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Politics by other means: Protests in Ethiopia (2015 -2018)

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Protest has been employed by those who lack access to the resources of organized pressure groups and/or by those whose values conflict sharply with those of the dominant elite. It has been a means of politics by other means. The use of protest as other means of politics in Ethiopia was more pronounced and recurring between the years 2015 and 2018. However, the problem still is little is known about the root causes of the protests. Despite the vast news reporting on the protests, there is little or no comprehensive analysis on the fundamental causes of the protests. Much of the news reporting on the protests focus on immediate causes and overlooked or failed to present a systematized analysis of the fundamental causes. This paper, therefore, aimed at explaining the fundamental causes of the protests in a systematized manner. Thus, the research methodology is explanatory approach. The study employed case study, protest event analysis (PEA), content analysis and historical research methods to formulate inductive reasoning from separate events and incidents in the effort to unearth the underlying causes of the political protests between 2015 and 2018. Theories of social revolution and empiricism are used to put in perspective separate incidents and events in the effort to build up the case. The content analysis and protest event analysis (PEA) revealed that the underlying empirical causes for political protests in Ethiopia during the period under consideration emerged from structural, institutional, ideological contradictions and weakness resulting in marginalization, economic dogmatism, parochial political culture, strategic exclusion, ideological hegemony and weak institutional set ups. These resulted in politicized discontent and eventually political violence.

Key words: Political protest, theories of revolution, protest in Ethiopia.

INTRODUCTION

Political protest as a political activity has been expressed in the form of demonstrations (peaceful and violent), civil resistance/civil disobedience, social movement, strikes and even violence in the modern political history of human kind. It is usually undertaken by those who lack access to the resources of organized pressure groups and /or by those whose values conflict sharply with those of the dominant elite (Whitaker, 2015).

Political protest has been used for years as an instrument to bring about among other things decolonization, democratization, and racial equality (Gurr, 1971; Betts, 1998; Foran, 2005; Adom, 2019). It has been a means of politics by other means (Clausewitz, 1976). Almost all countries of the world have gone

through political protest/social movements to take their current shapes. The American Revolution (1765-1783) in the USA, the famous French Revolution (1789-1799), the Bolshevik Revolution (1917) in Russia, Gandhi's Salt March in India (1930), the civil right movements in USA, South Africa's antiapartheid protest, the Arab Spring in 2011 in the Middle East are only few of the illustration of political protests that shaped the world.

Ethiopia is not exception to this political phenomenon. Only recently, it had been under political protests between 2015 and 2018. Most of the news reports and commentaries on the political protest fall short of comprehensive analysis. There is no available academic work on the fundamental causes of the protests. This paper, therefore, cognizant of that academic lacuna, aimed at explaining the fundamental causes of the protests.

Relative Deprivation, Resource mobilization, mass-society, structural-strain and political process theories are employed to put in perspective separate incidents and their causes in Ethiopia during the period under consideration. The theories are also employed to help improve content validity and construct validity of the paper through theoretical and empirical convergent validity. The paper consists of an introduction, methodology of the research, a brief background about the protests under consideration; it looks into the theoretical frame works to understand perspectives of political protests, and the paper also recollects the pedigree of political violence in Ethiopia's history; empirical conditions in Ethiopia within the purview of theories of protest are explained. The Results and discussion section revealed the fundamental causes of the protests and the last section is recommendations and conclusions.

METHODOLOGY

The study made use of qualitative methods of data collection and analysis and explanatory methodology. Qualitative design was selected because it is important to understand the difference between stated policies and implemented policies, theories and realities. It better helps understand process which is the unit of analysis in this study and helps to formulate inductive reasoning from separate events. "Qualitative methods are useful here, since they help to identify plausible explanatory mechanisms and refine them; allow less plausible mechanisms to be eliminated as well" (Franck, 2002: 11).

The study employed case study, content analysis, protest event analysis (PEA) and historical research designs in combination. The case study method helped to understand the characteristics of the causes of the protests (2015-2018) of the two largest ethnic groups (Oromo and Amhara) in Ethiopia. And the utilization of historical research methods benefited the paper with past available data to study, interpret and understand past events. Content analysis, as 'a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use', was also employed. Through content analysis the theories of protest, policy papers, interviews of leaders and the vast news reporting are analysed in their proper contexts (Krippendorff, 2004: 18).

The research employed inductive analysis whereby conclusions are only be made from data that would be collected in due course of the research process through text, document and content analysis. Document review and analysis are important techniques employed in this study. This study only covers the political protest in Ethiopia between 2015 and 2018. Based on explanatory approach to research, it explained the underlying causes for the political protest in Ethiopia between 2015 and 2018 using social movement theories and empirical realities. "Very often, the introduction of explanatory frameworks that take a broad spectrum of causal factors into account goes hand in hand with the use of case studies in their empirical application" (Blatter and Haverland, 2012: 8).

Prior researches on the subject at hand are hardly available. Those available are highly limited to newspaper commentaries, interviews, positions, press releases. This may possibly compromise the quality of the paper. It limited any possibility of triangulation there by reducing the problem of construct validity. In the effort to improve construct validity; this paper used theories, policy documents as reference of reliability and validity. This ensures content convergence and divergence. "Explanatory approach also allows for taking broader sets of theoretical approaches into account and collecting more finely grained empirical evidence" (Blatter and Haverland, 2012: 8). This also helps to legitimately infer the operationalizations in the paper to the theoretical constructs on which those operationalizations were based. This paper is assumed to be a droplet in the ocean of knowledge of conflict, social movement and political protests. The piece may be important to a range of stockholders like policy makers, researchers, educationalists who are concerned with the Ethiopian politics in particular and by extension third world politics. This tinny study would serve as a spring board for further research on the subject.

