. It also defines ethno-cultural communities as “Nation, Nationality or People... as a group of people who have or share a large measure of a common culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identities, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory”. The Federal Constitution not only recognises ethno-linguistic identity, but it also establishes regional states based on such identity. The Federal Constitution has many striking features, one of which is the right of ethno-cultural communities to self-determination, including the right to establish a regional state or independent state. This makes the Ethiopian Constitution unique. Pursuant to the Preamble and Articles 1, 8, 39 and 40 (4) of the Constitution, Ethiopia’s ethno-linguistic federalism is such that the ethno-cultural communities as a group – not Ethiopian nationals – are sovereign, and are the building blocks of the federation. Constitutionally speaking, the constituent units of the

Ethiopian federation are neither Ethiopian nationals nor the regional states, but rather the ethno-cultural communities. A combined meaning of Articles 9, 39 and 47 (2) of the Federal Constitution makes this point very clear. Moreover, the preamble to the Federal Constitution, which reflects the object and purpose of the Federal Constitution and the legislative intention of the framers, begins by saying:

We, the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia: strongly committed, on full and free exercise of our right to self-determination, to building a political community founded on the rule of law and capable of ensuring a lasting peace, bringing a democratic order and advancing our economic and social development can be fulfilled if only... individual and people’s fundamental freedoms and rights, to live together on the basis of equality and without any sexual, religious or cultural discrimination.⁴

Taking the purposive interpretation approach (the spirit and legislative intention) of the Federal Constitution, group/collective rights of ethno-cultural communities are given



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An important power of ethno-cultural communities is their collective ownership of land and its resources. The special right of pastoralist peoples to land for grazing and protection from displacement is also granted under Article 40 of the Federal Constitution.

an equal constitutional footing. Moreover, as stipulated in Articles 5, 8, 39 and 47, “all sovereign power resides in” the ethno-cultural communities, and they are entitled to self-determination and self-rule, and their right to establish regional or independent states of their own. The Constitution also confers on all ethno-cultural communities an internal authority in their affairs and empowers them to exercise and promote their culture, language and historical heritage through self-government. A conjoined reading of Articles 51 and 52 of the Constitution reveals that the regional states enjoy wide-ranging executive and judicial, but limited legislative, powers.⁵ The Federal Constitution, though mostly *de jure*, has reduced the federal executive branch of the government to a weaker status than ever before in the history of Ethiopia. However, there are serious disparities between *de jure* constitutional power granted to regional states, and the *de facto* power exercised by regional states.⁶

Under Article 39(4), the Federal Constitution has conferred to ethno-cultural communities not only the right of self-determination but also the right to secede and establish an independent state of their own. Of course, secession could only be exercised through long and stringent procedural requirements, such as: (i) the demand is supported by a two-thirds majority vote of the regional state legislature in which the ethno-cultural community is found; (ii) the federal government organises a referendum for the ethno-community requesting such referendum within three years of that vote by the regional legislature; and (iii) the referendum is supported by a majority vote of the same ethno-cultural community. Similarly, the respective regional states are expected – as some already have – to grant special administrative status to ethno-cultural communities within a regional state with a dominant ethno-linguistic community. These administrative units are carved-out territories constituted as special zones (*Leyu Zone*) or special districts (*Leyu Woreda*). This indigenisation of political power and self-administration at the lowest administrative levels – i.e., the *Woreda* has empowered indigenous people to take their destiny in their hands, as well as to reinstate their culture, language, historical symbols and other traditional institutions, including conflict-resolving mechanisms.⁷

Another important power of ethno-cultural communities is their collective ownership of land and its resources. The special right of pastoralist peoples to land for grazing and protection from displacement is also granted under Article 40 of the Federal Constitution. Such a priority to the collective rights of ethno-cultural communities is not without reason, but a response to the past historical legacy of ethno-linguistic domination that prevailed for so long in Ethiopia.⁸ These constitutional provisions are the product of compromises by the ethno-linguistic based liberation forces that toppled the former military regime in Ethiopia.

