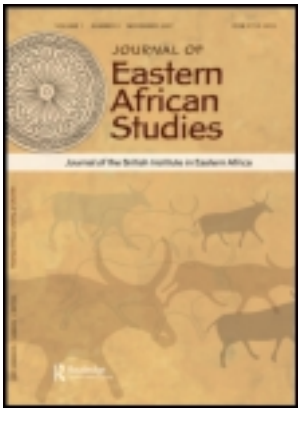
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Ethnic-based federalism and ethnicity in Ethiopia: reassessing the experiment after 20 years

Jon Abbink [a]

[a] African Studies Centre, P.O. Box 9555, 2300, RB, Leiden, the Netherlands

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Ethnic-based federalism and ethnicity in Ethiopia: reassessing the experiment after 20 years

Jon Abbink*

African Studies Centre, P.O. Box 9555, 2300 RB Leiden, the Netherlands

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One of the core principles instituted by the post-1991 government in Ethiopia that took power after a successful armed struggle was ethnic-based federalism, informed by a neo-Leninist political model called revolutionary democracy. In this model, devised by the reigning Tigray People's Liberation Front (later EPRDF), ethnic identity was to be the basis of politics. Identities of previously non-dominant groups were constitutionally recognized and the idea of pan-Ethiopian identity de-emphasized. This article examines the general features and effects of this new political model, often dubbed an "experiment", with regard to ideas of federal democracy, socio-economic inclusiveness, and ethno-cultural and political rights. After 20 years of TPLF/EPRDF rule, the dominant rhetorical figure in Ethiopian politics is that of ethnicity, which has permeated daily life and overtaken democratic decision-making and shared issue-politics. The federal state, despite according nominal decentralized power to regional and local authorities, is stronger than any previous Ethiopian state and has developed structures of central control and top-down rule that preclude local initiative and autonomy. Ethnic and cultural rights were indeed accorded, and a new economic dynamics is visible. Political liberties, respect for human rights and economic equality are however neglected, and ethnic divisions are on the increase, although repressed. Ethiopia's recent political record thus shows mixed results, with positive elements but also an increasingly authoritarian governance model recalling the features of the country's traditional hierarchical and autocratic political culture. This may produce more debate on the need for "adjusting the experiment".

Keywords: ethnic federalism; Ethiopian politics; ethnicity and "revolutionary" democracy; ethnic conflict and mediation

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In this article I discuss the general features of the post-1991 regime under the ruling party (and former insurgent movement) Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF, with its core the Tigray People's Liberation Front or TPLF) and the effects and results of its policies toward ethnicity and ethnic relations in Ethiopia in the past two decades. I here largely follow a growing scholarly consensus on the political state of play regarding Ethiopia as an ethno-federal state, but my approach is more anthropological, i.e., looking at politics and unfolding ethnic relations as a social and cultural process with its own dynamics, though set in motion by cumulative decisions in a political arena. The issue of ethnic federalism and its impact has been studied extensively from the legal, sociological and political science

*Email: abbink@ascleiden.nl

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angles. In a paper published two years ago (2009) I tried to inject a new element in this debate by looking at the *republican*-democratic aspect of Ethiopia's politics, instead of predictably focusing on the ethnic-democratic element, but this was not to deny that ethnic identity remained the defining feature of the country's political system.

In 1991 Ethiopia accommodated ethnicity as a formal political element in the new state order. This makes the country relatively unique in Africa, where ethnic relations may be an obvious factor in national politics but not in any recognized form. If we look at Kenya, we see that every election is determined by a subtext of ethnicity, locally called "tribalism", and that virtually all parties have an overwhelming although not exclusive ethnic basis, but formal ethnic parties are not allowed. In Ethiopia they are the norm. Ethiopia's adoption in 1991 of ethno-linguistic identity as the prescribed basis of politics in the new federal state is explained by three factors: (a) the military victory in 1991 by an ethno-nationalist movement – the TPLF – over centralized tyrannical military rule after a successful ethno-regional mobilization of insurgence; (b) the ideological idiom of student opposition movements and later of the armed opposition in the later years of the imperial regime and the military *Derg* regime that saw "the national question" as the main cause of Ethiopia's problem, above all others; and (c) the need of the ethno-regional insurgent movements, present among an important number of Ethiopian population groups in 1991, to come to a shared political agenda to address perceived or real "ethnic grievances".

In 1991 the TPLF thus presided over the deconstruction of Ethiopia as a nation-state seen as dominated by one ethnic group and reconfigured it on the basis of a model of an alleged "voluntary federation" of the 75 or so ethnic groups in the country. This was a new model dictated partly by necessity – how could an ethno-regional minority from Tigray suddenly rule a large, diverse country without secure "ethnic allies"? – and partly by an ideological programme aimed at reversing "ethnic" hierarchies, ousting the perceived elites in place, and impose a new political dispensation. It was accompanied by a tortuous and to many people painful rhetoric of ethnicization that declared Ethiopians first and foremost a member of "their ethnic group" and only second as Ethiopian citizens. This model was held to liberate groups and to defuse the "national question", as no group could be allowed to claim political dominance – except perhaps the one proclaiming an end to ethnic dominance. In this sense, the EPRDF-TPLF replaced a perceived "Amhara/highland"-dominated ethnocratic state with a multi-ethnic state, but with one clear leading core group.

This ethno-federal idea was elaborated in the Transitional Period Charter, promulgated after a national conference in June 1991 and in the Federal Constitution adopted in December 1994 and that came into effect on 21 August 1995.[1]

Twenty years later, ethnicity is the dominant rhetorical figure in political discourse in Ethiopia and has permeated people's identities and daily politics, whether they like it or not. It has inspired the governance model, the division and administration of the regional states, educational-linguistic policies and party politics. My argument here will be that, while initially liberating and potentially "empowering" – coming from a background of suppression and delegitimization during the imperial and *Derg* eras – ethnic discourse in Ethiopia in both its ideological and practical-administrative forms, may have become somewhat of a

constraining factor in the political, economic and social sense, and may need amendment. This interpretation implies "benchmarks" to evaluate the post-1991 experience. These may be difficult to provide if a non-normative assessment is aimed at, but one could propose a few key indicators in view of the stated aims of the political transition in 1991: contribution to (ethnic/regional) self-determination; ability to defuse/prevent ethnic-based conflict; exercise of ethno-cultural rights (to use people's language, develop their own culture, etc.); democratic-consultative decision-making; an open economic arena and economic partnership; and non-discriminatory, issue-based politics for the federation as a whole.[2] I here start from the metaphor of Ethiopia going through "an experiment" – as its prime minister once said, back in 1991[3] – and if an experiment shows serious problems or unexpected results one can amend it and change some of the conditions of the experimenting. The "experiment" meant here is a political model adopted by the new regime and implemented on the basis of ideology. In this sense it can be changed. But the wider social and cultural *effects* it already has had may already be less amenable to retrospective engineering: the (often unintended) consequences have gone to reshape Ethiopian society from top to bottom. A case could be made for amendments if we look at the ambivalent record: unintended forms of discrimination, non-federal elements, economic disparities, and (violent) conflicts that reportedly still mar the federal system in practice.[4]