Theories of political protest

Empirical data will be interpreted and analysed through the prism of deprivation and relative deprivation, mass society, structural-strain, resource mobilization and political process theories to explain and understand the underlying and immediate causes of the current unrest in Ethiopia. This writing goes through theories of political protest to dissect why and how social discontent turned out to be violent in Ethiopia. Theoretical prisms are important to analyse the situation in perspective as "nothing is as practical as a good theory" (Olson, 1991: 17). Relative Deprivation, Resource mobilization, mass-society, structural-strain and political process theories are indeed as good theories as are empirical realities providing theoretical foundation to the issue under consideration. Thus, in what follows, this paper will be looking into these theories about violence.

Deprivation theory

Deprivation theory argues that political protests have their foundations among people who feel deprived of some good(s), services and/or resource(s) (Morrison, 1978). According to this approach, individuals who are lacking some goods, services, or comfort are more likely to take to the street to improve (or defend) their conditions (Morrison, 1978).

The feeling of deprivation cannot be explained in absolute terms. Because lack of some goods, services and/ or resources create deprivation to some groups and more so than to others. It will not be good enough reason to cause political protest in its own right (Jenkins and Perrow, 1977). This means one needs an additional theoretical explanation to understand the cause of political protests. That brings to the concept of relative deprivation theory (Gurr, 1971; Morrison, 1978).

Relative deprivation theory

The theory of relative deprivation underlines that relative deprivation causes political protest when groups feel that there is inconsistency between their values, desires and their environment's manifest value potentialities (Gurr, 1971). Value prospects/desires are the goods and conditions of life to which people suppose they are fairly entitled. The determinants of value potentialities are to be appeared extensively in the social, political and physical surroundings; they are the stipulations that decide people's known possibilities of obtaining or retaining the norms they justifiably desire to achieve. So, any discrepancy between value prospects and value potentialities or discrepancy between expectation and actuality results in frustration which again leads to aggression to secure expectation (Gurr, 1971).

Relative deprivation is a perceived discrepancy between men's value expectations which is defined as the goods and conditions of life to which people believe they are rightfully entitled and their value capabilities which are the goods and conditions they think they are capable of attaining or maintaining, given the social means available to them (Gurr, 1971:13). Societal conditions that increase the average level or intensity of expectations without increasing capabilities increase the intensity of discontent. Among the general conditions that have such effects are the value gains of other groups and the promise of new opportunities (Gurr, 1971:13).

The frustration resulted from deprivation in relative reference to other groups and dissonance between actual experience and the principles of equity, anomie in estimating potential opportunities resulting in political protest and ultimately conflict. Groups protest or revolt against those who they perceive has more. They do not immediately take concrete measures to resolve the problem related to the sources of deprivation. It is primarily psychological. It is not escorted with a clear ideology for the social system; a sufficient level of understanding and reflection on the contrast between the social and cultural conditions of the privileged and those of the deprived, and as a result does not have a clearly articulated solution to the problem (Gurr, 1971).

Mass-society theory

Mass-Society theory argues that social movements are made up of individuals in large societies who feel insignificant or socially detached/marginalized. **"Mass society is a system in which there is high availability of a population for mobilization by elites"** (Kornhauser, 1959: 33). As detailed in the 'results and discussion' section of the paper, if we take what was happening in Ethiopia where there is a large chunk of unemployed young individuals who were feeling insignificant and socially detached, the political protest provides sense of empowerment and belonging. Social movements, according to this theory, provide a sense of empowerment and belonging that the movement members would otherwise not have (Kornhauser, 1959). In fact, the key to joining the movement was having a friend or associate who was a member of the movement. The *bandwagon* effect is paramount that friends jump in political protest because they have friends who have been already participating in the protest and because the protest provides a sense of empowerment and belonging (Kornhauser, 1959).

Structural-strain theory

Structural-Strain theory figures out six factors that encourage development of social movement /Political protest. Smelser (1962) opines that structural conduciveness, structural strain, growth and spread of solution, precipitating factors, lack of social control and mobilization are factors that facilitate political protest. Conducive structure with in the existing structure that gives space for people to

discuss societal problems and challenges enables the society to develop inception for political protest. Then, the failure of the existing structure to solve discontents leads people to experience deprivation. When the existing structure fails to address those concerns, it leads to the growth and spread of an alternative solution. One of the alternative solutions is called protest (Smelser, 1962) and/or rebellion (Andersen and Taylor, 2009). But discontent usually requires a catalyst (often a specific event) - precipitating factor to turn it into protest and will only be successful if there is lack of social control to make mobilization. By lack of social control Smelser (1962) means that the entity that is to be changed must be at least somewhat open to the change and allow, knowingly/unknowingly, mobilization which is the actual organizing and active component of the movement; people do what needs to be done but if the social movement is quickly and powerfully repressed, it may never materialize.

