

## Chapter X

### Where to, Ethiopia?

In the wake of the dethronement of the TPLF, Ethiopia was presented with four options arising from the implementation of ethnonationalist ideology and policies for 27 years. The options have generated politico-ideological movements that compete for the seizure of power in Ethiopia. Broadly speaking, these movements can be viewed as different stands in relation to Article 39 of the constitution granting ethnic groups an unconditional right to self-determination, including secession (see previous chapter). Let us briefly examine the four positions with the view of clearly demarcating the lines separating them.

#### **Antithetical Stands**

Directly stemming from the 27 years of ethnonationalist championing, the first option wants to bring the deconstruction of Ethiopia's national unity to its logical denouement, namely, the dismantlement of the state. It intends to do so by demanding the unconditional and outright application of Article 39 of the constitution recognizing each ethnic group's right to self-determination and even secession. This position is known to be the long-standing goal of a major fraction of the Oromo Liberation Front and was voiced by some Oromo during the protests against the TPLF. Other but less important ethnonationalist parties express a similar demand, like the Ogaden National Liberation Front.

In addition to rejecting the hegemonic position of the TPLF, the second option calls for the abrogation of the ethnic fragmentation of the Ethiopian people. Known as Ethiopianism, the position advocates the reassertion of Ethiopians as one people while adding that oneness does not mean homogeneity. Ethiopianism includes diversity and recognizes the rights associated with it, but insists that the exercise and defense of these rights do not necessitate the formation of distinct ethnic states, which is fatal for national unity, still less the recourse to secession. Democratic arrangements working in tandem with the respect of individual rights can perfectly handle the implementation and defense of diversity rights.

The third option, too, calls for the reaffirmation of national unity, but does not go to the extent of abolishing the ethnic states established by the Ethiopian Constitution. It upholds self-rule, which is deemed necessary to defend diversity rights and develop the particularities of each ethnic group. It considers diversity as a blessing and rejects its alleged opposition to national unity. Best represented by the concept of *medemer* (synergy), as articulated by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed himself in his book, *Medemer*, the vision takes root in the ethnic division of Ethiopia, but aspires to transcend the division toward unity stemming from the cooperation of ethnic groups for the common good. According to Dr. Abiy, *medemer* is "the key solution to our country's problems."<sup>1</sup> It rests on three interrelated basic principles, namely, the safeguarding of "national unity," "the respect of citizens," and the pursuit of "prosperity."<sup>2</sup> The union based on these

principles is not a mere sum of distinct parts; it is a common will to achieve through cooperative togetherness equality, democracy, and prosperity. In basing unity on a common stake, the ideology hopes to mend the broken ties between Ethiopians and reignite all the affective and psychological components that accompany national commitment. In his attempt to resurrect the binding features of national unity, Abiy frequently praises continuity and reformism, and so supports changes that line up with historical continuity, as opposed to the destructive nature of revolutionary changes. Notwithstanding the understandable ethnic grudges against the past, he underlines the virtue of the inheritance of Ethiopian history and the role that all Ethiopian ethnic groups played in the survival of Ethiopia. He also emphasizes the common traits that they have developed by living together and the bright future that they can have by continuing their cooperative partnership.

The fourth choice comprises those who are very supportive of the existing ethnic federalism while at the same time opposing the disintegration of Ethiopian unity. What separates them from Abiy's position is the condition they set for the system to work. According to them, the Prime Minister's principle of cooperative togetherness cannot avoid disintegration unless there is one dominant group that keeps the ethnic units together. The TPLF understood this requirement and became the dominant group in the governing ethnic coalition. The problem, however, was that the TPLF represented a minority ethnic group so that its dominance could not shake off the tag of usurpation. We recognize here the position of extremist Oromo ethnonationalists: some of them are organized into non-armed political parties, others into fighting guerrilla forces, and still others secretly operate in government institutions and in social and economic organizations. Relying on the assumption that the Oromo represent the largest ethnic group, they argue that their representatives should legitimately have the dominant role in an association composed of distinct ethnic groups. Be it noted that these Oromo groups are not alone in this quest for dominance: other ethnic elite groups also compete for hegemony. Thus, the TPLF cannot be said to have given up its ambition to become again the dominant force, a fact corroborated by its November 2020 military assaults on Ethiopian forces with the view of marching on Addis Ababa. A similar trend is observed among the Amhara: though recent, Amhara ethnonationalism, that is, a separatist nationalism or one seeking dominance, is a phenomenon unquestionably on the rise and spreading like wildfire.

The current manifold crises, namely, the numerous displacements of people, the violent attacks on selected ethnic groups, in particular on Amhara settlers, the guerrilla-style confrontations in various parts of the country, the recent eruption of an open armed fight between government troops and the militia known as Fano in the Amhara region, and the persistence of the northern tension despite the signed peace agreement, result from the clash between the four positions. For now, the third position of *medemer*, which is the official position of the ruling Prosperity Party, has the upper hand, but a large section of its Oromo component is pulling toward the fourth position of extreme ethnonationalism.

### ***Assessing Medemer***

In light of the mentioned serious conflicts and plights ripping the country apart, the whole question is to know whether the concrete policy that would result from the implementation of *medemer* principle will indeed restore national unity and materialize the promised prosperity. Even if it is too early to make any comprehensive and final assessment of Abiy's government, the major hurdles that his politico-economic agenda is facing are already quite visible. The thing to remember here is that most, if not all, of these hurdles do not stem solely from Abiy's policy; many

of them are structural remnants from the previous TPLF's government. As such, the main issue is to know whether the policy put in place is liable, assuming that it will be pursued with determination, to both overcome these hurdles and significantly reduce ethnic conflicts.

The most important point to consider is that the realization of any modernizing plan squarely depends on the restoration of peace and security. Unfortunately, since Abiy came to power, as already alluded to, Ethiopia has been the theatre of a full-scale war in its northern part that also spread into Amhara and Afar regions, following the sudden attacks of TPLF's troops on Ethiopian garrisons stationed in Tigray. As though this were not enough, another war specifically confined to the Amhara region has erupted recently. Elsewhere, guerrilla type of warfare is ongoing, as in some parts of Oromia. Additionally, in Oromia and other parts of the country, mass killings and numerous displacements of people have periodically occurred and are still occurring with even greater intensity. In short, hate-spreading ethnonationalist political movements, be they armed or not, constantly disrupt peace and security. Apart from the situation in the Amhara region, which is still undecided, the Ethiopian military and regional security forces have so far been able to defeat the assaults of the TPLF and push back guerrilla attacks in other parts of the country. Even so, the question remains whether Abiy's government will ever be able to permanently defeat extremist ethnonationalist forces and respond satisfactorily to Amhara grievances (see next paragraphs) without angering his Oromo base, thereby establishing a stable peace in Ethiopia.