In assessing these "benchmarks" it is useful to recognize their variegated expression in the phases that the Ethiopian 20-year federal experiment has gone through. The period is not unitary, neither in its political emphases nor its economic policies, and has seen various shifts in policy and practice, despite the fact that the ideological and constitutional order has officially not changed much. One might distinguish at least the following four phases of the Ethiopian ethno-federal model: (1) transition and stabilization – democratic opening, political self-definition, and liberalization, 1991–2000; (2) nationalist reconfiguration and ruling party reaffirmation, resulting from the 1998–2000 Ethio-Eritrean war and the internal TPLF division, 2000–2003;[5] (3) broadening EPRDF party reach via incorporating and creating (new) regional EPRDF party elites beyond the TPLF, 2003–2005;[6] (4) building the "developmental state", since May 2005. This entailed a full emphasis on nation-wide economic development, whereby "political" considerations would be secondary and legitimacy would be sought in the economic growth achievements (infrastructure, road building, hydropower mega-projects, "double-digit" GDP growth, foreign investments, etc.). The powers of the central/federal government were hereby reinforced, via new laws and executive organs. This "technocratic" approach was pursued after the shock 2005 elections, with a narrow and controversial win for EPRDF, the killing of close to 200 people by security forces, and a very bad press for Ethiopia and serious criticisms from donor countries. This developmental state phase is still in full swing – witness the huge foreign land-lease deals, the emphasis on investments (any investments) and growth figures, the mega-dam building, the road construction – and has entirely trumped the quest from democracy, civil society facilitation, and plurality in domestic politics. Indeed, a spate of post-2005 laws (Press law, NGO law, Anti-Terrorism law), with narrow and restrictive clauses, has thwarted the development of civil society organizations and a concomitant democratic culture. The government's 2010 *Growth and Transformation Plan*[7] is the best indication of this fourth phase, stressing economic growth and not much else.

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Shaping the experiment after the end of the war: the second phase of the Ethiopian post-imperial revolution

Looking at the formal structure of post-1991 federalism, let us start with the observation that when speaking with politicians, academics or students from other African countries one usually hears: "We do not understand Ethiopian politics. How can they go and institutionalize tribalism. This was the one country in African with a non-colonial history, an indigenous state that had some unity and a centralist tradition, and now they follow us and go back to fragmentation. Why?" True or not, this very common remark might give us some food for thought.

Back in 1991 the TPLF-EPRDF ideology of ethnic federalism could have been seen as "the best possible model" after the ravages of the civil war and a regime marked by harsh centralist government suppression of ethno-regional sentiments and interests, and a relentless war. Mobilization of rebellion against this *Derg* government, led by lt.-col. Mengistu Haile-Mariam, had been successful on the basis of an appeal to this ethno-regional or ethnic aspect in people's identities, and it found resonance among some other large ethnic communities or their elites. It was also a convenient ideology of rule, which made sense to the new leaders back in 1991.

Historically, the instituting of ethno-federalism was also the realization of the *second* element of the programme of the revolutionary student movement in the 1960s–70s: solving the "nationalities" question.[8] The first phase of that revolutionary ferment in the 1970s had been the class-based "anti feudalist, anti-capitalist revolution of the masses" against the imperial elites, and was adopted and rhetorically expressed by the military *Derg* regime under the guise of centralist revolutionary socialism (Marxism), globally in vogue at the time. When the *Derg* refused to yield to a form of transitional or civilian government, "revolutionary military socialism" became its dominant model of ideology and governance. The state became a unitary one, entertaining the precepts of Marxist-Leninist ideology – also shared by the armed opposition fronts of the time, like the EPRP, MEISON, OLF, TLPF, SLM, and others[9] – and did not recognize or respect regionalist tendencies. One-party rule gradually took shape under a dictatorial strongman.

It has to be noted that under the *Derg* the nationality discourse was first introduced: following Stalinist theory and practice, popular among the student movements, a new "Institute for the Study of Ethiopian Nationalities" (ISEN) was set up to make an inventory of the Ethiopian nationalities and their territories. Maps and ethnographic profiles were duly produced. Also literacy campaigns were started in a number of indigenous languages next to Amharic.

When the TPLF-EPRDF assumed power after its military victory in May 1991, it largely took over the ISEN maps and ethnic classifications and proceeded to work out a new regional and district division of the country, closely following the ethno-linguistic lines put on paper by the ISEN experts. Later, the ISEN was turned into the National Electoral Board (in the same building), as the electoral constituencies were based on ethno-linguistic districts. This minute ethnic cartography was seen as needed to tune the emerging democratic structures to the new "ethnic party" structures: every ethnic group had to have its own political party, under the aegis of the ruling EPRDF. These were of course the so-called PDOs – "People's Democratic Organizations" – ethnic satellite parties among the various ethnic groups set up

and controlled by EPRDF cadres, without much grass roots influence. In a later phase several smaller and related groups were merged in one PDO party.

As a result of the classificatory work started under the *Derg*, the EPRDF conception of ethnicity and politics provided space for the self-expression of specific ethnic and language groups. It also led to a strong territorialization of ethnicity: ethnicity was territory, with exclusivist tendencies, and forms of mixture did not really fit the scheme, especially in the towns and cities, which were almost by definition mixed and pluralist. But also in the countryside, there were some problems, as rural districts were, *contra* reality, held to be the territory of *one* "original" ethnic group, and of one only. Here we see a perhaps well-intentioned programme leading to essentialist group images and classifications of minorities or migrants as "strangers" or "latecomers" that are difficult to accommodate. While the legal basis for this perception may be absent, practice tends to confirm the picture, especially in regard to members of minority groups or caste groups that are too small to be recognized politically.[10]

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The legal framework: progress on paper and a basis for development

The legal framework that underlies Ethiopian politics is an elaboration of the political ideology of the party that won the civil war in 1991, the TPLF/EPRDF, and has not changed much. While the 1991 Transitional Charter first indicated the strong ethnic basis of the future political dispensation of post-conflict Ethiopia, the basic document is obviously the Ethiopian Constitution, drawn up by a committee appointed by the ruling party and ratified in the transitional parliament in December 1994. The two most salient and still much debated elements here are: (a) the definition of "political sovereignty" – this is vested in the "nations, nationalities, and peoples" of the country (article 8); and (b) the secession clause in article 39 – any nation, nationality or people (=ethnic group) that wished to secede from the federation can do so after following the required three-step procedure. This most unusual clause (only found in the old Soviet Union constitution) is a perennial bone of contention – and rightly so, because it reflects the underlying emphasis (or dilemma) of the Constitution as a document emphasizing the differentiating instead of unifying elements of the federation. On the basis of the documents, 64 NNPs received the right to establish self-governments, as enumerated in Proclamation no. 7 of 1992.[11] While it has created a legal and political reality, it was practically never tried, and is unlikely to be allowed to be put into practice.

Many have commented of the strongly static, primordialist definition of "ethnic groups" (i.e., of what in Ethiopian legal texts are called "nations, nationalities and peoples", here abbreviated as NNPs). For example, in article 39(5) of the Ethiopian constitution it says:

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

This is still the official view on the NNPs in Ethiopia, although it does not cover all groups. It assumes a certain static view of the groups and does not reflect the views of

ethnicity as a social "part-identity", invoked situationally. Numerous critical reflections have been offered in academic work and evaluative reports showing that this view does not reflect reality and cannot work together with democracy.[12] But it is maintained anyway because it is a convenient framework elaborated in territories, electoral districts and control structures, e.g., via ethno-regional parties linked to the ruling party. Next to the three categories mentioned, a fourth category is added in another article of the Constitution (art. 53.2): the "minority nationality": one that is too small to form a regional or district self-government or a voter district of its own.[13] Twenty-two such "minority nationalities" always receive one seat each in the parliament, the House of People's Representatives.