Resource-mobilization theory

Resource-Mobilization theory emphasizes the importance of resources in social movement development and its success. Resources are understood here to include: knowledge, money, media, labour, solidarity, legitimacy, and internal and external support from power elite. The theory argues that social movements develop when individuals with grievances are able to mobilize sufficient resources to take action. The emphasis on resources offers an explanation why some discontented/deprived individuals are able to organize while others are not. The basic underlying assumptions of this theory are rational actors (actors calculate cost and benefit of joining a protest), the availability of network, the importance of the aggregated resource and continuity of leadership, the availability of social movement entrepreneurs and protest organizations. (Cragun et al., 2014, 375).

Political process theory

Cragun et al. (2014, 375, 376) argue that Political process theory is similar to resource mobilization theory in many regards, but tends to emphasize on political opportunities. Political process theory argues that there are three vital components for movement formation: insurgent consciousness, organizational strength, and political opportunities. Insurgent consciousness refers to the ideas of deprivation and grievances development. The idea is that certain members of society feel like they are being mistreated or that somehow the system is unjust. The insurgent consciousness is the collective sense of injustice that movement members (or potential movement members) feel and serves as the motivation for movement organization. Organizational strength goes in line with resource-mobilization theory where in order for asocial movement to organize it must have strong leadership and sufficient resources. Political opportunity refers to the receptivity or vulnerability of the existing political system to challenge. Political opportunities include growth of political pluralism, decline in effectiveness of repression, elite disunity; internally fragmented leading factions, a broadening of access to institutional participation in political processes, and support of organized opposition by elites. The three elements of political process theory are equally important to ignite protest and for its success (Cragun et al., 2014).

Historical pedigree of political violence in Ethiopia: The 1974 Ethiopian revolution

Political protests in the run up to the 1974 Ethiopian revolution are important historical incidents to explain the pedigree of 'protest as another means of politics in Ethiopia'. 'Protest as another means of

politics' (Clausewitz, 1976) got expression through the Ethiopian student movement, the Eritrean armed struggle, peasant rebellion in Gojam and Bale ultimately culminating into the 1974 Ethiopian revolution resulting in the down fall of Emperor Haile Selassie I and the coming into power of the Derg Regime. Opposition to the imperial regime reached its peak in February 1974, when the Ethiopian masses from almost all circles made a serious strikes, protests and demonstrations and demanded for radical changes. Opposition against the regime included those from the army, the Ethiopian teachers' association, and the taxi-drivers. The popular revolt ultimately brought to an end to the rule of the monarchy in Ethiopia on September 12, 1974 (Geberu, 2009; Andargachew, 1993; Young, 1997; Prunier and Ficquet 2015).

Prunier et al. (2015: 211) in explaining the cause of the 1974 Ethiopian revolution that brought the down fall of the last Emperor of the country, Haile Selassie I, opined ''that it (the revolution) came from the incapacity of a post feudal socio-political system to modernize itself when faced with the challenges of the transformations of the second half of the twentieth century''. It is true that the monarchy failed to entertain socio-economic and political transformation demands and expectations. There was a yawning gap between what Gurr (1971) referred to as 'value capabilities and value expectation' resulting in frustration aggression. The structure became inherently nonresponsive to such frustration-aggressions.

Messay (2011), in explaining the causes for the collapse of the imperial regime and the political assent of the military, posits that the structural causes stem from the lack of reforms of social systems based on chronic inequality and exploitation; and the rigid and outdated socio-political structures, both highly propitious to the build-up of popular discontent and elite conflicts. In addition to the structural causes, the inflationary trends such as the 1973 Arab-Israeli conflict and the increase in the price of oil, severe famine in provinces of Wollo and Tigray (1972-1973), the education sector review (1971) that suggested reduction in enrolment and advocated universal education up to only fourth grade were immediate causes of the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution.

Senility and conflicts within the ruling elite created the condition of 'the structural -strain' and political opportunities for political protest. ''Haile Selassie's autocracy had not only been buffeted and discredited by internal and external opposition but also its head, the monarch, had become too old and senile to employ even his old skills effectively'' (Andargachew, 1993: 58).

The structural and immediate causes illuminated above were instrumental for the total collapse of the *ancien regime* but failed to address the absence of any obvious successor to it. That gave way to a group of around 106 military officers to fill in the power vacuum. These military officers established the Provisional Military Administrative Council and the Provisional Military Government, also called Derg (the Amharic word for committee).

The Derg ruled Ethiopia for 17 years. Despite a short-lived euphoria resulted from land reform, the regime deteriorated to crisis. In addition to a fast-declining human right records and economic collapse, politico-military crisis was said to be at the centre of the causes for the collapse of the regime (Andargachew, 1993).

The politico-military crisis of the state, which is, arguably, the most central cause for the decline and collapse of the regime, flowed from the excessively centralized and autocratic nature of the regime and from the attendant lack of the rule of law (Andargachew, 1993). That in addition to internally destabilize the regime gave rise to politicized discontent accompanied by institutional support.

According to Gurr (1971: 14) politicized discontent is a necessary condition for the resort to violence in politics. But however intense and focused the impetus to violence is, its actualization is strongly influenced by the patterns of coercive control and institutional support in the political community. Political discontent is only a necessary but not sufficient condition for political violence of different magnitude (civil war, revolutionary movement). Dissident organizations' capacity to use political violence to realize their political aims depends both on political discontent and organizational support and degree of coercive capacity in relative to the ruling regime (Gurr, 1971).