Many critics are skeptical and advance the argument that an effective fight that could weed out extremist ethnonational forces while satisfying the legitimate demands of various ethnicities, especially of Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups, cannot be waged without a constitutional revision abolishing the ethnic divide between regional states. So long as ethnic federalism is the law of the land, it will continue to feed on and spread ethnonationalism. Praising the virtues of social synergy is not enough for people to embrace unity while ethnic institutions and modes of thinking determine their concrete day-to-day life. It is like asking people not to breathe the smoke that is filling the room in which they are. A proof of this is the not-so-successful result of Abiy's attempt to unite the ruling coalition of ethnic parties, previously known as the EPRDF, into one party under the name of Prosperity Party. Every day that passes shows that the party is one only in name, that its members and leaders think and connect as representatives of distinct and rival ethnic groups. Once ethnic politics is legalized, there is no getting around it. That is why, convinced of the stubbornly divisive nature of ethnic politics, many African countries chose to outlaw ethnic parties.

The counterargument that Abiy's government and supporters make is that the riddance of ethnic federalism will imperil all the advantages accruing from the formation of ethnic states. Some of those advantages are: self-rule with the possibility for each ethnic group to develop its language and culture, a practical and constitutionally protected recognition as a distinct group, as opposed to being only member of a pan-Ethiopian identity, and the attendant equal treatment arising from the recognition. Moreover, the banning of identity politics would wreck the relative peace that is prevailing, so that the proposed solution would make the situation much worse. For any impartial observer, it is hardly possible not to agree with the assessments of Abiy and the ruling party. Undoubtedly, many ethnicized elite groups will greet the elimination of ethnic states as a loss of many already acquired rights, and this will further undermine the existing fragile social peace. Underestimating the ethnic ethos is a dangerous position: ethnicity in Ethiopia is not just a passing whim; it has developed deeper roots and is reflective of engrained regional interests of elites. As a result, the future of Ethiopia and the success of its modernization highly depend on the ability of its political elites to reconcile the requirements of national unity with those of ethnicity. The two,

that is, national unity and dedication to ethnic identity cannot simply coexist; they must harmonize in such a way that they cease to be discordant.

Harmonization presupposes the mitigation of ethnic hostilities, and one way of doing so is by planning and rapidly achieving strong economic growth. Given that widespread poverty, youth unemployment, and regional inequalities feed ethnic animosity, in the precise sense that the common leitmotif of ethnic discourses is to point out a distinct group as the culprit for one's group deprivation, an improvement in conditions of life is surely liable to tone down the appeal of ethnonationalist discourses and grievances. In this regard, despite some timely reforms and the launching of projects to boost economic growth, the most prominent being the decision to finish the grand Abay dam, the hurdles confronting Abiy are, in the main, the same as during the TPLF's rule. They are massive unemployment, scandalous disparities between rich and poor as well as between urban and rural sectors, soaring inflation, huge foreign debts, mostly incurred by the previous regime, etc. Even if some measures of privatization are taken, all in all, changes that can be considered structural have not yet taken place. For instance, land, rural as well as urban, remains nationalized and will remain so as long as the constitutional principle according to which "land is a common property of the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia and shall not be subject to sale or to other means of exchange"<sup>3</sup> stays in place. Nothing indicates that this state of things is likely to change in the near future. With the status of land ownership unchanged, the already considerable authority of the state in economic and financial matters will remain as extensive and heavy-handed as in the previous government, with the consequence that it will hold back the development of the private sector. Moreover, rent-seeking activities are as rampant, if not more rampant, as in the previous regime. Though the government regularly admonishes bad behaviors, like corruption, embezzlement, and nepotism, nothing concrete is really done to deter such behaviors.

A huge part of the problem has to do with the lack of adequate instruments to fight rent-seeking and related detrimental conducts like corruption. Doubtless, the occurrence of a peaceful transmission of power from the TPLF to Abiy's premiership and the latter's commitment to continuity and reformism constitute positive changes. Nonetheless, positive as the changes were, they had a deleterious side, which is that the appointed cabinet as well as the leadership and rank and files of Prosperity Party did not undergo any significant personnel change. Likewise, the last parliamentary election did not bring about any noticeable change: with some exceptions, it maintained in power the same party, with the same overwhelming majority and almost the same people. This absence of elite renewal naturally opens the door for the persistence of old habits of thinking and behaviors that stand in the way of real change, not to mention the perseverance of a strong tendency to protect vested interests. Closely associated with all this is the saliency of clientelism: both the existence of entrenched political leaders and the ethnic partiality due to the importance accorded to the ethnic criterion go against the norm of merit in appointments to political, managerial, economic, military, and bureaucratic positions. Needless to say, clientelism counters professionalism and competence, without which modernization is anything but achievable, especially when the enacted policy gives a major and leading role to the state.

This shortage of competence is all the more alarming, since schools and higher educational institutes still suffer, as pointed out in the previous chapter, from their all-round deficiencies and appalling low quality. This state of things is most wearisome because changing the educational system and raising its standard, if indeed there is such a will, cannot happen in a short time. Worse yet, in the same vein as in politics, the ethnicization of education is harder to overcome: since it

continues to breed division and distrust among younger generations, it makes the realization of the modernization project all the more difficult.

Finally, the various obstacles against which the progress of democratization routinely stumbles further aggravate the difficulties of Abiy's government. Abiy repeatedly pledged his commitment to implement a truly democratic system, convinced, as he seemed to be, that real democratization is the best antidote against the divisive nature of ethnicity. Despite an undeniable improvement compared to the previous regime, at least during the first years of Abiy's premiership, the progress of democratization seems to encounter increasing restrictions. Thus, neither federal instances nor regional states really respect the principles of fair and free elections. For instance, according to credible reports, the dominant party in some regional states engaged in harassments and threats to prevent pan-Ethiopian parties from competing in the last national parliamentary election. Similarly, intimidation and even, at times, imprisonment restrict the practice of freedom of speech, and this is most unfortunate because of the absence of an independent judiciary and a police force abiding by the rules of law. Many critics go even further by suggesting that "Abiy's government has turned into a dictator government," thereby following the footsteps of its predecessors.<sup>4</sup> For some of the critics, one should all the more expect the inevitability of this evolution, given that Abiy has a personality that one author describes as "an almost messianic phenomenon."<sup>5</sup> The belief that Ethiopia's future rests on his shoulders can degenerate into the need to be always right, which is conducive to a progressive loss of touch with reality.