A federal institution worth mentioning is the second chamber, the House of the Federation (HoF),[14] which is largely a constitutional control chamber made up of people from the Regions and has elected members from the regional state parliaments. Here the ruling party EPRDF has also great influence. The HoF has members from all the 74 recognized ethnic groups (NNPs) in the country. Its chief role is to interpret the Constitution (at the exclusion of the Judiciary), to mediate in disputes between zones or regional states (article 62.6) and to contribute to decisions on formulas for regional state revenue sharing. In the past 20 years it often mediated relatively successfully in ethnic group boundary disputes. Still, the HoF is not a very active institution; perhaps understandable, because is has no legislative function.

There is also a Ministry of Federal Affairs, directly under the Prime Minister, that is concerned with dispute resolution and "capacity building" of the regions. It has been growing in importance in the past decade and has more impact than the HoF because of its closeness to the Executive and its capacity to enforce its decisions. The Ministry of Federal Affairs (issuing from the previous Regional State Issues bureau in the PM's office) also runs prisons and is in charge of security in the peripheral, lowland regions. The existence of such a Ministry (at the federal level and in a supposedly federal political system) indicates the continued objective of the central government to manage the ethno-regions. This may produce contradictions to the basic idea of federalism. At the same time, this Ministry has been able to help defuse several ethnic group conflicts in the west, south-west and south of the country.[15]

Part of the federal structure is the aim of decentralization and devolution of power and decision-making to the ethno-regions: regarding budget, revenue collection, self-administration, the judiciary, and local development planning. This programme of decentralization has had limited results over the past two decades, but it can be seen in the adoption of the locally dominant languages for administrative purposes and the staffing of the new bureaucracy by ethnic locals. A great problem is always said to be "the lack of capacity", but the more important one has been that of corruption and nepotism.

A final notable element of ethnic federalism is the public celebration of ethnic diversity. The colourful folkloric aspects of this diversity are advertised on large street posters, on national TV programmes on ethnic dance and song, on postage stamps, via touristic products, and in cultural festivals such as the annual "Nationalities, Nations and Peoples' Day", a national meeting day for representatives of the many peoples in the country. There is also a cultural policy document[16] that in principle promises to enhance or preserve culture and heritage throughout the country. In practice, however, such aims of preservation and respect of cultural diversity are hemmed in and undermined by laws about "development" (to which

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everything should be subsumed), policies toward the abolition of "harmful traditional practices" (controversial;[17] determined by the federal government, not the communities themselves), and by frequent statements by government spokesmen and leaders that the livelihoods of such groups are not sustainable and that they cannot be preserved like natural species or museum pieces.

The federal order is a very complex structure. This is evident from the constitution, the many additional laws and proclamations issued since 1994, and the institutional layers established top-down. It has in actual practice led to the emphatic presence and interference of the federal government via the ruling party and its officers/employees (cadres) to create an effective governance structure and monitor or sanction "deviations". Recently one Ethiopian observer even said that the federation does not show enough devolution of powers, and that "there is absolutely no political freedom at the state level. Today … the government of Ethiopia operates more like a unitary state".[18]

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Ethnicity and the ideology of "revolutionary democracy"

Many commentators have discussed the ideology that runs across the ethno-federal constitutional structure: that of "revolutionary democracy". This is not the place to elaborate on this[19] but suffice it to say that this ideology of the ruling TPLF/EPRDF party is a hybrid ruling ideology derived from Leninism, infused with some democratic principles, and confronted with or applied to ethnic diversity in the country. For our purposes here, I only note that "revolutionary democracy" was seen by EPRDF in 1991 as the way to implement the "democratization" of Ethiopia by way of according ethnic rights and exercising local, ethnicized power via derived, satellite ethnic parties in the newly established ethnic districts and regions.[20] In this governance venture, the use of political advisers, i.e., the ruling party "cadres" as they are called, is vital. They are active across the country training and "guiding" local administrations. Inevitably, this phenomenon enhances the intertwining of ruling party, government and state,[21] and reflects the revolutionary-democratic party ideal of so-called "democratic centralism". The democratic content of this formula is, however, limited or let us say, peculiar.[22]

Ethiopia's ethno-federal democracy is of course not a liberal parliamentary democracy as commonly accepted.[23] It is rather centralist and vanguardist, under a ruling party. As said, it is a direct product from revolutionary Marxist-Leninist thinking and does not entertain the possibility of a possible loss of power in elections, although of course elections have been held. The EPRDF stance is that liberal democracy cannot work in a developing country like Ethiopia and that the country needs a dominant party (now called *awra party* in Amharic: the "dominant" party). This was substantiated in all elections so far, where the EPRDF always came out as the overwhelming winner. Interesting is that this idea of the impossibility or "undesirability" of liberal democracy was virtually refuted by the 2005 elections, a remarkable phase of electoral performance in that the opposition parties of the time gained a very large following and had been allowed to appear in state TV debates and to campaign, etc. Here we saw a real dawn of political pluralism. But only when it appeared that the opposition parties could win the vote and thus jeopardize the entire revolutionary-democratic programme, the process was probably interfered with and the ruling party still won in the end.[24] But the point is: voters (we will never know how many exactly) knew what to vote for and wanted in many

districts to vote the EPRDF out of office. There are some data for various regions,[25] suggesting that support for parties did not follow predictable "ethnic" or urban – rural lines. At the level of the National Electoral Board, however, votes disappeared in a non-transparent counting exercise. When a coalition government would have been formed in 2005, the Ethiopian political experiment would have entered a new democratic phase, and the ideology of the ruling party would have to be modified and adapted in political practice. To sum up, as the EPRDF won all elections on any level since 1991, the revolutionary-democratic model, with its strongly centralist approach, was retained, and the federal democratic model has not really been put to the test.

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Ethnic diversity and the ethnic regions – a new socio-political structure of group relations

Numerous legal and logical analyses have been made of the nature and effects of the federal structure of Ethiopia, and many reach similar conclusions. I will not repeat them here. But to draw up the balance of the almost 20 years of ethno-federalism one has to look at the facts of the ground: how has the model fared in reality. Only a brief survey can be given here.

- The innovative and encouraging aspect of Ethiopia's ethno-linguistic based federalism in the 1990s was that it initiated a liberating phase of ethnic and linguistic self-expression. People used their freedom for ethnic, linguistic and cultural expression. For instance, a whole series of new ethno-historical, language and folkloric publications written by members of the groups themselves was published, and still is. According to law, no ethnic group or individual should be afraid or to be ashamed of performing his/her ethnicity. Old denigrating categories, such as "Shanqila" used for the black, south-western ethnic minorities, are forbidden by law and can lead to court cases for group insult.[26] Local administrations can pursue their affairs and meetings in the dominant local languages, such as Sidama or Wolaitta or Gamo or Afar. All this does not preclude the continued existence of prejudice and of denigration of certain groups by others. Nor did these rhetorical acts construe equality between the groups: ethnic ranking and hierarchy, e.g. of highland groups towards lowland groups, continues.[27]
- Specific local cultural policies according to the ethnic make-up of a region or zone or district can be developed and pursued. Research on local languages and folklores is facilitated more.
- There has been decentralization and devolution of powers, at least in outward from and appearance. Much of it is, however, more akin to deconcentration. More funds have been flowing to regional authorities, and some regional state can act autonomously in securing external (even foreign) project aid.
- New institutions for conflict mediation were instituted through state organs like the HoF, the Ministry of Federal Affairs, district or regional courts and the ruling party branches. Also some recognition was given to the role of local community elders and religious authorities (i.e., if they are not serious matters like assault, highway robbery, homicide or specified "political crimes" as defined by the government), although ruling party/government officials usually kept control of the proceedings.