In that light, dissident political organizations were able to effectively exploit popular discontent against the Derg regime. Furthermore, in the wake of the politico-military crisis of 1987 and after the dissident organizations like Eritrean People Liberation Front (EPLF) in Eritrea, the Tigray Liberation Front (TPLF) in Tigray had widespread organizational support and high degree of coercive capacity compared with the regime in power. The regime in power was losing the military aid it was getting from Russia due to political reform and the end of the cold war.

The political violence in Ethiopia culminated in the collapse of the Derg regime. In 1991, the TPLF dominated Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) took power. EPRDF was a coalition of four regional political parties; namely the dominant TPLF representing the Tigray region, Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) that represents the Amhara region, Oromo People Democratic Organization (OPDO) in Oromia region and Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM) representing the Southern part of Ethiopia. EPRDF ruled Ethiopia from 1991 to 2018 under fist and iron for much of its existence (Mokaddem, 2019; Addis, 2019; Tefera, 2019). As a result, between 2015 and 2018 EPRDF faced intensified protests from the two largest ethnic groups: the Oromo and the Amhara. The next section provides preliminary background information about the protest.

Protests in Ethiopia between 2015 and 2018: Background information

Protests by students began in Ginchi, a small town 80 kilometres southwest of Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, when authorities sought to clear a forest for an investment project. Protests quickly spread throughout the Oromia region, home of Ethiopia's estimated 35 million Oromo, the country's largest ethnic group (Human Rights Watch, 2015). They evolved into larger demonstrations against the proposed expansion of the Addis Ababa municipal boundary, known as the "Addis Ababa Integrated Development Master Plan." (Human Rights Watch: 2015; Endalkachew: 2015). The protests expanded to Amhara region which is the second populous region in August 2016. The protest was sparked by the Wolkait Committee leaders' detention. The committee was advocating for the self-determination of those living within the Wolkait district. Wolqait is an administrative district that was part of Amhara Region before the ruling party-Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) annexed it to the Tigray Region; hence, a disputed area between the Tigray and Amhara ethnic groups. Security forces have used live ammunition to disperse largely peaceful protests, killing hundreds, and arresting tens of thousands (Human Rights Watch, 2015; Amnesty International, 2017).

While the trigger behind the protests in the Oromo and Amhara communities was not the same, Fisseha (Qtd. in Kestler-D'Amours, 2018) explained the protesters' demands had been consistent since the start of the protests and continued in the same vein: accountability for human rights abuses, the release of political prisoners, political reforms and greater freedoms. Data collected and analysed by ACLED (2017, June 17) since November 2015 points to more than 1,200 people killed in the context of the protests. This includes around 660 fatalities from state violence against protesters, 250 fatalities from riots, and more than 380 people killed following the declaration of the state of emergency in October 2016. More or less continued street protests between 2015 and 2018 eventually toppled the old leadership. That cleared the

path for Mr Abiy to become party head and prime minister (Pilling, 2019). The Fundamental causes of the protests have not yet well articulated and therefore, it is the aim of this paper to use mainly text and document analysis to explain the fundamental causes of the protests.

Ethiopia's situation between 2015 and 2018 in the prism of the theories of political protest

Using one or the other theory single-handedly would not be comprehensive enough to understand the whole situation in the country. It is important, therefore, to use the theories, illustrated above, in combination to comprehend the protests. During the period under consideration; Ethiopia with a large chunk of unemployed youth (Walta.com, 2019), over 30 million people in the education system (MOE, 2016), over 24 million people below poverty line (Word Bank, 2020:9) prepared a fertile ground for the fulfilment of the three conditions of political process theory namely insurgent consciousness, organizational strength and political opportunities (Cragun et al., 2014).

Maladministration, lack of good governance, misuse of power, rent seeking behaviour of officials in all echelons of power created collective sense of injustice among the society. The resented group formed a potential for mass protest. The potential mass with available resources like, over 30 million people by 2016 in the education system, Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT) and Oromo Media Network (OMN) (US based TVs- strong opponents of the government until 2018), big money from the Diaspora and foreign powers, social media activism, internal and external elite support provided the conditions for the organizational strength (resource mobilization) which is the second element to be fulfilled to cause political protest. Elite disunity in the government on the one hand, the broadening of access to institutional participation of the young though modern technological communication (TV, social media, mobile) and support of organized opposition by elites on the other provided political opportunity for political protest in Ethiopia. Therefore, one can see the conditions in Ethiopia resonated well with conditions of Political Process Theory (PPT) and Mass society Theory.

Theoretically, Ethiopia's liberal constitution allows people to discuss discontents. This is one of what is called in the phraseology of structural-stain theorist a conducive structure for political protest. The structure provided space for potential protestors to discuss among other issues about identity/border which was the immediate cause in both the Oromo and Amhara protests. Lack of good governance, maladministration, corruption, unemployment continued to be a headache to the society. A system under such condition, on the one hand, enabled insurgent consciousness; on the other hand it failed to response to demands using the already available institutional means.