Against these accusations, defenders of Abiy retort that any denunciation of his policy must take into account the prevailing volatile political situation. For one thing, as regards the last election, there was no widespread criticism accusing the dominant party's huge victory of being marred with frauds and manipulations. For another, to avoid the explosion of violence, the government has no choice but to dissuade, ban, and even prosecute individuals, groups, and parties that spread extremist ideologies and hate. With extremist ideologies, it is often difficult to tell where free speech ends and where incitement to violence starts. As to the charge of messianism, Abiy's proponents interpret it as a strong commitment to the integrity and prosperity of Ethiopia. In any case, nothing is really new here: many emperors, including Menelik and Haile Selassie, saw their rise to imperial power as a messianic assignment. Messianism is more a national character than an idiosyncratic incident. Recall how the myth of equality and justice of socialism fired up Ethiopia's younger generations in the 70s.

Be that as it may, the point that must not be lost, according to Abiy's proponents, is that criticisms of Abiy and his government must be balanced against the complex and deeply entrenched problems inherited from the previous regimes, notably from the TPLF. In addition to the deterioration of national unity and the culture of ethnic partisanship, it was during the rule of the TPLF that rent-seeking and related practices such as corruption and nepotism became widespread among state officials and employees. Moreover, an assessment of the progress of democratization that discounts the prevailing condition is little objective. Notably, it does not acknowledge that, at this juncture of Ethiopia's transition to a post-TPLF era, measures to restore lasting peace and unity and activate economic progress matter more than the full deployment of democracy. In brief, the full implementation of democracy necessitates, if not the removal of some of the salient problems inherited from the previous regimes, at least the abatement of their asperity.

In the mind of Abiy's supporters, what deserves the highest attention is that no better alternative to Abiy's government and policy is emerging at this moment. Opposition parties either profess extremist ideologies or are so divided that they are unable to form a front offering a credible

alternative. Consequently, many people endorse the argument that the removal of Abiy's government will certainly lead to renewed and extensive violent clashes, even probably to civil war, the outcome of which will surely be the disintegration of Ethiopia. Therefore, seeing what is at stake and considering the longer time needed for the implementation of Abiy's reform agenda, the best position is to refrain from making any final judgment at this stage. Accordingly, if one were to consider the average position among Abiy's supporters, one would say that, in agreement with Jonathan Fisher, the majority holds that "a critical appraisal of Abiy's leadership must take into account the immense challenges of governing a state as diverse and complex as modern Ethiopia."<sup>6</sup>

### **Policy Volte-Face or Stratagem?**

What proponents say would be worth cogitating were it not for the fact that Prime Minister Abiy, who had so far declared his intention to navigate the moderate middle course in line with *medemer* principle, seems increasingly determined to effect an adjustment in the direction of Oromo ethnonationalists. On the one hand, he does not want to question the existence of ethnic states, the apparent reason being the fear that calling into question ethnic federalism will ignite sustained protests and violent uprisings in Oromia and other parts of the country. On the other hand, he says that he is aware of the danger of the ethnic divide for the unity of the country and of its drawbacks in achieving peace, economic development, and a liberal—as opposed to revolutionary—form of democracy.

For Abiy's opponents, far from alleviating ethnic tensions and the economic plight of working people and discouraging harmful behaviors, Abiy's wavering position has exasperated them. Worse yet, all the mentioned challenges pale in comparison to the highest danger stemming from the real possibility of the Oromo wing of Prosperity Party, under the tacit consent, if not encouragement, of Abiy himself, fully succumbing to ethnonationalist extremism. We have already alluded to the strong sympathy of many members of the wing for the theory supporting the need for a dominant group to run a country divided along ethnic lines. Until recently, the prevailing belief was that the moderate stand of Abiy would keep under control his own party's temptation to assume the role and rank of the dominant partner. However, basing themselves on some of Abiy's latest positions and decisions that seem to favor the Oromo, many critics increasingly speak of a shift of policy, while others counterargue by saying that the so-called shift is actually an uncovering of Abiy's original belief. To illustrate the shift or the unveiling, critics say that, under Abiy, Ethiopia witnessed the following turn of events: recurring displacements and mass killings of Amhara who had settled for many decades in Oromia; the attempt to impose Oromo language and culture in Addis Ababa's schools and other official places, not to mention the looming threat of integration of the capital into Oromia; the plan to break up the unity of the Orthodox Church so as to create a rival Oromo church; the determination to single out and forcefully disperse Amhara regional forces; the crusade, which often results in arbitrary arrests and imprisonments, against Amhara activists, political leaders, media, and parliamentarians, even though the latter have constitutional immunity against prosecution, while giving their Oromo counterparts *carte blanche*; the recent conciliatory attitude of Abiy and the Oromo wing of Prosperity Party—some even speak of close cooperation—toward the TPLF, which attitude can only work to the detriment of Amhara interests, especially as regards the issue of contested territories, etc. To crown it all, these policy changes culminated in the deployment of the full armed forces of the government against the Amhara resistant fighting force known as Fano and the eruption of war in the Amhara region.

Those who speak of shift see the recent policy decisions as deviations from *medemer's* basic principle of equal treatment of all ethnic units and the ultimate generation of a trans-ethnic Ethiopian national unity. No such unity is possible if one of the units receives preferential treatment. Those who think that the shift was in reality an unveiling retort that the pan-Ethiopianism of Abiy was just a cover-up until the consolidation of his power. The imperative of obtaining the support of other ethnic groups, especially the Amhara, to rebuild the state and reform its military and repressive forces in accordance with his needs explains the adoption of a pretend pan-Ethiopian attitude, mostly reflected in Abiy's various public speeches.

