

Dealing with Territorial Cleavages in Con Transitions

Ethiopia

March 28–29, 2014

Federalism as Means for Taming 'Ethno Nationalism' in Ethiopia

- ▶ Ethiopia historically existed under 'king of kings' that represented the center and kings in provinces
- ▶ Radical change by the end of 19th C and early 20th C – centralized unitary state with a privileged centrist political elite along with 'Nation state' where Amharic **language** (NL – 1991) and Christian religion (**1974**) played as twin tools for centralization and assimilation of diversity
- ▶ The slogan was: 'one Ethiopia, one language, one flag and one religion' other forces branded as 'anti-Ethiopian, divisive, tribal, traitors and disloyal'

‘N Building or N Destroying?’

- ▶ A minority but privileged ruling elite’s identity was promoted to be a state’s identity and imposed on others.
 - ▶ **Identity politicized:** Identity became a means for exclusion or inclusion, source of pride or source of social and psychological trauma – less worthy depending on where one stands.
 - ▶ Cleavage partly reinforcing and partly cross cutting – rival political elites share some values
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Century old process of centralization not smooth ?

- ▶ Resistance against centralization/homogenization initially by farmers from several provinces (1950–60s) called for **modest reform**
- ▶ **Radicalized** with the ESM (1960's and 70's)) a multiethnic movement that gave birth to many political parties.
- ▶ The 'question of nationalities' took center stage, civil wars whose cause, goal fundamentally differed from earlier ones.

- ▶ Ethiopia constituted a 'prison house of nationalities and' the then activists called for the end to 'national oppression'
- ▶ the exact meaning, scope and how to end, not clear, little agreement.
- ▶ TPLF 1975/EPRDF 1989 inherited it. This group held that a new and democratic Ethiopia could only be constructed through the voluntary and consensual association of its parts, the 'nation, nationalities and the people' with the NNPs right to self determination up to and including secession, which ended up to be come Art 39 of the federal Constitution of 1995

Failed Efforts to Accommodate Diversity (1974–1991)

- ▶ Observers warning in the 1960s of pol storm
- ▶ 1974 Revolution –military junta ended the Absolute Monarchy–popular cause hijacked by the military junta – the only organized force–revolution added more burdens
- ▶ Solomonic based NB replaced by socialism as a new ideology for building the ‘nation state’
- ▶ The military junta initially showed some signs to address the NQ but only addressed in 1987 con in an obliterated form, too little too late to an already emboldened Etho nationalist forces

TGE 1991–1994 – paradigm shift

- ▶ Fall of the military regime by force in 1991, some 31 Ethio nationalist based parties **negotiated among themselves** to enact ‘the Charter’
- ▶ a process largely **dominated** by ‘NLF’ (had an **easy way!**) hence the emphasis on the right of ‘NNP’s, at times at expense of the overarching state
- ▶ centrist political elite demoralized, largely **sidelined but not fully excluded –AAPO**
- ▶ Established TGE, national parliament which **fairly represented** the NLF with 14 states largely based on language, a prelude to the post 1995 era was set, 5 states in South merged SNNP – nine states, **current PM**
- ▶ Charter provided the right to self determination, officially proclaimed Eth as home of NNP, indeed were declared as its building bricks, ‘we the NNP’..., art 8/39

- ▶ The parties agreed as well to facilitate the establishment of elected local governments as well as to elect Constitutional Assembly.
- ▶ CA was elected to draft and adopt a new Con. The draft constitution was subject to public debate?. Self determination, land and the issue of how to organize the federal units in the new constitution (**ethnic based or merely geographic**) remained very divisive issues
- ▶ Adopted by CA December 8 1994 and came to force in August 1995

reflection

- ▶ In constitutional design, the **process** is certainly as important as the **final product**.
- ▶ Initially the TGE was more inclusive government than the country had had in its entire history. Although it **was not elected**, it was able to represent the **major contenders of power and the then existing contending views**.
- ▶ Yet some forces withdrew from the process of implementing the charter and con making of 1994. It began with a **more inclusive process** but ended up as a **process dominated by one party, a section of the opposition missing since then**.
Continues to be a big challenge even today

1995–The Pillars of Ethno nationalist federation

- ▶ The fed in response to the NQ takes politically salient ethno nationalism seriously but goes much further than is needed. It promotes every group to be EN which is not correct., nine states, two cities (**AA, Dire Dawa**) acc to fed govt
- ▶ it is a federation in which the constituent units of the federation are ‘homelands’ controlled by their respective ethno nationalist groups (seven out of nine named after them)
- ▶ through the institutions of shared rule and representation in federal institutions, ethno nationalist groups are given the opportunity to influence decision making at the centre – HoF key role in **allocating subsidy** but the executive is also **fairly shared** among the four coalition members of EPRDF.
- ▶ **Limited sense of power sharing.** A very good practice that was initiated during the TGE but abandoned since then.