The Federal Constitution is one under which ethno-cultural communities are: first, the ultimate sovereign

entities, where constitutional power of both the federal and regional states rests. Second, they are constitutionally entitled to establish regional states, or their own states, independent from Ethiopia. In short, under the Ethiopian federal system, ethno-linguistic communities constitute the federation.⁹ Federalism, in general, is a system of governance of great variance, depending on the problem(s) it is supposed to solve. It is better understood as a system with diverse features of state power-sharing.¹⁰ However, all federalist systems share some common broad characteristics – albeit with some varieties.¹¹ The most important characteristic is that, in federalism, power is

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not delegated to regional states from the centre, as in the case of a unitary system. Rather, the central government is delegated by, and obtains its power from, the regions. In federalism, the central (federal) government is not the author of its own power, for the ultimate power rests in the constituent unities – in the Ethiopian case, the ethno-cultural communities. However, no single federal system is universally superior. Any constitution, as a political and legal institution, has to reflect the political history and principal social structure of the society it serves. In the drafting of the Ethiopian Constitution, Samuel Huntington pointed out:

A Constitution has to reflect the history, culture of the society, its level of economic development and social structure, ethno-linguistic composition, and most importantly the goals of its leaders. Political parties reflect the principal social identities and cleavages within society. In Ethiopia the principal cleavage appears to be ethno-linguistic...and regional [cleavages].¹²

Huntington goes on to argue that the Constitution, as a political and legal institution, reflects the political history and principal social structures of Ethiopian society. Most importantly, he suggests it has attempted a consociational accommodation of the principal forces of political mobilisation – ethnic-based parties. Taking these historical facts and the nature of the political parties into consideration in the Ethiopia of the 1990s, majoritarian democracy would have furthered ethno-linguistic



Supporters of pro-communist Ethiopian Workers' Party wave in front of a huge portraits of the founders of 'scientific socialism' as they celebrate the 13th anniversary of the Ethiopian revolution led by Haile Mariam Mengistu. Mengistu set out to create a socialist state in Ethiopia aligned with the communist block, but was overthrown in 1991 by the Ethiopian People's Democratic Front.

domination and disintegration¹³, while a simple unitary system would have allowed the majority ethno-cultural group (in number or in power) to remain permanently in power, leaving other principal forces of political mobilisation and minorities in opposition or at the benign concessions of power.¹⁴ What is more, since most of the political forces that toppled the former Ethiopian military regime were mobilised along ethno-linguistic lines, suppressing political mobilisation based on ethnicity would have been a recipe for the further disintegration of Ethiopia. Huntington made a similar point, noting that a "straight plurality system would lead to some ethno-linguistic groups

being a permanent minority in their district and having no [meaningful] representation".¹⁵

Constitutionally speaking, Ethiopian ethno-linguistic federalism can be taken as consociational in nature for two reasons. One, the Federal Constitution lays down the institutional arrangement for ethno-cultural communities to be meaningfully represented in all government institutions. Second, it has granted a sort of veto power through the right to unilateral secession against ethno-linguistic domination or tyranny from the centre. Consequently, the Ethiopian federal system is designed to serve as a consociational institution where ethno-cultural communities "negotiate and compromise" for unified political and economic space.

SINCE MOST OF THE POLITICAL FORCES THAT TOPPLED THE FORMER ETHIOPIAN MILITARY REGIME WERE MOBILISED ALONG ETHNO-LINGUISTIC LINES, SUPPRESSING POLITICAL MOBILISATION BASED ON ETHNICITY WOULD HAVE BEEN A RECIPE FOR THE FURTHER DISINTEGRATION OF ETHIOPIA

Public Reaction to Ethno-linguistic Federalism

The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) – the ruling party in Ethiopia since 1991 and the architect of the Federal Constitution – is criticised from two opposing political positions. Some characterise the EPRDF government as pro-secession, relentlessly working to disintegrate the country. Others portray it as opposed to the self-determination aspirations of ethno-linguistic communities and intent of continuing the hegemonic domination of the central state that has prevailed for so long in Ethiopia. Those who favour the former position argue that EPRDF is implementing the constitutional right of ethno-linguistic communities, with an ultimate aim of disintegrating Ethiopia.¹⁶ They believe they have to fight to abolish or/and amend the federal nature of the Federal Constitution. These are avowed opponents of the federal system. They believe that EPRDF is sincere in implementing the Federal Constitution by respecting the ethno-linguistic federal arrangement, including the right to self-determination up to secession. They argue that, by legitimising ethnicity as the only valid marker for membership of a homeland regional state, it has, however, impacted negatively on the economic and socio-political development of the country.