To understand Abiy's manifest inconsistencies, many among his detractors are increasingly appealing to the personality disorder known as narcissism. For them, there is no doubt that Abiy's sense of self-importance, his need for admiration, his longing for total control, his cavalier attitude toward the truth, etc., betray a narcissistic personality.<sup>7</sup> As we saw, other critics associate these character flaws with messianism.<sup>8</sup> As interesting as these psychological approaches are, they fall short of providing a satisfactory explanation. In fact, in deriving political decisions from an innate narcissistic disposition, they overlook an additional temptation, which is that Ethiopia's manifold intricate problems can drive a leader to make authoritarian choices. Far from me to deny the impact of the psychological makeup of leaders: I myself appealed to such an explanation to account for the rise and fall of Mengistu Haile Mariam in Chapter VIII. However, I maintain that political problems should not be reduced to psychological or character issues (this point is discussed in Chapter I, notably regarding the difference between idealist and materialist explanations). Certainly, without the context prescribed by objective conditions, subjective factors alone cannot account for political choices. Thus, in the case of Mengistu, the overthrow of a long-reigning monarch like Haile Selassie and the numerous problems arising from it, combined with the growing influence of the civilian left, created conditions favorable to Mengistu's narcissistic personality. The question, then, is whether it is possible to understand the recent shift of Abiy without considering the numerous grave hurdles he is facing. When the problem is so posited, one can rationally entertain the idea that the dictatorial slide reveals a predisposition, but with the understanding that it is also a choice based on the belief that it provides a way out. For, the more problems multiply and deepen, the harder it becomes to resist the dictatorial solution.

It stands to reason that a latent dictatorial tendency can become explicit by the exercise of power in a party and government filled with sycophants. Add to this possibility the hegemonic aspirations of Oromo elite groups, which originate from the position of representing the most numerous ethnic group in the Horn of Africa and the need to repair and avenge the damages inflicted by Menilik's conquest on Oromo peoples and the subsequent Amhara domination since that conquest. You then have what it takes to change the dictatorial craving into a fully blossomed trait. In other words, an encounter occurred between the Oromo hegemonic ambition and Abiy's dictatorial predisposition, whose consequence was that both fed upon each other and mutually fortified. The one group able to counter the ambition being the Amhara, the ongoing armed hostility between Abiy as the messianic leader of the Oromo people and the Amhara elites is, therefore, in the order of things. Whether one prefers to speak of narcissism or messianism matters little, the bare truth for critics is that the reinforcement of a predisposition by a definite social context explains Abiy's decision to disarm the Amhara militia and subdue the region, for only thus can his awakened craving for absolute power be fulfilled.

Let us try to be precise and thorough, as the reason for the shift from the moderate stand to a more ethnonationalist position does not seem to have an easy answer. Undoubtedly, the recent change of position has to do with the openly competitive conflict between the two major ethnic

groups, namely, the Amhara and the Oromo, in particular within the Prosperity Party. For one thing, the midway course could not but frustrate both Oromo elite groups and the Oromo wing of the ruling party, which constitutes the base of Abiy's power. For another, the intra-party conflicts are a constant source of instability destabilizing the functioning of the government. Another highly consequential outcome of intra-party conflict was the war against the TPLF army. It had the unintended consequence of considerably strengthening both the fighting force and the weaponry of the Amhara militias. This state of things could not but provoke anxiety among Oromo elite groups and the Oromo wing of the Prosperity Party, including its leader Abiy.

Another consequence of the war is the thorny issue of territories retaken by the Amhara regional state following the military defeat of the TPLF. Rejecting the argument that the territories were forcefully annexed to Tigray after the collapse of the Derg's army, the TPLF defiantly claims them and makes the achievement of peace conditional on their return. The important thing here is that the TPLF has successfully convinced the international community, especially Western donor countries, of Tigray's "legitimate right" to the territories. As a result, Western donors subject the full resumption of economic and financial aids to the return of the territories to Tigray. Clearly, this issue of contested territories put Abiy and the Amhara region on a confrontational path. Not only because it stands in the way of the resumption of the much-needed Western support, but also because the reintegration of these rich territories further strengthens the already enhanced standing of the Amhara both in the party coalition and in the country.

Here then is Abiy's dilemma: convinced that the pursuit of a moderate course cannot handle the conflicts between the two major ethnic groups, Abiy is faced with the dilemma of siding with the one against the other. Going with the Amhara means the abandonment of ethnic federalism and Oromo hegemonic aspirations, which abandonment would only expand and consolidate the already active Oromo opposition against him. On the other hand, siding with the Oromo means losing the support of the Amhara, whose consequence is the loss of the most reliable and principal advocate of Ethiopian unity and integrity. Bearing in mind that Abiy has his constituency in Oromia, the feasible way out of the dilemma with minimum disruption or hurdle was to accede to the wish of the majority of the Oromia wing of his Prosperity Party. This means putting the party under the dominant leadership of its Oromo faction without, however, the drawback, as in the case of the EPRDF under the TPLF, of the domination of a faction representing a minority ethnic group. Indeed, what could be more legitimate than the ascendancy of the wing representing the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia?

Thus far, I have sketched the context of the shift of policy that led to the growing strained relationship between Abiy and Amhara elite groups, despite the fact that the Amhara provided the staunchest support to him during the first years of his premiership. This contextual explanation does not completely answer the question of knowing why Abiy effectively decided to go along with the hegemonic aspiration of the Oromo wing of his party, thereby repeating the path of the TPLF that he had severely criticized at the beginning of his premiership. The context provides the dilemma he faced, but it does not entirely say why he chose this path rather than another possible path. To complete the explanation, psychological features related to Abiy's personality must enter into the equation. The theoretically appropriate way of articulating the psychological factor with the context is via a more elaborate examination, which is the purpose of the next paragraph, of the impact of intra-coalition competition.

For now, the following should be said: even though only the future can tell how successful Abiy's resolution of the dilemma will be, one certainty stands out: the future of Ethiopia as a united and viable country hinges on a sustained prevalence of a moderate course over extremism coming



from various contending groups. This, in turn, depends on the commitment and ability of the prime minister and his associates to keep together moderates, who make up the majority. The best possible political arrangement to achieve this result is the institution of a system promoting power-sharing and democratic inclusiveness. A word of caution: power-sharing has no affinity with cooptation, as when the ruling party gives advisory roles, ministerial positions, or some other important functions to representatives of opposition parties. Cooptation can prevent neither the formulation of policies in the terms decided by the ruling party nor their execution. A good example of cooptation is the now defunct EPRDF: even though it was presented and promoted as a power-sharing coalition, the unchallenged authority of the TPLF turned it into a cooptative coalition. Unlike cooptation, power-sharing operates on the basis of consensus between political parties or partners in a coalition: it is an agreement in which the partners recognize their respective rights. We have now reached the stage where the elements for a more detailed and conceptual explanation of Abiy's policy seem gathered.