- There has been a resurgence of sub-national and ethnic identities, sometimes with political overtones. One example was the fight over "WoGaGoDa" in the Wolaitta area in 1999–2000, discussed below. This has an economic dimension in that new ethnic entrepreneurs seek to foster specific types of ethnic belonging for instrumental reasons: a rational response to an institutional system that puts a premium on ethnic group rights.
- Local border and identity conflicts, often incorrectly dubbed "ethnic" conflicts, have however increased. A fair number of newly emphasized ethnic groups pleaded for their own separate administrative division. Often they got a special district (*liyyu woreda*). Some of these border disputes became very lethal. All this has resulted in more local intolerance and exclusivist claim-making. People may have the right, and may feel happy, in asserting a newly found identity, but mostly the process seems to be shaped by a political economy of claim making for local power, jobs as well as federal budgets.
- Territories have become mono-ethnic, even if they were not so historically; they cannot be shared by two or more groups. Acrimonious conflicts and personal drama have often been the result. One case was the repeated expulsion of northern (re)settlers of "Amhara" origin from Wälläga in 2000[28] (and later in 2005), which reportedly happened with the connivance of the local authorities. It is to be recalled also that various Regional State constitutions carry the clause that the "sovereignty" in the Region resides in the majority ethnic group or people, thus excluding the other inhabitants.
- Especially pastoralist groups have become more vulnerable as the state and the regional authorities want them to "settle" and suspect them of fomenting instability and over-exploitation of the environment.[29]
- The actual power and interference of the federal government in regional and local affairs has become stronger than under any previous regime.
- There is strong normative social and cultural pressure on minority ethnic groups to conform to highland society lifestyles and to abandon traditional livelihoods and so-called "harmful traditional practices".
- The federal structure is undermined, and thwarted at times, by the political ideology of the government (=ruling party), i.e., revolutionary democracy, as the party retained all real power at the centre and has not sufficiently "democratized" the federal structure: the say of the regions and the zones on any policies is very limited.

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Conflict and mediation – some examples

Conflict in the federation has not been scarce. On the national level there are two ethno-regional movements that offer armed resistance: the Oromo Liberation Front for Oromo autonomy rights in various parts of Ethiopia, and the Ogaden National Liberation Front for autonomy or independence of the Somali in Eastern Ethiopia (Region 5). Granted that these two movements are violent, have in the recent past made several incomprehensible decisions and killed scores of innocent civilians and bystanders, there is also a historical basis for their grievances, which were not yet handled adequately by the state. I will not discuss the movements here, but it seems that in itself article 39 of the Constitution has allowed or

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encouraged some ethnic-based organizations in the country from historically underprivileged groups to develop secessionist programmes. Obviously, ethno-regional insurgent movements existed before the promulgation of the 1994 Constitution, but article 39 has given their cause a legal basis, and both movements mentioned have appealed to it. But any stirring in these respective regions to start a process towards more autonomy or secession was suppressed and institutionally thwarted; and no region will, despite the right to do so, ever have the practical possibility to secede from Ethiopia. So the principle of conceding secession seems vacuous in the face of the very strong federal state and its Executive. It serves as a rhetoric device in back gear, the constitution drafters assuming that because of its formal presence and enticement value it will never be resorted to. This has, however, undermined the sincerity of the federal idea.

I now turn to some elements of conflict perception, amongst which are the following. As noted above, the classification of Ethiopia's citizens primarily in terms of their ethnicity as well as the strong *territorialization* of groups has been accompanied by and perhaps been a casual factor in, numerous *new* local-level conflicts about who is what, and to heavy pressure on people to "come out" for one ethnicity (e.g., of the father) and not the other.[30] Also conflicts erupt frequently about the right to have a job in the local ethnicized administration, about voting or candidature rights, and especially of course about *borders*. Borders between regions, zones and districts have been the recurring issue of dozens of conflicts, many of them violent and with numerous casualties (I counted c.5000–6000 people killed over the past 20 years in such "ethnic" and "border" conflicts). This however is not to say that all resulted from state-induced border arrangements.

There is also *minority discrimination and ethnic inequality*. While some authors claim[31] that ethnic conflicts do not really occur in Ethiopia because the new regions and districts are staffed and led by members of the locally dominant ethnic group and thus cannot suppress their "own people", reality is different. We have seen conflict and repression of people by the local administration or security forces from nominally their own ethnic community, examples of armed clashes and expulsions of people of a certain ethnic group from certain areas, and the barring of qualified locals for jobs in the local administration or school system because of their preferring another political party.

Solutions have to be found here for the practical consequences and the mechanisms of "enemy making" on the local level that produce this. While the formal ethno-political structure as such cannot always be held responsible for violent abuse, it may by its rhetorical construction and governance practices stimulate difference and antagonism.

One would say that this aspect of conflict production in the federal political experiment needs amendment or at least elaboration, optimizing the use of available procedures for conflict prevention and resolution given by the Constitution and by additional laws, e.g. on "alternative conflict resolution mechanisms" (as announced by the government in 2006 and tried several times, e.g. in 2007 in the Ethiopian Southwest, when a settlement between several warring pastoral ethnic groups was reached).

Some well-known examples of conflict and mediation of recent years, closely related to the ethno-federal political framework, follow below.

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Wogagoda

Wogagoda was the name of a composite Omotic language in which the federal government wanted to conduct local administration and the education system, in order to save costs and "unite" four groups: the Wolaitta, Gamo, Gofa and Dawro, all speaking closely related languages.[32] But the groups resisted; notably the dominant Wolaitta, who feared being overruled by others and rejected cultural-linguistic "colonization". Protests erupted in November 1999 in which c.12 people were killed and millions worth of school books and property were destroyed. In the Wolaitta capital Soddo, local people turned on members of other groups, e.g., Gamo people who were in the police force, to vent their anger. An initial federal government clamp-down was followed by negotiations and abandonment of the language plans. The problem was thus "solved" on the federal, not on the regional, state level. Wolaitta as a result was also granted a new status as a separate Zone and was detached from the larger North Omo Zone. Proper consultation in advance to these perhaps well-intentioned language plans could have prevented the casualties.