Conversely, those in support of the latter position argue that the EPRDF commitment to ethno-linguistic communities' rights to self-determination is a sham, and a method of perpetuating the previous regimes of Ethiopia.¹⁷ They are of the opinion that the Federal Constitution is not being implemented fully. They demand – some groupings to the point of waging armed struggle – genuine implementation of the Federal Constitution. Some Ethiopian scholars, such as Ali Said, even argue that a more aggressive fiscal federalism corresponding to the devolution of political power is necessary, if Ethiopia is to remain peaceful.¹⁸

In sum, even if both positions are in opposition to the ruling party they, however, have two diametrically opposed positions on the federal system: the first opposes ethno-linguistic federalism and the Federal Constitution; the latter demands a full implementation of the same constitution. Some scholars, for example Gamest, have commented that the adoption of Ethiopian federalism was a “fundamental error” because it is based on ethnicity, and will “deeply imprint” ethno-linguistic identity.¹⁹ In Ethiopia, ethno-linguistic identities were already deeply imprinted before the adoption of ethno-linguistic federalism in 1994, as a result of the ethno-linguistic domination that had existed for so long. Ethiopia is an ethnically diverse country with a past political history of ethno-linguistic domination.²⁰ Moreover, Ethiopian ethno-linguistic federalism is designed to address the “national question” (a popular name for the 1960s struggle against ethno-linguistic domination in Ethiopia).²¹ Politicised ethno-cultural communities are not new products of Ethiopian ethno-linguistic federalism. Rather, ethno-linguistic federalism is an outcome of the

old mobilisation and struggles of politicised ethno-cultural communities. This politicisation of ethno-linguistic groups, or the ethnicisation of Ethiopian politics, is not a one-day event due to promulgation of the Federal Constitution; it is, instead, a product of Ethiopia's long political history.

Nonetheless, what is new is that now ethnically-based political mobilisation and power-sharing is constitutionally

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legitimised. Under ethno-linguistic federalism, communities are not only politicised cultural and linguistic communities, but also are entities bearing sovereignty with constitutional standing. In a nutshell, Ethiopian ethno-linguistic federalism is a response to the “unfavourable conditions” that prevailed in a unitary system. Ethno-linguistic communities are more “responsive to ethnic than to social or democratic slogan”.²² Politically speaking, it seems that mobilisation along ethno-linguistic lines has been, and perhaps presently is, easier in Ethiopia than mobilisation around overarching countrywide ideals and principles. But, it is wrong to assume that responsiveness to an ethnic slogan is necessarily anti-social or undemocratic. Ethno-linguistic liberation fronts were the forces that toppled the former military rule. They were also the main forces behind the drafting of the Federal Constitution. Logically, they would not commit suicide by promulgating a law that disbands them.

At a public level, the political reaction to the ethno-linguistic federalist arrangement in Ethiopia can be summarised in three views: first, those who support ethno-linguistic federalism as a matter of the human rights of ethno-linguistic communities to self-determination, including the right to secession. These are *forces of diversity and freedom*. They support federalism even at the cost of unity, and they believe that federalism is the only means to promote freedom and check tyranny. This strand of thinking is similar to the theory of multiculturalism, which recognises distinct groups within a society and allows them some space of public expression.²³ Second, there are those who believe that ethno-linguistic federalism, while regrettable, is the only way to keep the country unified and prevent its disintegration. This is a calculated



Haile Selassie I (1892 – 1975), Emperor of Ethiopia, voluntarily granted his people a constitution.

version of unity. They view ethno-linguistic federalism as a means to strengthening unity, and they support diversity for the sake of unity. We may call them *calculative federalists*: inherently, they are opposed to secession. A third view is totally opposed to ethno-linguistic federalism. It seeks to do away with it and seeks another form of federalism, or a unitary system. *Unitarist in approach*, they look at the federal system as an instrument to undo the assimilation efforts of previous regimes, particularly that of Emperors Menelik and Haile Selassie.²⁴ This line of thought is similar to the theory of cultural assimilation, which encourages

the absorption of minorities into the dominant culture. It is contrary to the principle of multiculturalism.²⁵

Each of these positions has legitimate concerns that demand serious consideration – but not equally. The third position wrongly believes that only a unitary system will ensure the unity of the country. But this position could lead to policy of forced assimilation – and worse, blind nationalism.²⁶ It could cause a total disregard to democratic rights, group injustice and probably massive human rights violation, including ethnic cleansing and genocide. If such a view was to be implemented by force again, it could

THE UNITARIST APPROACH LOOKS AT THE FEDERAL SYSTEM AS AN INSTRUMENT TO UNDO THE ASSIMILATION EFFORTS OF PREVIOUS REGIMES, PARTICULARLY THAT OF EMPERORS MENELIK AND HAILE SELASSIE

return the country to bloody civil war and gross violations of human rights. Moreover, it could lead, ultimately, to the disintegration of Ethiopia – the very situation the holders of this view abhor.