The failure of the structure, which is at the core of the 'structural stain' theory, to solve the problem causes people experience deprivation that then led to the growth and spread of an alternative solution to the problems people are experiencing -protest. Identity and border issues which were the precipitating factors turned to be successful due to lack of social control from the government providing space for protestors to mobilize. People used social media which are not under the control of the government to mobilize potential members of the protest and familiarize their cause and convince the youth to jump into the political protest. That gave the context for the *bandwagon* effect of mass-society theory. The causes of the protests resonated well with the theoretical assumptions confirming convergent and construct validities. The fundamental causes of the protests as detailed in the results and discussion section includes marginalization, ideological rigidity and contradiction, political favour-sim, parochialism, institutional weakness, and strategic exclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Empirically speaking, conditions leading up to the unrest in Ethiopia were resulted from immediate and fundamental causes. Lack of good governance, inefficient but large government, dominant party system and ideological hegemony, weak and non-responsive institutions, lack of national consensus on the federal arrangement, elite disunity, growing demand of the society and the government's failure to structurally respond to that demand were the fundamental causes resulting in the break out of the political protests. The immediate causes are related to identity questions/border issues fuelled with ethnic politics as explained above. The fundamental causes boiled down to seven major causes; marginalization (Burke, 2017; Dahir, 2016), the neither strong man nor strong institutions situation (Lefort, 2014, 2016), the ethnic politics ploy (Lefort, 2014; Leulseged, 2018; Addissu, 2019), strategic exclusion(Dewaal, 2018; Ethiopia Faces Era of One-Party Rule, 2010), ideological and structural contradictions in the system, ideological rigidity and political favouritism (Abbink, 2006; Teferi et al., 2019; Tefera, 2019).

Marginalization

Marginalization is only one form of oppression in a political and economic system. The other forms of oppression are violence, exploitation, and powerlessness. The people of Ethiopia were feeling that they were marginalized, exploited and powerless and to some extent exposed to police violence (Human Rights Watch, 2010; Burke, 2017; Dahir, 2016; BBC, 2017). Relative marginalization, exploitation and powerlessness were prevalent and were more so among the majority 30 million youth in the education system (MOE, 2016), the 24 million below poverty line (World Bank, 2020), the 10 million unemployed by the government account (Walta,com 2019). That provided the Mass society condition-a system in which there would be high availability of a population for mobilization by elites (Kornhauser, 1959).

Relative marginalization of the two biggest ethnic groups from important political posts like the office of the Prime Minister, the National Intelligence and security service, the high brass of the military ranks and files, the ministry of foreign affairs which had been headed and dominated by TPLF had been a political hot-spot and subjected to heated political debate among the opposition political parties and the educated youth equally. TPLF disproportionally held influential positions in the fields of government, economics and security, among others'' (Kestler-D'Amours, 2018). The Military seemed to be totally dominated by one ethnic group where by some 95% of the top brass of the military emanate from the Tigrayan ethnic group representing about 6% of the

population (Ginbot 7, 2010). The nature of ethnic dominance that was observed during the EPRDF period (1991-2018) seemed to be more purposeful, calculated and certainly more excessive than any of the regimes in the past (Teferi et al., 2019; Tefera, 2019).

The total control of the parliament (2015-2020) by a single political party- EPRDF and its affiliates, the dismantling of opposition political parties by their weakness and the alleged insidious hand and conspiracy of the ruling party, the absence of independent and autonomous private and public media left the country and people with no alternative ways to express opinions, thoughts, and seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds and made people feel powerless and resorted to violence and protest. Horne (Qtd. in Kestler-D'Amours, 2018) explained that all of the underlying grievances about a lack of political space, a lack of ability to express dissent, came to the forefront of the protest. That certainly created a sense of marginalization among the Oromo and Amhara elites creating internal conflict in the ruling party-EPRDF. The internal struggle culminated in the ascendance of Abiy Ahmed (Prime Minister since 2018) and his team to the forefront. Abiy Ahmed's ascendance to the highest echelon of power and the measures that followed created nation-wide euphoria.

'All are equal but some are more equal than others': Selective development and underdevelopment!

According to observers of Ethiopian politics, in Ethiopia all administrative regions have equal right to develop but some regions have more rights to develop than others rendering Orwellian analogy. Regional disparities in development is said to be resulted from difference in physical resources endowment, human resources, capital accumulation, population size and infrastructural facilities. These are the objective criteria in determining the location of manufacturing firms. The regional distribution of manufacturing industries in Ethiopia, however, was attributed to "a selective hold on politics and economics" (Abbink, 2006: 174; Teferi et al., 2019) resulting in more acute skewed regional distribution particularly after 1991 (Wodajo and Senbet, 2013: 164; Kindeye, 2014: 339; Amare and Suryanaryanaraya, 2015: 48). The distribution of manufacturing firms does not seem to correspond to the regional distribution of the country's population, resource endowment, human capital and infrastructure which are the important determinants of a location of an industry. Tigray, the region where the former dominant political elite-TPLF-came from, has experienced unjustifiably better achievement than others given its distance from Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia and the relatively small consumers, labour force, small population (Kindeye, 2014:339; Wodajo and Senbet, 2013: 164).