- ▶ States are given the mandate to design their own cons, determine their working language, establish state level ins and have the autonomy to make laws/policies that fit their local context subject **to broad standards set by the fed govt**
- ▶ But generously granted con powers and the federal system are **overshadowed** by centralized policy making– Ideology/devtal state under dominant party of **the east Asian** type, Party politics (democratic centralism) – **‘electoral authoritarianism’**

Secession ‘ **free union is a false phrase without the right to secede** ’ Lenin

- ▶ Assumes a coming together type with the NNP as contracting parties with the right of exit. the **secession clause is expressly stipulated (Procedures)** and can not even be suspended during emergency.
- ▶ Ideological and pragmatic reasons for its inclusion.
- ▶ CF with India and Switzerland, apart from art 39, Ethiopia’s federal system is distinct in the sense that it insists to provide one state for every major ethno nationalist group

remarks

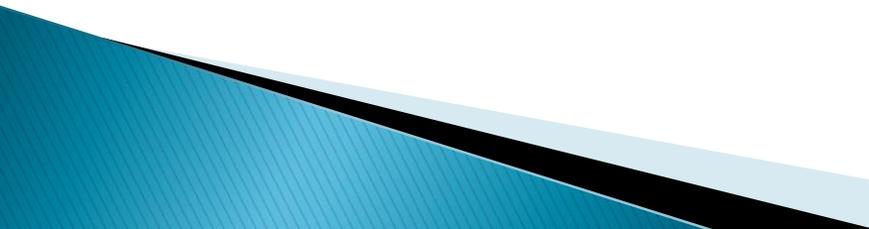
- ▶ ‘Nation state’ in the form of One L/R is not a right strategy to diverse societies. Diversity needs to be taken seriously particularly when territorially grouped and politically mobilized. Appropriate Ins/policies in the form of **shared rule and self rule** need to be put in place but designer’s need not insist on exit option.
- ▶ By 1991 when the military junta’s leader went to exile following sustained attack from ‘National Liberation Front’s, Ethiopia was on **the brink of collapse** with the ethno nationalist based political groups on the **front seat**

- ▶ Given that none of the ethno nationalist group in the country taken alone constitute a majority, a **broader coalition** (currently limited to a coalition within the ruling party) combined with federalism brings more legitimacy to the institutions and the political process.
- ▶ This goes a long way in **explaining the relative peace, economic growth and political stability** gained in the last two decades in a rather fragile region otherwise known as the ‘Horn of Conflicts.’

Balance, transformation?

- ▶ Concern is the ability of the federal project to strike a balance between unity and diversity. *Given the competing NB project, that is,* centrist political elites –absolute loyalty to the overarching **state (Ethiopia first) vs** ethno nationalist elites emphasized on strengthening loyalty to their own group identity at times at the expense of the overarching state. The future in Ethiopia is less certain.

- ▶ The centrist political elite is largely sidelined but alive and vocal.
 - ▶ The impact of hardliner secessionist groups seems to be diminishing following the delivery of the state on the **much needed services** and ethno nationalist accommodation.
 - ▶ The **role** of the ruling ethno nationalist based coalition seems to have been transformed since it took power.
 - ▶ The new political leaders of post 1991 Ethiopia may have come to power as 'leaders of National Liberation Front's' but have undergone fundamental transformation once they assumed state power.
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- ▶ Eg former PM Meles Zenawi the chief architect of ethno nationalism in Ethiopia.
 - ▶ In the last two decades he emerged as uncontested national figure with heavy political clout as a pro poor and pro development ideologue and political practitioner not only within Ethiopia and the Horn but even in global issues.
 - ▶ The Flag Day celebrated every September of each year in which **heads of the army** and all the regional state **figures** attend signaling loyalty to country and its values is another indicator that one could hardly think of in the early 1990's.
 - ▶ Yet it is **difficult to predict how the ruling coalition will behave once its grip on power is threatened.**
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risks

- ▶ minorities within the constituent units and the rights of the individual citizen are given **less emphasis and at times enslaved by ethno nationalist forces**. The former are left at the mercy of the states and there is variation across states.
- ▶ Critical gap: because with increased foreign and domestic investment inter-regional migration is expected to boost thus increasing the new regional state minorities. It fails to strike some balance between the right to self-rule of the various groups on one hand, and the need to promote free movement of labor and capital, on the other.

▶ Thank you