Anywa–Nuer relations

In Gambella regional state there has been perennial competition and conflict between the indigenous sedentary Anywa people and the agro-pastoral Nuer, many of whom have since 1991 migrated in large numbers into Gambella, and since more than 15 years appear to form the numerical majority. The EPRDF initially supported an Anywa-dominated local administration, but later shifted towards support of the Nuer. Other local minorities as well as "highlanders" (Amhara, Gurage, Oromo, Tigray) were left out of the local administration, not being "indigenous". The features of this conflict have been repeated clashes, persistent border disputes, and rounds of killings, the worst one in 2003 when dozens of people died in Gambella town. The federal government contained the problem but has not been able to find a durable solution for the division of power.[33] It was also accused of sometimes fanning the conflict.[34]

Benishangul-Gumuz regional state

In this small and rather marginal regional state (0.5 million people) a conflict erupted in the mid-1990s between the various population groups, indigenous Berta, Gumuz and descendants of later immigrant groups like the Oromo, the Amhara and other "highlanders", about political representation, ethnic districts, and the regional presidency. As the groups did not differ much in population size and as there was no majority ethnic group, fierce competition started among the two indigenous groups for the leadership and for resources via claims for new ethnic district units. Under the federal system's rules, the highlanders (counting c. 35% but not being "indigenous") were excluded from the leading positions: they were so-called "non-titular" groups. After inter-group rioting (Gumuz vs. Berta and Berta vs. Amhara/highlanders) and boycotts of the regional government by either the Gumuz or the Berta representatives, a commission of the House of the Federation could successfully intervene by negotiating a complicated compromise formula with ethnic quota, formation of a new "special *woreda*" for the Amhara resettler population, new councils, and a structure of alternate power holding. Peace in the region is

maintained due to federal control and intricately balancing the ethnic interests, although at the exclusion of the largest group, the highlanders. Stability does not seem durable.

Somali–Oromo relations

In the vast border area of the Oromo and Somali regions in southeast Ethiopia there are ongoing disputes about land, border and identities. First of all, there have been frequent disputes between the Boran-Oromo and Somali clans since 1991. Secondly, Somali and Oromo identities are not unambiguous; some groups claim to be both Somali and Oromo, like the Garre, Garrimarro, or Gabbra, and what they emphasize may depend on wider perceptions of their interests and access to power and resources. Even the "ownership" of the regional town of Moyale (on the Kenyan border) was contested by the local ethnic/clan groups. In 2003–04 there were disturbances in the area on regional borders, along a *new* fault line of Gerri (originally Darod Somali) and Jarso (who are Somalized Oromo). Interestingly the two groups previously had an alliance of more than a hundred years. Their being imbricated in local ethnic politics and claims of local ethnic parties made them drift apart and emphasize a more separate identity,[35] and conflict erupted. The federal government then organized a referendum in October 2004 to settle the emerging boundary dispute between the Oromia and Somali regional states. As a result, more than 35 Gerri–Jarso *kebele*s were transferred to the Oromia region,[36] others remained in Somali Region 5. Again the federal government was instrumental in negotiating a deal by confirming an ethnic "separation".[37]

So in most of the cases above solutions were found, be it often tardy and haphazard. Issues of population balance (no one group being overwhelmingly dominant), local leadership, as well as government promises may have been conducive here. But the point is that disputes keep (re)surfacing, and separation and containment seem to be pursued as solutions. This is evident, for instance, in the large number (13 at present) of "special *woreda*s" – or districts – within a zone or between zones that have more autonomy than others.

Ethio-democracy and ethnic-based federalism: inherent tensions?

So we have seen "revolutionary democracy" and territorialized ethno-linguistic federalism in the past two decades, and in view of the facts on the ground – the many reports in the Ethiopian press about clashes and land disputes – there are tensions. Why? Because Ethiopian ethno-federalism is a "container federalism", based on fixed ethnic entities. The federal structure is precariously democratic and generates competition between the NNPs (or ethnic groups), specifically their aspiring elites, about "resources" – land, water, minerals, federal funds and about communal or religious identity. In other words, they have a political interest to take position against each other.[38]

The social facts of ethnic identity and local group relations show that ethnicity is fluid, ambivalent and negotiated. An ethno-federal system needs to be legally and institutionally capable of recognizing and pragmatically handling these dynamic aspects, which result in opportunistic behaviour, group-based claim making, and shifts in (ethnic) self-identity. There is – ambiguous – evidence that the Ethiopian federal state has furthered such pragmatic solutions in the field – as in the

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Benishangul-Gumuz region, in the South, or on the Amhara–Afar border. But the legal framework per se (the Constitution and the other laws) as well as the governance practices, e.g. of the strongly centre-dominated Ministry of Federal Affairs, may paradoxically hinder this pragmatism.

Furthermore, there is tension in the federal system due to: (a) strong administrative control from the centre, with capillary dual control structures into all regions; (b) economic and budgetary dependency of ethno-regions on the federal centre; (c) insufficient decentralization in administrative and economic practice; (d) a clever district voting system tied to the national ruling party and its allies where the "first past the post" system guarantees that a local ethnic majority represented by a party linked to the ruling party EPRDF always wins the vote and rules the region.[39]

Critics say that a recurrent problem of the federation is the unchanged one-party dominance based on the old Marxist "democratic-centralist" thinking: top-down policies by the vanguard party.[40] The latter indeed may often "know best" and they have a clear programme, but this works against political pluralism and grass roots initiatives, and does not allow us to gauge the extent of consent of ethnic elites towards the current political federation. There is a tendency to rule by coercion and by imposed "solutions". At the same time there is a reluctance or fear to use local initiatives and customary mediation mechanisms in times of conflict. Perhaps the Ogaden situation is the best example of this. Here we see a major problem where the government and the population are not able to work out a solution.[41] The regional government in the Ogaden (Region 5) is not performing well and, supported by federal security, responds with strong armed force to suppress the rebel movement ONLF as well as civilians suspected of assisting them. An emergency law situation is in place and the humanitarian and food situation remains dramatic.

A general basis for tension in the federation may also be that the current nine large ethno-regions make often little economic and geographic-ecological sense: widely disparate parts of various language communities, e.g., of Amhara and Oromo, were lumped together in a region. But the ethno-linguistic units were (and are) not economic or political units. Parts of these regions were or are economically more related to neighbouring regions outside the regional state and with those inside it. For instance, Wollega Oromo with Gumuz (in another state), Gojjam Amhara with Wollega Oromo, or Afar with Somali and Tigrayans. Even enmity between various parts of allegedly the "same people" has been regularly recorded on the basis of different beliefs, values and livelihoods (clashes between Guji vs. Boran, both Oromo-speaking). Also annexations of areas belonging historically to other ethnic-national groups were recorded, based not on ethno-linguistic but on profitable economic criteria, e.g. the large Humera sesame-producing areas to Tigray while it was historically part of Amhara (Gondar/Begemdir). Asymmetry is found in any kind of federation, but the territorial, economic and demographic imbalances in the Ethiopian one are created on presumed ethno-linguistic grounds and ideologically enforced unity, and have introduced a new hierarchy that will remain a bone of contention.

One of the underlying aims of a federation is to further *stability*, via the recognition of autonomy and self-determination claims, the application of rule-of-law principles in political practice, and the mediation of conflicts. I will not discuss the evidence about recent conflicts regarding politics proper, e.g., the national elections (2005, 2010), the government/party attitude towards opposition parties, the precarious existence of the independent press, of NGOs, of independent labour

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unions, of public dissent, and the ongoing rebellion and counter-insurgency in Somali Region 5. But I note that in the domain of ethnic relations many observers have doubted whether stability and consensus seeking were decisively enhanced by the current political model, which has politicized ethnicity. Although there are good examples of successful mediation and solution of certain problems via the House of the Federation or the Ministry of Federal Affairs, the fact that so-called ethnic conflicts are produced time and again on the local level is a moot point. As noted, an inventory of "ethnic–based" incidents and conflicts mentioned in the press and in various human rights reports over the past years has revealed dozens of cases and with a disturbing number of fatalities.