To put it in a historical perspective, the framers of the Federal Constitution had five choices. The first was a blanket denial of the existence of diversity and its political expression. The second was to promote Ethiopian nationality as an overarching ideology, thereby denying the existence of ethno-linguistic communities. The third was to promote Ethiopian nationality as an overarching ideology while recognising ethno-linguistic communities, but disallowing any political expression and space for them. The fourth was to promote the right to self-determination as overarching, regardless of the implications for Ethiopian unity. Finally, there was the option to promote Ethiopian nationalism while also recognising and allowing political expression and territorial self rule for ethno-linguistic communities. This last option is perhaps the best of all the options for unity with peace and equality. It looks at federalism as an instrument for conflict management – a political solution to a political concern – and as a tool to contain disintegrative forces and to create a balance between the forces of unity and of diversity. It also addresses the concerns of the forces of diversity, and averts the secession inclinations. For this reason, it is predictable that there will always be strong resistance to any hasty change of the existing arrangement.



Sudanese refugees belonging to the Uduk ethnic group at the Bonga refugee camp on the border of Sudan and Ethiopia. The Uduk tribe was threatened by extinction, with about 7000 refugees fleeing the civil war in their native Sudan. The group has thrived in the camp, the population skyrocketing to more than 17,000 with an average of 100 births a month.

Ethno-linguistic Federalism and Localisation of Conflicts

Another perhaps inherent problem of ethno-linguistic federalism is its tendency to localise and or create new conflicts. A good example is the case of Gambella, which is one of the ethnically-heterogeneous regional states without a dominant ethno-cultural community. In Ethiopia, regional states with a dominant ethno-cultural community (such as Amhara, Tigray, Oromia, Somali and Afar) seem less prone to inter-ethnic conflict than those without a dominant ethno-linguistic community. Gambella also exhibits the phenomenon of spontaneous and pastoralist

migration (of the Nuer). The national identity of the inhabitants of its border areas is very fluid and, hence, cross-border migration – of the pastoral Nuer, the Anywaa refugees fleeing the conflict in Gambella to the Sudan, and Sudanese refugees fleeing to Ethiopia due to the civil war in Sudan – changes the ethno-linguistic population balance. It thus has a dynamic demographic composition. In ethno-linguistic federalism, demographic changes have huge effects on the power and resource-sharing system in ethno-linguistic arrangements. The politics of numbers has a significant role in power-sharing. This has created arguments and disagreement about the outcome of the

THE NATIONAL IDENTITY OF THE INHABITANTS OF ITS BORDER AREAS IS VERY FLUID AND, HENCE, CROSS-BORDER MIGRATION – OF THE PASTORAL NUER, THE ANYWAA REFUGEES FLEEING THE CONFLICT IN GAMBELLA TO THE SUDAN, AND SUDANESE REFUGEES FLEEING TO ETHIOPIA DUE TO THE CIVIL WAR IN SUDAN – CHANGES THE ETHNO-LINGUISTIC POPULATION BALANCE

1994 population census; because of the implications of the census, results for power-sharing between ethno-linguistic communities are profound. In Ethiopia, regional states with pastoralist populations seem more vulnerable than those with sedentary populations. Gambella is such a case. It has many pockets of 1980s resettlement villages and many old and newly constructed refugee camps, run by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). These settlement villages and refugee camps have often been at the centre of conflict, and have been attacked repeatedly. The effect of *large-scale migration* (about 110 000 forced migrants) on a regional state such as Gambella, with a core population of only about 160 000, can be huge.²⁷

Hence, one could argue that, at a local level, Ethiopian ethno-linguistic federalism has sometimes created the very problem it was intended to address – namely, further ethno-linguistic domination and conflict. But the point needs to be made that ethno-linguistic federalism *per se* does not necessarily cause ethnic conflict. Switzerland, Belgium and Canada are good examples of this point.