The increase in the number of L&M scale manufacturing

firms after 1991 ranges from 61 to 113% in the three populous regions of the country, Oromia, Amhara and SNNP that constitute nearly 81% of the country's population. In contrast, in Tigray, a region with only nearly 6% of the country's population, the total number of manufacturing firms has dramatically increased from just 4 before 1991 by a sheer 26 after 1991, registering a staggering 550% rise within 15 years (or approximately a 37% rise per year). Given, the pre-1991 government policies which stifled private investment in the country in general and the 17-year war waged in Tigray region in particular, one may wonder as to what were the sources of private finances in this region to result in such unprecedented percentage change in the number of private manufacturing firms, which surpasses the net percentage increases in other regions of the country combined, except the government's favouritism for the region. It should also be noted that the growth rate of private manufacturing firms in Tigray is higher than the combined growth rates in Oromia, Amhara and SNNP. (Wodajo and Senbet, 2013:164,165).

The unfairly skewed distribution of manufacturing firms resulted in unfairly skewed development, unemployment, infrastructure development confirming the Orwellian analogy of all regions have equal right to develop but some regions have more rights to develop than others. As is asserted by mass society theorists "Uneven rate of development creates highly visible differentials in economic gains, strong feelings of alienation from the existing order" Kornhauser (1959: 151). Ethiopia's unrest was sparked by unequal development record (Abbink, 2016) as unequal development resulted in a sense of marginalization that led to social turmoil and instability in the country.

The neither strong man nor strong institutions situation

Politics as an authoritative allocation of resources need a powerful man and/or strong institutions. The 'who gets what, when, how and why' (Lasswell, 1936) of a policy and a decision can only be implemented through an authoritative power and this power should be vested in a strong man and /or institutions. Ethiopia between 2012 and 2018 seemed to have neither. The gravity of power was dispersed among the military brasses, the intelligence office, regional states and the office of the prime minister with no or less powerful command post rendering the neither strong man nor strong institutions situation.

Public participation and democratizing as important strategy on one hand, building speedy, expedient, institutionally driven and centralized mechanism of decision making and its implementation on the other could only happen under a strong man and/or strong institution. Yun Sun corroborates (2013: 17) "Sound

national security decision-making requires a centralized authority able to make speedy decisions based on consistent, effective and efficient information processing and agency coordination''. These conflicts with not just the collective leadership tradition of the EPRDF led government but also the neither strong man nor strong institutions situation of the state. The state was like a ship that had lost its captain, with no one in the crew able to take his place, this multipolarity at the top leads to contradictory behaviours. Furthermore, the Prime Minister Hailemariam (2012-2018) was '*a frontman without teeth*' (Lefort, 2014). That is why the state was seeing promises made unimplemented. The government had promised at the top of its voice to do away with rent seeking behaviour in the government and lack of good governance in the soonest possible time since 2015. But these continue to be problems until Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took power from Hailemariam Desallegn (His Predecessor).

The problem in the run up to the TPLF split in 2001 and the problem happening in EPRDF between 2015 and 2018 were partly the results of the presence of neither a strong man nor strong institutions; the absence of an authoritative allocation of resources and policies and strong man and/or institutions to implement them. The existing institutions were weak and/or lack popular confidence. That is called in the phraseology of political process theorist a political opportunity-vulnerability of the existing political system to challenge.

The ploy of ethnic politics: Parochialism

Ethnic politics in Ethiopia all starts with TPLF's official agitation of struggling against what it calls 'the Amhara domination/the Shoan domination' and its divided loyalty of Tigray first, and then Ethiopia approach to politics (Henze, 1990: Interview with Melese). Ethnic politics got currency in Ethiopia for several reasons. Firstly, the Haileselassie's and Derg's regime lacked tolerance to ethnic allegiances and their suppression resulted in more loyalty to ethnicity than to the state led by autocratic regimes. Secondly, feeling of discrimination by the authority and the alleged domination by what they called 'Amhara domination' but the 'Amhara domination' was more of orchestrated by self-styled and self-interested politicians to agitate ordinary men and women by creating 'you are deprived of your privilege by the dominant Amhara' story. The TPLF ethnic politics culminated into overthrowing the Derg regime and establishing a government led by EPRDF in response to what it calls 'national oppression'. It established the right of nations, nationalities and peoples at the heart of its principle expressed in the law of the land, the constitution. It organized the majority of member states of the federation in terms of language creating a sense of ethnic politics and divided loyalty to the multinational state. ''More than

two thirds of the population, those below the age of 25, have grown up in a federal system which identifies them as Oromo, Amhara… first'' (Lefort, 2014). Ethnic politics continues to play an important role in politics. The 'who gets what, when, how and why' of Lasswell (1936) in politics, economics, military and other activities get to be evaluated in terms of ethnicity. Ethnic loyalty first, and then the state, has become mantra of the political game. Ethnic politics, though all started against what was called 'Amhara domination', turned out to being used to agitate Amhara and Oromo ethnic groups against what they called 'Tigray domination', creating parochial tendency among members of all ethnic groups, threatening the harmony and friendship among many ethnic groups, weakening stability in the politics of the country, threatening the integrity and unity of the multi-nation state. This game continues even under the Abiy Ahmed premiership some claiming that if there is any change at all it is the change of 'politics of domination from Tigray to an impending Oromo domination' (ICG, 2019; Yohannes, 2019). Under politicized ethnic political contexts like the Ethiopian one, the actual or perceived value gains of one or more ethnic group and the promise of new opportunities increase the intensity of discontent (Gurr, 1971) by providing Societal conditions that increase the average level or intensity of expectations without increasing capabilities. The ploy of ethnic politics was, therefore, in the calculation of the causes of the protests in Ethiopia.