### **Intra-Coalition Competition and Social Discontents**

What makes context important is that, whether one speaks of shift or tactical maneuver, one still has to explain the specific nature and timing of the change. As stated earlier, the answer to the question of what particular occurrence or occurrences caused the policy mutation is to be found in the events that took place in Tigray and the subsequent effects of those events on the attitude of Western countries vis-à-vis Ethiopia and Abiy's government. Even more importantly, the effects had decisive repercussions on the competition, already underway, between the Oromo and Amhara wings of the Prosperity Party. Essentially driven by Amhara frustrations against the expanding dominion of Oromo elites in every aspect of social life as well as mistreatments of Amharas' basic rights in other regional states, the competition brought into play Abiy's retention and preservation of absolute power. In the perceptive words of Terrence Lyons, "heightened intra-coalition competition produces internal dynamics . . . that shape political outcomes. It may be that political competition within the authoritarian party matters more than competition with formal opposition."<sup>9</sup> The observation necessitates an additional remark, which is that the authoritarian command so reigns over the coalition that the party acts basically as a single-party system.

A pertinent instance of the dynamics of intra-coalition competition is the election to the premiership of Abiy himself. The change happened as a result of the Amhara and Oromo wings of the EPRDF acting in concert to challenge the hegemony of the TPLF. The specific thing about intra-party competition is that it generates a dynamics, that is, a change from within, in distinction to the usual approach assigning change to an external cause. Of course, the legitimate question here is whether such a change is a lasting one. While in the case of Abiy the change seems short-lived, there are instances where it had far-reaching impacts, as in the case of Gorbachev in the previous USSR or Den Xiaoping in China.

Another example of the dynamics of competition between party partners, but this time with dreadful outcomes, is undoubtedly the war in Tigray. From day one of his premiership, Abiy had to confront the TPLF's open threat against his power. The menace was not only real and highly perilous to Abiy, but it was also imminent. The TPLF had under its command a large fighting force that was probably better equipped and organized than the federal army, not to mention the large networks of supporters and financial backings that it had at its disposal all over Ethiopia and outside Ethiopia. When the TPLF's army finally launched its attacks on the Ethiopian army with the clear intention of marching toward Addis Ababa and removing Abiy, it became clear that the

survival of Abiy's regime depended on the mobilization of the Amhara and the Afar peoples as well as on the assistance of Eritrean forces. For Abiy's critics, after the military victory of the Ethiopian army over the TPLF thanks to the effective assistance of Amhara and Afar fighting forces and the Eritrean army, a new situation emerged that cornered Abiy into making difficult choices. Indeed, his pan-Ethiopianism had already angered many among the Oromo wing of his own party as well as among the Oromo elites at large. This anger translated into concrete measures supporting and strengthening the Oromo guerrilla force, known as *Shene*, in its fight against governmental forces. It became increasingly obvious that Abiy was about to lose his support in Oromia unless he significantly tempered his pan-Ethiopian stand. Specifically, the tempering meant skewing the competition between the Oromo and Amhara elites in favor of the former.

For critics, the need to side with Oromo elites became even more imperative as the consequences of the TPLF's war were unfolding. First, due to the war, the Amhara regional state ended up with an armed force that could be as menacing as the Tigrean force was. Second, the freeing of the rich region known as Welkait and other areas from the Tigrean control and their integration into the Amhara regional state further strengthened the Amhara standing. Thus grew the belief that the Amhara's competitive mindset and the simultaneous rise of Amhara nationalism are more dangerous to Abiy and the Oromo wing of Prosperity Party than the threat of Oromo opposition groups inside or outside the party. Third, the issue of recovered territories stood in the way of the reconciliation between the TPLF and Prosperity Party. The reconciliation is particularly sought by both Oromo elites and the Oromo wing of the Prosperity Party for its balancing effect against the rising Amhara influence and its predictable adverse impact on the continuation of ethnonationalist politics. It is well known that Amhara elites have been and still are the main opposing voice against ethnic federalism, while the TPLF and Oromo elites and members of the ruling party remain its staunchest defenders. Fourth, the way Western countries came out in support of the TPLF during the war and their subsequent pressure to put an end to the military confrontations, the apex of which was the American threat of drastic financial and economic sanctions unless a peace agreement is signed, implied the preservation of the territorial integrity of Tigray, that is, the return of Welkait and other recovered territories to Tigray.

In addition to the felt need to downsize the newfound Amhara politico-military importance, the implementation, as already said, of the Tigrean demand that both the West and the Oromo party base support could not but put Abiy on a collision course with Amhara elites and regional state. Since the resumption of Western assistance is conditional on the completion of the reconciliation with Tigray, it meant the return of claimed territories to Tigray in some way and at some time in the near future. Accordingly, to regain the much-needed economic support of the West and counter the perceived Amhara challenge by winning the support of the Oromo wing of his party and Oromo elites in general, Abiy saw no other way out than to effectuate an adjustment in the direction of backing Oromo hegemonic aspirations. Moreover, reconciliation with the TPLF would seal the alliance with the Oromo wing of the Prosperity Party, which is necessary to contain the opposition, mostly coming from Amhara elites, against ethnonationalist politics and ethnic federalism. While ensuring the resumption of Western loans, investments, and aid, the reconciliation presents no danger to Abiy now that military defeat has diminished the TPLF.

All things considered, say critics, the surest way for Abiy to retain and strengthen his power is to move away from his pan-Ethiopianism by both securing the alliance with the TPLF and echoing the viewpoint of those yearning for Oromo ascendancy in Ethiopia. These two conditions enable Abiy to have a firmer hold on power because: (1) the seemingly irreconcilable antagonism between Tigrean and Amhara elites is a useful tool now that the former are militarily diminished;

(2) the government's decision to demobilize and disperse the Amhara regional militia that was greatly strengthened as a result of the war is another move beneficial to Abiy; (3) the procurement of the support of Oromo elites provides a large and reliable power base. As already mentioned, arguments like the Oromo constitute the largest ethnic group in the country, Oromia is the richest and the largest region, prop up the Oromo domineering appetite. Nothing illustrates better the dynamics of intra-coalition competition than Abiy's political shift. Indeed, the condition that led to the alliance between the Oromo and Amhara wings of Prosperity Party having changed now that defeat has weakened the TPLF, the competition, previously contained but never resolved, between the two wings of the party naturally comes to the forefront. Likewise, nothing better explains the policy shift than the intersection between the context and Abiy's narcissistic tendency: that which was simply latent can come to fruition when it finds favorable or pressing conditions.