Conclusions and Implications

In comparison to previous regimes in Ethiopia, the federal system has empowered ethno-cultural communities in many areas of cultural, linguistic, social and political life, and has thereby, to some degree, offset the historical legacy of ethno-linguistic domination. It has also concretised the rights of minority and indigenous communities. However, even if the *de jure* equality of ethno-linguistic communities has been constitutionally ensured, much remains to be done to ensure *de facto* equality in many areas where marginalised ethno-cultural communities have had a limited capacity to make use of these constitutional rights. What is particular to Ethiopian federalism is that the right to self-determination, including that of secession, acts as a brake on any desire of a central government towards the tyrannical and discriminatory treatment of ethno-cultural communities. A reversal of the constitutional rights of ethno-linguistic communities, by either the central or a state government, would be politically costly. Any attempt at discrimination among ethno-cultural communities, or the domination of one ethno-linguistic community by another, or the unconstitutional seizure of political power at the centre, would put the unity of the country at risk – as then ethno-linguistic communities could attempt their constitutional right to secession.

Other constraints, discussed above, are attributable to the immaturity of the federal system. The major problems can best be described as ones of implementation, interpretation, legal lacunae and shortcomings. A democratising of the culture of all parties – especially that of the ruling EPRDF – is vital if the federal arrangement is to function well. Since EPRDF is an umbrella organisation of four ethnic-based parties that control almost all the regional states, it exercises effective control over the

federation through its member and affiliated political parties in the regions. This party chain of command has effectively replaced state control. Almost all decisions of the party are made and implemented using party structures, instead of the state structure. Procedurally, this system violates no laws; substantively, this party control does not encourage discourse and deliberative democracy. It's byproduct is also a weakened state institution and strong parties. While the Federal Constitution provides excellent formal institutional ground for a peaceful Ethiopia, and ownership of decision-making powers – including economic ones by local people – EPRDF's party culture and structure inhibits the implementation of the constitution effectively. The father of the constitution – EPRDF itself – has, through its organisational culture of democratic centralism and

BUT THE POINT NEEDS TO BE MADE THAT ETHNO-LINGUISTIC FEDERALISM PER SE DOES NOT NECESSARILY CAUSE ETHNIC CONFLICT. SWITZERLAND, BELGIUM AND CANADA ARE GOOD EXAMPLES OF THIS POINT

centralised party structure, weakened the federal system and regional state structures. The political constitution of EPRDF effectively antagonises the federal system it has built. In short, democratic centralism is an antithesis of federalism. For instance, regional state presidents are more accountable to the party than to their election constituents or parliaments. In addition centralising attitudes are also widely shared among technocrats and civil servants who prioritise economic efficiency or nationalism before administration of justice and protection of human rights. Thus another key binding constraint to an effective federalism in Ethiopia is the ruling party's excessive control of regional party leaders and the central government resource-backed centralising drifts and attitudes. The gradual effect, however, can be devastating for the unity of the country when such strong party control weakens or vanishes, for the regional states may fall into the hands of extreme nationalist officials.

Other implementation problems, such as violations of the human rights of internal migrants, are often the result of a lack of understanding or lack of political will of regional state officials to implement the Federal Constitution properly. One way in which the leading difficulties in federalism and the relationship between the centre and regions could be tackled would be to conduct training on the relevant laws, to increase their knowledge among the concerned organs of the federal and regional state. This

would facilitate the building of a human rights-protective federalism. Striking a balance between the forces of unity and diversity, between regional state power and federal power requires the educating and training of officials, academics and public servants at both the centre and in the regional states.

A more important recommendation in this regard is the need for the promotion of a democratic pan-Ethiopian national unity based on equality, the rule of law, respect for human rights and commonly shared values in regard to the historic past, economic development and political commitments. In this regard, a deliberate policy of promoting consensus and unity in diversity around positive historic legacies has to be designed and implemented. The victory of Adwa, Ethiopia's tolerance and long acceptance of all major religions, etc. could serve as unifying historical symbols for Ethiopia. While addressing historical grievances due to previous exclusionist regimes and rejecting any new political tendencies to bring back the old regimes of discrimination and exclusion, much has to be done in championing commonly appreciated and accepted legacies. The historic legacy of Axsum in culture, religion and language, the meaning of the victory at Adwa for all black and freedom-loving peoples, as well as the role of iconic Ethiopia leaders like Ras Alula, are not necessarily incompatible with democratisation and the new constitutional federal experiment. The idea of national unity through the promotion of an historical legacy of an inclusive kind, as discussed by Donald Levine, is an important area of improvement.²⁸ The introduction of civic education, democratic patriotism, the celebration of the Day of the Flag and the acknowledgement of the iconic leaders and emperors of Ethiopia would contribute much to a unifying project. ♣

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