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The new dynamics

New economic developments and the growing role of the federal Executive in recent years may mark a departure from the ethno-federal model as we know it. The recent emphasis on, if not obsession with, "development", in the sense of grand infrastructure investments (hydropower schemes) and commercial agriculture ventures by foreign investors being given large tracts of land, has increased the grip of the federal government, bypassing the regional states and the local populations. Land is state property and can be easily expropriated and used for state or foreign investment.[42]

While the debates on the benefits and pitfalls of ethno-federalism will go on, there is therefore a possibility that they will become secondary of even fairly irrelevant in the face of the economic changes and the general development of Ethiopian society. The massive infrastructure works, new economic ventures, large resettlement projects in the South, hydro-power dam schemes, land investments, etc., may engender a new nation-wide dynamic that rekindles "assimilation" processes or socio-economic mobility across the (ethnic) regions. This is indeed to be expected, and indeed the Ethiopian federal government does everything to deflect attention from existing problems of group tensions, democratic deficit[43] and conflict. But these processes of "assimilation" and growing trans-group contracts will not occur without legal and political changes. The Ethiopian government/ruling party aims to keep full control of the process and, according to critics, appears to run the economy as a party-co-opted venture.

A brief analysis of the recently started Ghibe-3 dam venture and of the alienation of large tracts of land from pastoral and agrarian peoples in the south and west of the country makes these control structures clear.[44]

The Ghibe-3 dam in the Lower Omo River

The federal project since 2006 to build a third large dam in the Omo River aims to generate a huge reservoir for electricity production, also for export. The interruption of the flow of the Omo River will have a serious impact on the livelihoods of c.200,000 people downstream up to Kenya, impeding their flood bank cultivation systems, fishery, and availability of pasture. Most of these people happen to be smaller agro-pastoral ethnic groups. The local people were not seriously involved in consultations and their customary land rights not recognized, because this dam was defined as a matter of overriding national concern. The environmental and social impact assessment report was weak and late. Serious compensations were not on

offer except vague promises of schools, clinics, or roads. Sedentary cultivators may indeed receive some compensation and low-paid job offers, but the needs and rights of pastoral (mobile) groups are more difficult to meet. Local objections towards the building of this dam in the manner proposed have been quelled and can even land people in prison.[45] Here we see that ethnic minorities have little possibility to defend themselves against federal development plans and are left to their own devices; they simply must submit and share in the "development" to come. Here the federal structures could have performed much better but did not feel any need to do so. According to local people and observers this contradicts the letter and spirit of the federation.

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Large-scale land investments by foreigners

A new phenomenon since c.2006 is that of the federal and regional governments handing out huge tracts of land for commercial agrarian investment, mostly to foreigners, against lease fees and easy conditions. Most of the land is said to be unproductive and empty terrain, fit for cultivation. Partly this is true. But a large portion of these lands is also used in a low intensity manner by local groups as essential livelihood supplement (livestock pasture, forest product gathering, bee-keeping, shifting cultivation, water supply). The figures are staggering,[46] and the land – being formally state property – is easily alienated from local people and then fenced off. In many cases, proper socio-ecological assessment studies have not been carried out, and the idea of serious dialogue about the plans is absent. Again ethnic minorities – although not the only ones affected[47] – are extra vulnerable because they cannot defend their rights (small numbers, lack of language knowledge and regional connections). The options for local people are to move out and migrate to other areas,[48] or to become (low-paid) labourers on the newly established mega-farms, taken out of their social fabric and networks. Alternative areas or facilities are not prepared for them and many are lost and become destitute.[49]

This process is very recent and its full effects are not yet known. The social and ecological impacts may be different from what the federal government expects. The hope is that these large agro-firms will have a positive effect on food security in Ethiopia[50] as well as an economic and technological-managerial spill-over effect on Ethiopian agriculture, but this is not guaranteed unless the federal government imposes stricter conditions, demands training for Ethiopians and provides proper compensation for locals.

These massive processes of socio-economic engineering and change – which call to mind the state schemes described in James Scott's famous study *Seeing like a State*[51] – do radically impinge on local peoples and undermine their rights as local cultivators or as minority ethnic groups vis-à-vis the central state and dominant groups, and thus seem to endanger their ethnic rights in their own homeland areas. The state projects mentioned represent (in Scott's terms) a "high-modernist" development ideology that is not interested in local knowledge and people: local people were only nominally consulted and are not in effect seen as stake-holders, and in no case of the proposed schemes has any serious alteration been made.[52] Here a seamless continuity can be found with the large "Socialist" schemes of resettlement, villagization and collective agriculture that were tried under the *Derg* regime,[53] although the ideological justification is now democratic-centralist developmentalism. As noted above, neither were commensurate compensations offered, and it is unclear

if they will materialize. The problem is not that development on a large scale is started in Ethiopia – this can have benefits. The problem is that the regional states and lower authorities have no power or inclination to consider or to protect minority ethnic groups from adverse effects contained in certain federal policies. This, I think, reveals a weakness of the ethno-federal order and its democratic content.[54]

The ruling government, or party (the same), is adamant about these large development schemes and about its vanguard ideology of "revolutionary democracy", but the latter seems to subvert essential elements of the federal order and the rights to culture and livelihood of the various ethnic groups. It is to be asked whether in some respects the revolutionary democracy ideology has perhaps not outlived the conditions of the early 1990s, when the new regime was faced with the task of "holding together" a diverse and complex country in a post-war situation. Even apart from the contentious electoral–political processes of recent years and its need of constant and costly monitoring (via omnipresent cadres), the ideology may contradict some of the demands of the formal ethno-federal order. In the case of the two big schemes mentioned above, it can be contended that local peoples simply have to adapt to the new national development schemes, but if that is enforced without involving them and by asking them to utterly change their livelihoods and ethno-cultural profile[55] – which they have the constitutional right to keep and preserve – it is unclear what the meaning of ethno-federalism is.

To come back to the general point of the possible impact of the overall economic changes and the general development of Ethiopian society, there is no doubt that social frameworks and ethnic relations will change in their wake. But this change will not materialize if some legal and institutional facilitation is not provided. E.g., rural land is not owned by people and cannot be sold (FDRE 2005), ethnicity is still the defining basis of territorial-administrative units, and so-called illegal migrants from poorer areas and with another ethnicity have a tenuous status are regularly chased out by local authorities (from another ethnic group) from the areas where they migrate to. The emergence of a more diffuse, dynamic category or middle class of trans-regional people is thus inhibited and the economic dynamics hindered. While even the aforementioned position of economic growth and development as most important national challenge may eventually carry the day, it cannot succeed when the political model and its legal constraints are not adapted to these processes. It remains to be seen if the current party in power is able or willing to make any adaptations, but one might hope so.