That is why, in the eyes of many opponents, more than a return to an original or to a newly acquired ethnonationalist commitment, the retention of absolute control of state power is behind Abiy's recent political volte-face. Seeing the policy mutation from the perspective of Abiy's partiality for the Oromo is to overlook the change of context that led him to read into the hegemonic aspirations of Oromo elites a sure way of retaining absolute power. By contrast, given the dictatorial craving of Abiy and the domineering aspiration of Oromo elite groups, if one asks the question of knowing which support among the contending forces Abiy is likely to use to gratify his craving, the pertinent answer jumps out easily. For, in posing the problem in terms of the encounter between the absolutist ambition of an individual and the aspiration of an elite group, one seizes the opportunity to grasp the war in Tigray as the first manifestation of the elites' conflict for the hegemonic control of Ethiopian state and the current war in Amhara region as a continuation of the fight over domination. Moreover, the haste with which Abiy and his Oromo wing of Prosperity party allied with the TPLF after the signing of a peace agreement fits well with both Abiy's dictatorial longing and Oromo elites' domineering goal: now that the TPLF is weakened by its military defeat, its ethnonationalist dedication can become an ally in the fight for the preservation of ethnic federalism, provided that the TPLF benefits by recovering the contested territories. The recovery conveniently disadvantages the rival Amhara region and reinforces the hostility between the two ethnic regions.

Not only does the preservation of ethnic federalism call for a dominant faction, but it also necessitates the dictatorial rule of one individual, obvious as it is that the condition for the dominant ethnic faction to safeguard its privileged position is to shield the unlimited rule of the individual who comes from its own ranks. The last time this rule was not followed ended with the TPLF's loss of its dominant position: because the prime minister who succeeded after Meles's death, Hailemariam Desalegn, did not come from the Tigrean ethnic group, he was denied the limitless power that the system required. This same time reveals the extent to which intra-party competition opens the door for the expression of popular discontents: in parallel with the germinating divisions within the ruling EPRDF party, mass uprisings first in Oromia and then in the Amhara region against the TPLF exploded. These uprisings could not but intensify the divisions within the ruling party, with the consequence that they weakened the repressive ability of the government. In the Amhara region, because the competition between the Oromo and Amhara wings of the Prosperity Party failed to reach a confrontational level owing to the conceding attitude of the Amhara political leadership, the popular discontents, led by the armed Fano militia, first turned against and then practically ousted the Amhara regional party. It was only when Abiy sent the national army that the Amhara uprising escalated into a war against the government. Despite the noted difference between the cases of the EPRDF and Prosperity Party, one common

characteristic emerges about intra-party competition within an authoritarian party, which is that the competition itself is expressive of underlying social discontents that the dictatorial nature of the ruling party cannot solve.

So understood, the competition must be seen as a crack in the system that can move in the direction of a positive change if the ruling party reforms itself in a way echoing the social demands. If, on the other hand, the party refuses to reform itself and clings to its authoritarian methods, it invites revolution, even civil war. In taking the path of heightened authoritarianism as a response to mounting challenges, what else are Abiy and the Prosperity Party inviting but the most dangerous outcome of all? Indeed, the surrender to a dictatorial drift does no more than put the very existence of the country in jeopardy, for no ethnic group in Ethiopia has anymore the stomach to endure another round of ethnic hegemonic rule, whichever be the perpetrating group. It only leaves Ethiopians with a bitter sense of *déjà vu*, thereby confirming that, despite a very promising start, Abiy could not escape the fate of his predecessors, namely, the fall into the dictatorial trap, a slide typical of the vagaries of “modern” Ethiopian politics.

### **By Way of Solution**

From what is said so far, one thing protrudes: in whichever way we examine the causes of Ethiopia’s inability to broaden and deepen modernization, none is more difficult to grapple with than the multi-faceted impediment arising from ethnonationalism and its constitutional expression, ethnic federalism. The difficulty stands in the way of the most urgent and paramount task, to wit, the reformation of the Ethiopian state, whose basic defect is that it cannot function without instituting some form of dominance. In addition to masking the real root of the problem, ethnicization parades itself as the appropriate solution when in reality it is itself an outgrowth of the malformation of the Ethiopian modern state. However, it is important to reiterate what has been said previously. The argument according to which the fragmentation of the country along ethnic lines being the major problem, the solution is to dissolve the ethnic regions and establish a federal system based on criteria that are less divisive, logical and attractive as it may sound, is not feasible. According to many analysts (including myself), some such solution has the obvious disadvantage of trying to solve the problem by seriously endangering whatever appetite for unity still remains, the consequence of which would be, as already reiterated, to inflame violent ethnic clashes in various places of the country.

In agreement with *medemer* policy, I say that, at this stage of the country’s evolution, the depoliticization of the ethnic criterion would be a hasty measure because ethnicity has become the main legitimizing reason for political demarcations, alignments, and mobilizations, especially for elites vying for the control of state power. Since all political demands and grievances are soaked in identity politics, the country has reached a point where doing politics amounts to ethnicizing. Any attempt at depoliticizing ethnicity is perceived as a unitarian bid to reverse the gains of identity politics since the fall of the Derg. Even those who push for a unitary state agree to make such large concessions to identity politics that one wonders what is really left of their opposition to ethnic federalism.

The point of contention that defenders of today’s ethnic federalism have against their opponents being that the depoliticization of ethnicity can only result in the restoration of a unitary state, what if, instead of restoration, we think in terms of institutional mechanisms that would mitigate the divisive nature of ethnic politics while retaining its institutional expression? This kind of thinking wants neither a return to the past nor the maintenance of the status quo. Rather, it calls

for the creation of institutional mechanisms enabling ethnicity to work hand in hand with national unity instead of undermining it. This appeal to institutional mechanisms demarcates the proposal from the position of *medemer* in that it backs the restoration of national unity with political means instead of merely relying on the expected benefits from synergy to overcome ethnic fragmentation. It also differs from the position of those who support the necessity of a dominant group or party to keep the country together. It does so by restoring universal suffrage, that is, by allowing the people to speak and reach a national and sovereign majority vote. Let me give the main lines of the proposal.

One basic condition of national unity is the consent that people give to living together and sharing a common future, a consent that is usually provided through the ballot box. Yet, for consent to produce a stable and working political community, it must translate into a sovereign power, that is, a power that transcends the mere sum of its constituent parts. The democratic way of expressing and implementing this sovereign power is through majority rule. To quote John Locke, “every man, by consenting with others to make one body politic under one government, puts himself under an obligation to everyone of that society to submit to the determination of the majority, and to be concluded by it.”<sup>10</sup> To make unity conditional on a continued unanimous agreement between the component parts is just an invitation to its dissolution, obvious as it is that unanimity as a requirement of unity offers no alternative other than dissolution at the slightest disagreement, which is inevitable. The democratic principle of majority rule is the only and broadly acknowledged means that political unions have to avoid dissolution and, with it, the inevitability of violent clashes. Two companies can merge and then dissolve without causing a national catastrophe, not so a political union, in which hands, people place the protection of their lives, liberties, and properties.