Building hegemony and the tendency of suppressing diversity of opinion: Strategic exclusion

The government claimed to be building what it calls developmental state at crux of which building ideological hegemony. Hegemony by definition prevents competing ideas and power sharing. Ideological hegemony is when an ideology or way of thinking is so powerful that it dominates all other ideas in the system (Mearsheimer, 2001). That means in the effort to build hegemony the government was suppressing competitive ideas and powers which could have been alternative opinions in policy making and implementation. The government claimed to build hegemony of developmental discourse, in the Gramscian sense that it is an internalized set of assumptions, not an imposed order (De Waal, 2012). However, policy and party indoctrination documents revealed otherwise. ''Politically speaking, hegemonic rule in the classical Gramscian sense was aimed at but many have 'internalized' this ideology or accept it because of intimidation or seeing no alternative'' (Abbink, 2017:4). Furthermore, the strategy of building developmental ideological hegemony officially excludes the intellectual as 'wishy- washy' to developmental causes (EPRDF, 2011). Intellectuals were considered as adherent of neo-liberalism and a challenge to developmental state. ''The

intellectual class is often hostile to the regime and against the developmental state paradigm. Meles, head of Ethiopian government (1991-2012), used to believe that the neoliberal paradigm was 'the only game in town' for intellectuals; hence a challenge'' (Merkeb, 2013: n.p.). This strategic exclusion may stifle intellectual debates which prevent the venting out of popular discontent through such debates.

The government was also intolerant of ideas and positions other than its own. Those who may challenge the government are considered anti-development, anti-peace and errand boys of neo-liberalism. Crystallizing this is Mogus (2014:23, unpublished manuscript) who posits ''The EPRDF government has at times demonstrated undue nervousness when criticized by external observers. The reactions are often loaded with emotive language blaming in tedious frequency advocates of neo-liberalism''. This is a clear stifling of alternative ideas and opinions. ''The Ethiopian federal structure appears to be that of one-party state governance, which is characterised by highly concentrated and centralised powers maintained by totalitarian institutions such as the military, other security organs and state-controlled mass media''(Bekalu, 2017, n.p). The government's project of building ideological hegemony of developmental democracy has been inherently alternative opinion phobic. That not only created, in the terminology of political process theorist, insurgent consciousness (collective sense of injustice within/out the party) but also drained political resources of the ruling party creating political opportunities for popular discontent and its violent expression.

In recent statements (2016), the then ruling party indicated that in its attempt to fundamentally solve problems on the ground it resolved to rejuvenate itself. But this piece recommends that the rejuvenation should been made in such a way that it would solve the socio-economic and political, institutional or lack of it and bases of the problems outlined above. The state is in a primarily a political and economic crisis. It can only be solved politically by political economic measures; such as consultation with the people and addressing their legitimate grievances, allowing political associations to be formed that can represent peoples' interest. De Waal (2016) warns if the crisis were addressed in a security way, it would be a disaster.

In response to the political crisis, Hailemariam Desalegn EPRDF chairman and prime minster of Ethiopia (2012-2018) resigned and Abiy Ahmed got elected as EPRDF chairman and Ethiopian PM on March 27 and April 2, 2018 respectively. Following his premiership, Abiy Ahmed released political prisoners, unblocked websites and other media, suspended and reformed restrictive legislations and introduced various political reforms. On December 2019, the Prime Minister

reformed the ethnic lined coalition EPRDF into a single national Prosperity Party (PP). The prime minister's approach towards competing nationalism seems to be pluralistic nationalism which borrows ethno-cultural group as structural device and the principle of equality and equal rights from civic nationalism. The fruits of his reform are however yet to be seen.

Economic dogmatism over political mastery

The mechanical approach of development/economics first, politics second is the beginning of the political mess up facilitating the beginning of the end. The politics of engineering is not a mechanical thing where the parts make up the whole. In fact, in politics the whole is greater than the combination of the parts unlike in mechanical engineering where the whole is exactly the sum-total of the parts. For example, the state, the *raison d'être* for modern politics, can be established as a political whole with a minimum requirement of government, population, territory and recognition (Montevideo Convention, 1933) but the state is greater than the combination of parts, it is more than the minimum four requirements. The whole is always greater than the parts. Statesmen should have that into account in their ever going and continuing state formation and nation building activities. A policy is a whole thing. It is a process of building up. In policy paradigm, it is difficult to sequence democracy and development where each seems to depend on others. Statesmen in Ethiopia deemed to deviate from that political reality. De Waal (2012: 155) quoted the late Meles as arguing that ''what meaning did liberal civil and political rights have in a context of abject poverty or political chaos? Development and a strong state were prerequisites for human rights, and Ethiopia needed to establish these first''. The whole gamut of state institutions was oriented in this context that they overlooked implementing the cherished principles enshrined in the constitution the country adopted.