Conclusion: a mixed picture

Ethiopia in the past 20 years has rhetorically liberated ethnic relations, accorded many ethnic rights, and enhanced local self-administration, as evident from the relevant legal texts and the regional-zonal division of the country. Ethnic groups – in their guises of "nations, nationalities and peoples", from the c.28 mln Oromo to the c.70 Ongota (Birale) – are formally recognized and have been exercising rights of political representation and cultural and language development over the past 20 years. But how these are to be reconciled and what scope they can have still remains unclear, especially within the new economic dynamics. Economic upsurge is in full swing and has seen successes. But these do neither "compensate" for the socio-political problems nor guarantee stability. At present there still are constraints and dilemmas in the field of ethnicity and citizenship.

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Ethnicity, in the form of ethnic self-determination claims, is well-developed in political rhetoric but seen as expendable when great national development ventures (dams, resettlement, foreign land acquisitions/plantations) are undertaken. Common citizenship is still underdeveloped, because it is not the basis of constitutional sovereignty and rights – as ethnicity is the prime basis of people's identity: for voting in elections, for party membership, and for identifying yourself when you come to a police station to report a stolen object. Ethnic federalism as an institutional set-up privileges ethnicity as *one* marker of identity over many others (economic, citizenship, occupation, religion, class, or gender) and, in a sense, freezes this one marker of identity, or rather encourages people to identify in ethnic terms. But in many contexts the other ways of identifying are as important, and sometimes more so. Inclusive national discourse, as a result, has suffered and is nowadays constructed primarily in terms of "development" in the classic economic sense (i.e., GDP growth), and not in those of well-being, or democratic performance, or human rights respect, or the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), or the Human Development Index measurement.[56] This despite the renewed rhetorical emphasis on "national unity" celebrated in numerous seminars and public statements. The EPRDF version of pan-Ethiopianist national discourse, developed notably after the Ethio-Eritrean war, and is also seen in occasional symbolic celebrations of "unity in diversity" such as *Flag Day* (since 2008)[57] and *Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Day* (since 2006, an annual celebration of the ethnic group traditions of Ethiopia). But it has not been able to redefine the basis and hierarchy of the ethno-federal system in place. Ethiopian citizenship is still overlaid by cultivated ethno-regional identity, put above democracy. In addition, in daily life ethnic identities are now "internalized" by people to a significant extent. This may enhance more mutual prejudice and stereotyping.

All in all, when considering Ethiopia's ethnic-based federalism one can speak of a mixed picture, with achievements but also threats. A social science perspective on Ethiopia is not out to make normative judgements but describe and explain observable facts and societal trends. One can easily discern both momentous changes and remarkable continuities over the last 20 years in the patterns of governance and in ethnic tensions. The first – the changes – are a testimony to the things achieved and the tasks ahead; the second – the continuities – are indicative of the unresolved problems and the unfulfilled promises that the country has yet to deal with. It is here that the "benchmarks" to assess the ethno-federal model (see introduction) – contribution to (ethnic/regional) self-determination; ability to defuse/prevent ethnic-based conflict; democratic-consultative decision-making; exercise of ethno-cultural rights; an open, trans-ethnic economic arena and partnership; and non-discriminatory, issue-based politics for the federation as a whole – are probably not yet met. These problems would require additional political-legal engineering that could more engage Ethiopia's citizens, depoliticize ethnic identity, and reduce the politics of top-down rule, distrust and threat, indicative of a strongly authoritarian political culture lingering from the past. The French intellectual Alain Finkielkraut once said[58] that recognizing the fundamental unity and solidarity of all humans across ethnic and political lines requires imagination and active work. In analogy, one could say that recognizing the fundamental unity, rights and solidarity of all Ethiopians across such lines requires a similarly positive, constructive attitude. On this account the past 20 years of ethno-federalism have shown a neglect of opportunities,[59] and has yielded an unexpected hardening of political attitudes on the side of the EPRDF government, notably since 2005.[60] It is somewhat of a

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mystery why a party and government that came to power in 1991 with a groundswell of support and even goodwill after the demise of the *Derg* regime has seen fit to taint its historical record by stifling dissent and blocking the emergence of a mature democracy.[61] The ideal of a more representative parliamentary democracy, with political and media freedoms and a reliable, independent justice system, is however a global cause that is unlikely to be abandoned. In Ethiopia, economic resurgence is indeed in progress, with new infrastructure works expanding, investments proceeding, production growing, and several Millennium Development Goals appearing within reach.[62] But perhaps the real work of building an inclusive, democratic and more just society that puts ethnicity in its place and builds on addressing shared challenges and problems has only just begun. Constructive work on commonalities between population groups rather than using difference and division is needed – i.e., a new psychology of trust and cooperation – to maximize the potential and fulfil the ultimate aims of the federation. Thus the traditional might be harmonized with the new. Continued field research on Ethiopia's ethnic groups and peoples, both by government bodies and independent scholars, can contribute to the further understanding of the "experiment".

Notes

1. Vaughan, *Addis Ababa Transitional Conference*; Abbink, "Breaking and Making the State"; Micheau, "The 1991 Transitional Charter."
2. This paper offers a tentative assessment of such "benchmarks". A first sketch of this text was presented at the symposium "Twenty Years since the Change of Government in Ethiopia – Twenty Years since Operation Solomon," at the Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, May 17, 2011. I am grateful to various members of the audience, including Ethiopian Ambassador to Israel, H.E. *Ato* Helawe Yosef, for their questions and comments.
3. Asked in 1995 whether he thought the new federal system would work, he answered: "I don't know, but we have tried everything else, and that didn't work," cited in Clapham, "Nationalism, Nationality and Regionalism."
4. See Maimire, "Federalism, Ethnicity, and the Transition to Democracy"; Alem, "Ethnic Pluralism as an Organizing Principle"; Aalen, "Ethnic Federalism and Self-determination"; Aalen, "Institutionalising the Politics of Ethnicity"; Abbink, "Ethnicity and Conflict Generation in Ethiopia"; Asebe, "Ethnicity and Inter-Ethnic Relations"; Emebet, "Federalism and the Accommodation of Ethnic Diversity"; Hagmann and Mulugeta, "Pastoral Conflicts and State-Building"; ICG, *Ethiopia: Ethnic Federalism and its Discontents*; Kalkidan, "Nonfederal Features"; Asnake, "Federal Restructuring in Ethiopia"; Tronvoll, "Interpreting Human Rights Violations," Tronvoll, "Briefing: The Ethiopian 2010 Federal and Regional Elections."
5. See PM Meles Zenawi's ideological party texts *Perspectives on Bonapartism* and *Again on Bonapartism*, and the EPRDF, *The Development Lines*. For the 2001 crisis, see Paulos, 'The Great Purge'.
6. In this phase, a notable increase of accusations of 'narrow nationalism' or 'tribalism' was seen in the government's public statements and in the official media.
7. MoFED, *Growth and Transformation.*
8. Cf. Messay, "From Marxism-Leninism to Ethnicity."
9. Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Party, All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement, Oromo Liberation Front, Tigray People's Liberation Front, Sidama Liiberation Front.
10. See Tronvoll, "Interpreting Human Rights Violations."
11. See *Negarit Gazeta* "A Proclamation," 7–8.
12. Aalen, "Institutionalising the Politics of Ethnicity"; ICG, *Ethiopia: Ethnic Federalism and its Discontents*; Merera, "Ethnicity, Democratisation and Decentralization"; Teshome,

"Conflict of Ethnic Identity and the Language of Education Policy"; Tronvoll, "Interpreting Human Rights Violations."