As indicated in the last chapter, the manner the Ethiopian Constitution framed the federal system has no embedded safeguard against dissolution. Not only does it start from the sovereignty of multiple nations and nationalities, but it also underlines that “all sovereign power resides in the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia.”<sup>11</sup> The purposely discarded notion of the sovereignty of Ethiopia as a nation is clearly stated in the already mentioned Article 39 Clause 1 of the constitution granting ethnic groups the right to secede. According to the clause, the decision to remain or not in the union solely depends on the approval of a “two-thirds majority of the members of the Legislative Council of the Nation, Nationality or People concerned” and “a majority vote in the referendum” organized by the federal government.”<sup>12</sup> Unity here is not raised to the level of a transcendent notion through a transfer of sovereignty from the ethnic groups to the collective body; it is solely dependent on the conditional assent of the component groups. Far from constituting one body, the parliament remains a collection of distinct and sovereign entities.

No wonder that the late prime minister, Meles Zenawi, had to go out of stated constitutional norms and resort to dictatorial methods to protect his power and prevent the country from breaking apart. Operating in a constitutional system that removed all legal means to prevent dissolution, he had to tear apart the democratic provisions inscribed in the constitution, thereby joining the clan of all those dictators who subordinate the preservation of national unity to the continuity of their absolute rule. Moreover, the refusal to generate a collective being that transcends ethnic distinctions has the harmful effect of turning any officeholder, including the premiership, into a representative of an ethnic group. Consequently, officeholders do not see people as citizens, but as members of ethnic groups with unequal standing in relation to members of their own ethnic group. Inversely, people who belong to different ethnic groups than the officeholder see their relations with him/her as conflictual at best. It is of no use to try to create an impression of equality

through a fair distribution of governmental offices: inasmuch as the offices are not impersonalized, that is, de-ethnicized, equal treatment will remain wanting. A federal system that would be representative of all Ethiopians regardless of race, ethnicity, or religion is unattainable so long as the entire system is made unable to transcend the ethnic constituencies.

Here is, then, the real dilemma of Ethiopia: on the one hand, there is no any good actual alternative to the preservation of the ethnically demarcated states and, on the other, there is the need to generate a transcending unity to keep, not only the ethnic units together, but also to make them work in an integrated, harmonious, and mutually beneficial way. I see no better way to resolve the dilemma than to erect a presidential power transcending ethnic entities. The idea is to let ethnic politics operate at the parliamentary level while preventing it at the same time from undermining national unity, the long-term view being that economic growth, improved conditions of life, the progress of equality, and the prospect of a better future will soften the antagonistic nature of ethnic political alignments in favor of inclusive and pragmatic political values. In superimposing on ethnic political representations, which reside in the parliament, a presidential system with clear and extensive unitary and national functions, the country secures the means to institutionally reduce the divisive impact of ethnic politics. While the ethnic regions elect the parliament, the president is elected by direct universal suffrage, and so is invested with powers transcending ethnic representations.

For instance, one national function of the president could be the power to intervene in regional affairs every time an ethnic or religious minority group needs protection from threats and attacks. Naturally, the responsibility of the commander-in-chief of the armed forces as well as of federal security forces would have to be included among the national functions of the president if the latter is to transcend the ethnic states. Another prerogative of the president could be the power to dissolve the parliament in case of a national emergency. The nomination of the prime minister could also be one of the presidential functions. The prime minister will have the specific function of serving as a liaison and a bridge between the president and the parliament. As such, he/she is responsible for securing a majority support for policies initiated or approved by the president. To use an image, the prime minister will be to the parliament what a conductor is to a symphonic orchestra.

The assumption here is that a presidential candidate cannot have a majority of votes unless he/she presents a program that suits the majority of voters in the country. Given that no ethnic group can claim to represent the majority of Ethiopians, any agenda of preferential treatment of one ethnic group over other groups becomes a losing proposition. The obvious advantage of electing the president through universal suffrage is, therefore, to make sure that moderation pervades federal instances and decisions. In this way, the president does not represent a specific ethnic group, and this transcendence counters the tendency to dispersion inherent in the parliament with a unifying instance. To use an image borrowed this time from physics, presidential power will be to the parliament what a converging lens is to rays of light passing through it. If, unlike regional positions that depend on regional elections, the election of the president emanates from universal suffrage and is decided by a majority vote of all people from all ethnic regions, some such arrangement, in addition to strongly encouraging moderation, creates the needed incentive for the emergence of national political figures from within the ethnic regions themselves. Moreover, the combination of universal suffrage and majority vote with regional elections ties individual rights with group rights and turns moderation into a condition for a successful bid since, as suggested above, candidates for the presidential office will have to become attractive to voters

outside their ethnic groups. In thus addressing people outside their ethnic groups, presidential candidates are compelled to deal with them as citizens endowed with individual rights.

The solution provides a remarkable synthesis between unitarists and ethnic federalists: instead of opposing unity to ethnicity, it proposes a living, self-adjusting process that produces unity out of diversity and diversity out of unity. Depending on how we look at the constitutional arrangement, it can be seen as a differentiation of unity, if one descends from top to bottom, or as a convergence toward oneness, if one goes from bottom to top. Note that the process of going from oneness to multiplicity approximates or imitates the process of life; as such, it is natural, the defining feature of which is that, as outcomes of internal differentiations, the distinguished elements remain organically part of the whole being but its component and mutually complementary parts. By contrast, the movement that goes from distinct elements to unity involves an act of assemblage; as such, it is a mechanical process in which self-sufficient entities come together to constitute an artificial unity to which they remain external. Pinpointing the qualitative difference between the mechanical and the vital, Henri Bergson writes: “*life does not proceed by the association and addition of elements, but by dissociation and division.*”<sup>13</sup> To the question of which one, of the two forms of integration, is likely to produce reliable unity, the answer is not difficult to find out.