Economic development first and human rights second. This orientation is disastrous simply because it deprives peoples their very right that they are entitled simply because they are human beings. Human and democratic rights for the most part do need no prerequisites save the prerequisite of non-interference of the government. They are negative rights that do not need the intervention and interference of the government in any way. The only explanation for government's failure to observe human rights is excessive economic dogmatism over political mastery. ''The 'developmental state' model advocated by the ruling party and Zenawi marginalised any political democracy, freedoms and human rights discourse'' (Abbink, 2017: 142). Economic dogmatism would not be a resolution for hundreds of thousands asking for liberty and freedom from the excessive intrusion and intervention of local governments, economic dogmatism

may not observe peoples' request for their voice be heard, economic dogmatism may not allow any opinion and thought perceived to hinder the national agenda (economic), economic dogmatism may not allow the expression of rights for economic development itself resulting in disparity in development among regions. Economic dogmatism does not even allow some ethnic groups, classes, or interest groups to ask for equitable development. Every voice that deviates from the new normal as defined by the government was rejected to be handicap and hindrance for development. This orientation is dangerous in the 21st century in which politics is instrument of an interconnected society. It is dangerous to a society as diverse as the Ethiopian one where ethnic ploy play inflaming role of agitation and incitement. It is dangerous to a society like Ethiopia that have for millennia kept its long-standing pride and identity of expressing itself in its way, a society where *Kurate* prevails over *Erate* (which literally means Pride prevails over food/good).

Eventually, the orientation created structural constrain by creating tension between available means to achieve democracy and human rights, in EPRDF's view it should wait for economic prerequisites on the one hand and the grassroots demand for democracy, freedom and human rights on the other hand. The means are out of balance with the goals, creating societal deviance from the available structure. This imbalance, or disjunction, between goals and structurally available means can actually compel the individual and communities into one of possible form of deviance- rebellion (Andersen and Taylor, 2009). That goes well in line with the Ethiopian situation between 2015 and 2018.

Ideological and institutional contradictions

Ideologically, the government used to believe that economic development is the panacea for all ills. Economic development used to be a question of death and life in government orientation. Anything else including issues related to democracy, human rights, the right to economic development were perceived to be hindrance to 'economic growth' by the ruling political elites and decision makers. Ideologically, the ruling party was against any political parties when it declared that its vision was installing 'a dominant party system', where it planned to eliminate oppositions and replace them with either satellite parties or a break up from EPRDF itself.
The late Meles Zenawei (1991-2012) articulated this in his conversation with De waal (2018:5). He was quoted as saying "*we could have a dominant party system, as we have today, with different views expressed within the party. Or we could have competition between two parties, each of them subscribing to a hegemonic developmentalism, so that when they rotate in and out of office, the fundamentals of the national project aren't in dispute*" (Emphasis added).

Rhetorically, Ethiopia declares democracy but practically the government overlooks building democracy and democratic system; there is only democracy as a form of state and there is no democracy in the form of the government. "Democracy-while a popular slogan on state television and in policy speeches – stayed in the wings" (Abbink, 2017: 159). This resulted from the ideological and institutional contradictions; contradictions between theory and praxis, ideology and institution, *dejure* and *defacto* situations. There was contradiction and yawning gap between theories and practices of development and democracy, human rights and development, individual rights and group rights. This contradiction in ideology and institution took away both democracy and development from the people. In Gurr (1971) articulation the contradiction created discrepancy between value prospects (expectation) and actuality resulting in frustration which again leads to aggression to secure expectation. That aggression is expressed in terms of protest.

What has to be done?

Theoretically speaking**,** governance reform can only be effectively achieved through the combined energies and commitment of three key entities within a public sector governance system. These are the State (politicians and policymakers), the citizens (Public), and service providers (management teams in bureaucracies). Effective communication approaches diagnose the power relationships among these three groups and enable them to find ways to collaborate, coalesce, and work together to achieve governance reforms. (World Bank, 2008)

When it comes to the Ethiopian state, these entities on the one hand need to be used in careful combination, and on the other hand they are needed to be built. Particularly, the bureaucracy is needed to be built with an embedded autonomy. Implementing effective communication to create consensus among political elites, to disperse mistrust among political actors and to build civility within the political community is also recommended to realize reforms in Ethiopia. Levine (2013) observed what he called the missed opportunities in Ethiopia in 1960, 1974, 1991, 1998, 2005 and according to him the factors for the suboptimal outcomes of those initiated changes and transformation might be related to a deep-seated habit of suspiciousness and distrust, the spirit of warrior hood (the tough guy), foreign ideology emulation/fixities.

Ethiopians, Levine (2013) recommended, need to encourage public discourse with more straightforward, transparent communication to move forward without repeating the costly mistakes of the last half-century. Furthermore, he advised keeping the warrior ethos out of politics and cultivating civic courage, moving from ideological fixities to pragmatic solutions through self-understanding and self-appreciation would help move in

that direction. As indicated above, a number of things factored in the downward spiral of building democracy and democratic system resulting in political violence in Ethiopia. Marginalization, economic dogmatism, parochial political culture, ideological hegemony, strategic exclusions and weak institutional set ups among other things stood out. This means that the government should work out to strengthen institutions that are already established, establish new institutions if need be, work on democracy and development as an integral whole of the state, should work on building and developing rational patriotism though the education system, be democratic to entertain diversity in opinion. These are the means to the end: democracy and development!

Conclusion

Theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence revealed that the political protests in Ethiopia between 2015 and 2018 was attributable to marginalization, parochialism, ideological and institutional contradictions, leadership and institutional failure, ideological hegemonic desire, structural rigidity and strategic exclusions. The commitment and energies of the state, the public and the bureaucracy in the building up institutions, cultivating civic culture and in collaborating, coalescing, and working together to achieve governance reforms is important as a way out to the problem.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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