13. See Tronvoll, "Interpreting Human Rights Violations."
14. The HoF and its role are described in the Ethiopian Constitution, articles 61–8.
15. In Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State, in Bench-Maji Zone, in South Omo Zone, in Somali–Oromo border areas, a.o.
16. FDRE, *Cultural Policy*.
17. There is even a semi-official list of 138 of such practices: see the curious book by the National Committee on Traditional Harmful Practices of Ethiopia, *Old beyond Imaginings*, 285–90, a work co-financed by Norway's NORAD.
18. See Kalkidan, "Nonfederal Features," 11.
19. See Bassi, "Ethnic federalism and minority rights"; Bach, "*Abyotawi* Democracy," and Merera, "Elections and Democratization" in this issue.
20. For some important programmatic documents, see: Anon., "TPLF/EPRDF's Strategies"; Anon., "EPRDF's Organizational Structure," 16–19; Anon., "EPRDF's Organizational Structure and Operation," 18–22; Anon., "EPRDF's Organizational Structure and Operation: Lessons for the Opposition (III)" 18–21; Anon., "EPRDF's Organizational Structure and Operation: Lessons for the Opposition (IV)," 22–7; Anon., "EPRDF's Organizational Structure and Operation: Lessons for the Opposition (V)," 20–24. See also the more recent EPRDF, *The Development Lines*.
21. Emmenegger, Sibilo and Hagmann, "Decentralization to the Household" (this issue).
22. Cp. Vaughan and Tronvoll, *Culture of Power*; Abbink, "The Ethiopian Second Republic"; Bassi, "Ethnic Federalism and Minority Rights."
23. Article 8.1 of the Constitution states that the sovereignty of the (Ethiopian) people lies not in the individuals/citizens (as in a liberal democracy) but in the "nations, nationalities and peoples," i.e. in collectivities. (FDRE, "The Constitution," 79).
24. EU, *Ethiopia Legislative Elections 2005*.
25. See Arriola, "Ethnicity, Economic Conditions, and Opposition Support."
26. Previously instituted under the *Derg* regime.
27. This is reflected in the policies towards pastoralists, usually seen as backward, uncivilized and in need of change.
28. See Ethiopian Human Rights Council, *Serious Destructions Resulting from Ethnic Governance, 34th Special Report*, Addis Ababa, September 21, 2000.
29. Which is rarely the case, except when boundaries are made and territories are marked off or enclosed.
30. See Hagmann and Mulugeta, "Pastoral Conflicts and State-Building," 29–30; Schlee and Shongolo, "Local War and its Impact," 11–12.
31. Cf. Getachew Assefa, "Human and Group Rights Issues." He wrote: "there is no way for ethnically- or racially-motivated violations to occur, especially for them to be perpetrated by the federal government. In all cases, the day-to-day administrations in the individual states are run by the institutions and personnel of the states themselves" (ibid., 251) – a puzzling and incorrect observation. See Tronvoll's excellent reply, "Interpreting Human Rights Violations."
32. Data, "Enduring Issues in State–Society Relations."
33. Cf. Dereje, "The Experience of Gambella Regional State"; Dereje, "Conflict and Identity Politics."
34. HRW, *Targeting the Anuak* – this report, however, should be read with caution because the casualty figures cited were not independently verified.
35. Asnake, "Federal Restructuring in Ethiopia," 626.
36. Ibid., 617.
37. See also Fekadu, "Overlapping Nationalist Projects."
38. Cf. Abbink, "Ethnicity and Conflict Generation in Ethiopia."
39. People can only vote for ethnic parties that are allowed in their region, not for others present in other states or in urban areas; e.g., an "Oromo party" cannot campaign in Tigray or Afar Region. A more nationally orientated party, the Coaliton for Unity and Democracy (CUD), contested the 2005 elections.
40. Cf. ICG, *Ethiopia: Ethnic Federalism and its Discontents*, 15f.

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41. See Hagmann, "Beyond Clannishness and Colonialism"; Hagmann and Korf, "Agamben in the Ogaden."
42. FDRE, "The Constitution"; Oakland Institute, *Understanding Land Investment Deals in Africa,* 44; Lavers, *The Role of Foreign Investment,* 16.
43. Cf. Hunt, "Ethiopia's Endangered Democracy."
44. See also Bassi, "Ethnic Federalism and Minority Rights."
45. Cf. "Ethiopia's Controversial Dam Project," in *The Guardian*, March 7, 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/mar/07/ethiopia-controversial-dam-criticism-communities (accessed May 2, 2011). See also Tohme, "Turkana under Threat Due to Damming of Omo River in Ethiopia."
46. In 2007–2010 some 2.9 million acres (=1.17 mln. ha.) of land was given out, mostly to foreign investors, and in 2013 the total lease area will be 7.4 million acres by 2013 (=31,000 km^2). McConnell and Overdorff, "New Scramble for Africa's Land." One of the largest concessions is that of Indian firm Karuturi, with 100,000 ha. and with an option of 200,000 ha. more (in Gambela).
47. Most large-scale land acquisitions have so far been in the Gambela, Southern Region, Oromiya and Amhara areas.
48. There are also forms of "contract farming" and "outsourcing," whereby local farmers cultivate part of their land for agrarian investor firms.
49. Some adverse effects of this process are shown in the documentary "Food Crisis and the Global Land Grab"; see especially after 30.00 m., on the farmers in the Bako area.
50. This is uncertain, as the firms can export their harvest to their countries of origin (Saudi Arabia, Korea, India, Malaysia, China, etc.) rather than bring it to the Ethiopian market.
51. Scott, *Seeing Like a State.*
52. Cf. Bassi, "Ethnic Federalism and Minority Rights."
53. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 247–53.
54. For a fuller elaboration of the details of the Gibe III project, see Anderson and Turton, "After the Flood."
55. This change was promulgated by the EPRDF in a 2003 document (FDRE, *Rural Development Policies*, 58), and in a BBC news report of 15 December 2010, quoting Ethiopian government official Abera Deressa as saying that rural life in the areas [of land acquisition] must change, and that: "Pastoralists have enough land for their cattle, but at the end of the day we are not really appreciating pastoralist remaining as they are ... Pastoralism, as it is, is not sustainable. We want to change the environment," http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-11991926 (accessed February 7, 2011). See also similar words in Ethiopian PM Meles Zenawi's speech in Jinka in December 2010, http://www.mursi.org/pdf/Meles%20Jinka%20speech.pdf (accessed April 21, 2011).
56. See Epstein, "Cruel Ethiopia." For the MPI, see Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, *Country Briefing: Ethiopia.*
57. See "Ethiopia to Mark Flag Day Colorfully," Walta news message, 28 August 2010.
58. Finkielkraut, *L'Humanité Perdue.*
59. Cf. Levine, "Ethiopia's Missed Chances, I"; "Ethiopia's Missed Chances, II."
60. Cf. Tronvoll, "Interpreting Human Rights Violations," and "Briefing: The Ethiopian 2010 Federal and Regional Elections."
61. It is unlikely that the Ethiopian public would welcome an "Orwellian" form of (revolutionary) democracy, as presented in the "Bonapartism" papers of 2001 (see cited works in note 5 above).
62. This does not imply that the economic record of the government is universally positive; there is still food insecurity, poor service delivery in some areas, high inflation, and ecological-environmental problems.

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