Worth noticing is also the fact that the proposed solution that the proposal comes close to Ethiopia’s traditional system of semi-autonomous regions (almost kingdoms) unified under a transcending authority expressly called “king of kings.” To explain the remarkably long-lasting survival of Ethiopia, the third chapter of this book brought to light the role of the interaction between regional power and the emperor in protecting the integrity and independence of the country. What is more, the book has argued all along that the inability/refusal to include some of the assets of the traditional system in the modernization effort has, to a great extent, brought about the derailment of the modernization process. In opting for a tight centralization so as to dissolve regional power accused of being responsible for the prolonged lack of peace and security, the central power evolved first into an imperial autocracy and then into a military dictatorship. This slippage led to a reaction, which came in the form of a dictatorship of an ethnic party. These changes represent a cascade of reactions to the faulty formation of the Ethiopian modern state.

All the different forms of state centralization produced the same result, namely, the derailment of modernization. However, while it is absolutely true to say that decentralization is the change that is required to correct the derailment, one must not lose sight of the imperative of unity, especially after the deep divisions engendered by a deliberate policy of ethnic fragmentations. Needed, therefore, is the setting up of a political system that is as flexible, accommodating, and consensus-based as the traditional system. As a renovated, modernized tradition, the new political system will hold the country together, no more through the imposition of the absolute power of the center, but through the dynamic interactions and mutual dependency of centripetal and centrifugal forces. The major difference is evidently that, in the modern system, the source of power and legitimacy moves from war prowess and *Kibre Negast’s* divine consecration to popular suffrage. The involvement of popular suffrage ascribes the responsibility of protecting freedom and equality and enabling the material betterment of the citizens, in accordance with the gospel of modernization, to the elected political class.

This is to say that the proposed presidential system puts Ethiopia on the right track to undertake the much-needed reform of the state. Indeed, the preservation of ethnic regions ensures the decentralization of the state through the relative autonomy of regions. But unlike the TPLF’s solution, it does not appeal to the institution of the dominance of one ethnic party to safeguard national unity. Instead, it creates a powerful organ that transcends the ethnic regions thanks to the election of the president through universal suffrage, who is then the common national dominator

that unites all Ethiopians beyond their distinct ethnic identities. In this way, the solution provides the missing factor in *medemer*'s commitment to unity, which is the countering of ethnic dispersion with a transcendent unifying agent. The fact that the free choice of people elects the president democratizes the system by making the president accountable to the Ethiopian people. It is reasonable to assume that the free choice exercised at the level of the federal government will have its ramifications at the regional level. The general outcome will be the generation of a state in which finally Ethiopians will have a say in the running of the affairs that concern and affect them. In place of the system that takes away power from Ethiopians, thereby reducing them to the status of subjects, Ethiopia will have a governing system whose principal constituents are citizens, that is, free individuals who are collectively sovereign.

It may seem contradictory to recommend the reformation of the Ethiopian state via the establishment of a presidential system with extensive power. However, some such objection does not hold water: powerful presidential systems, like the one in France and the United States, are no less democratic than parliamentary systems. A strong presidential system is no threat to democracy so long as the parliament and the judicial branch retain their autonomy, not to mention the possibility of adding rules purposely designed to prevent the slide toward dictatorship. In whichever way one analyses the situation, the state of latent as well as advanced conflictual relations between diverse ethnic groups in Ethiopia requires a presidential system that can soar above the groups. To rely on existing parties for the formation of a government of coalition that would prioritize national interests over ethnic interests would be a deceitful solution. The matter must be left to the only resort that can transcend elite politics, namely, the people as a whole, that is, as citizens forming a whole beyond ethnic enclaves. It is equally patent that the presidency must command enough power to be able to soar above group interests. The point is that Ethiopians, as a people, elect the president and the president feels accountable to them. Together with the need to have majority support in the parliament, this power to directly elect the president empowers the people and gives them a say in the running of the country. Simply put, the foundation of Ethiopian national unity becomes viable and imperative only when the people as a collective sovereign majority manifests its will through a presidential election. So that, rather than elites speaking in the name of the people, as is now the case, the collective majority will of the people is the ultimate decider.

In conclusion, I want to share my firm belief that the proposal contains ideas that are liable to unite and mobilize a large number of people. The proposal to abolish the ethnic states can be appealing to many people, especially in urban areas, but no matter the extent to which it will go to protect identity rights, it will not be enough to rally a majority in such important regions as Oromia, Tigray, Somali, etc. Nor could it avoid the eruption of protests and violent ethnic clashes in various parts of the country. By contrast, my proposal attempts to harmonize unity with diversity, and so does not roll back any of the acquired rights, like self-rule and the development of group identity, while allowing these rights to operate within a renovated and strengthened national unity. As such, it can unite and mobilize numerous people from different ethnic groups. This study hopes that such a potential lays the ground for the emergence of a multiethnic political party that could fill the void of the much-needed alternative to the Prosperity Party. It will distinguish itself from the latter by prioritizing unity and deriving diversity from it in the manner of the Indian National Congress Party.

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<sup>1</sup> Abiy Ahmed, *Medemer* (Addis Ababa, Meskerem, 2012), iv (my translation).



<sup>2</sup> Ibid,47-48 (my translation).

<sup>3</sup> “Ethiopia's Constitution of 1994,” [constituteproject.org](https://www.constituteproject.org) (27 April 2022)  
[https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Ethiopia\\_1994.pdf](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Ethiopia_1994.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Abdisa Olkeba Jima, “Vicious circle of Ethiopian politics: Prospects and challenges of current political reform,” *CogentSocialSciences*, March 8, 2021, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23311886.2021.1893908>

<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Fisher, “A Shining Example for the Horn,” *Leaders for a New Africa* (Milano, Italy: Ledizioni LediPublishing, 2019), 41-42.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>7</sup> For instance, see Mistir Sew’s article, “Ethiopia’s Leader has some Worrying Traits,” *Ethiopian Insight* (May 4, 2021)  
<https://www.ethiopia-insight.com/2021/05/04/ethiopias-leader-has-some-worrying-traits/>

<sup>8</sup> Henok Jemal Aman, Mulat Abebel Reta, “A Close Look at Abiy’s Charismatic Leadership in Ethiopia,” *American Journal of Management*, June 27, no. 3, 2022, <http://www.sciencepublishinggroup.com/j/ajmse>

<sup>9</sup> Terrence Lyons, “The Puzzle of Ethiopian Politics,” *Democracy in Africa* (September 2, 2019)  
<https://democracyinfrica.org/puzzle-ethiopian-politics/>

<sup>10</sup> John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 332.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., “Ethiopia's Constitution of 1994.”

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: The Modern Library, 1944), 99 (Italics in text). For more information on the difference between organization and mechanism, see Messay Kebede, *Bergson’s Philosophy of Self-Overcoming: Thinking without Negativity or Time as Striving* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).