Political discourses and the securitization of democracy in post-1991 Ethiopia
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Citation

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Issue Date: 2020-05-07

Chapter Seven: Synthesis, Conclusion and Future Research

This chapter consists of three sections: section one offers a synthesis of the thesis by drawing linkages that bind all the chapters; section two presents concluding remarks, while section three sets a future research agenda in light of the major political developments that have taken place in Ethiopia since the beginning of 2016.

7.1. Synthesis

This concluding chapter probes issues emanating from the EPRDF's framing of opposition politics in a discourse invoking the speech act as an instrument to securitize opposing discourses of democracy and development paradigms. The EPRDF's discursive narratives are hardly new, dating back to the liberation struggle. They are shaped by the ruling EPRDF doctrine (ethnic federalism, developmental state and revolutionary democracy). The ideological trio underlying this doctrine is contested by the opposition forces and their counter-ideological strands, which oscillate between Pan-Ethiopianists and ethno-nationalists. Neither the TPLF/EPRDF nor the opposition forces constitute an internal ideological unity or political discourses that are coherently Ethiopian or ethno-nationalist. From this perspective, the TPLF/EPRDF and its political opponents engage in competing discursive narratives, using the regional states 'ethnicity, politics and history as counter-discourses. Some are directed simultaneously against their allies (for instance, the TPLF's latest spat with the ADP and ODP or the TPLF, ADP and ODP). The political discourses are not merely elite creations independent of their regional states 'constituencies; they must resonate with, and offer solace to, their ethnic groups to ensure their political support.

To be sure, the political discourses of the ruling party and the opposition, whether they are Pan-Ethiopianists or ethno-nationalists, are path dependent, have evolved from earlier political discourses, and consciously strive to link the past to the present. The ultimate goal of the opposing discourses in both groups is to provide a doctrinal perspective that privileges their respective democratic and developmental transformation.

While the dominant political discourse of the EPRDF is the securitization of democracy and development, the opposition's discourse has thrived by equating ethnic federalism with ethno-nationalism, either under competitive democratic politics or by seeking fulfilment in a nation-state in an ethnic-based confederal system. Opposition forces agitating for a Pan-Ethiopian future, contrived to do away with ethnic federalism altogether, and therefore dismantle the crown jewel of the TPLF/EPRDF doctrine. Accordingly, from the EPRDF perspective, any divergence of political discourse that does not align with its own political discourse and doctrine or offer alternative democratic and development processes, invites security risks. The securitization of development and democracy, therefore, is an act of self-preservation, which, for the EPRDF, justifies the use of brutal force and violence to silence its opponents, whether they use peaceful or violent means of resistance.

For securitizing the opposition and its alternative political and development doctrines, the EPRDF defines the opposition as an agglomeration of chauvinists who purportedly rally around the cause of Ethiopian unity only to dominate and oppress the rest of Ethiopia's nations and nationalities (*Addisraey* 2017: 4-25). Concomitantly, the EPRDF further describes the chauvinist forces as remnants or new agents of pre-1991 regimes. In this discourse, these agents comprise the Amhara Pan-Ethiopianists, on the one hand, and the Oromo, Somali and others who struggle for the right of self-determination as narrow nationalists (EPRDF 2010). The EPRDF, as the liberator of Ethiopia, promotes itself and its politics as the only correct democratic option in its available discourse. In contrast to the opposition groups, the EPRDF 'Portrays itself as the bearers of all that is good, and their opponents as relics of the past '(2007:673) as Salih aptly put it. For the EPRDF, therefore, the redemption and survival of Ethiopia is inherently contingent on the prevalence of its superior political discourse**.** As a result of this, the EPRDF has elevated its political discourse as Ethiopia's discourse. In other words, any opposition to the EPRDF is an opposition to the people, the constitutional and democratic order, and peace. As such, the EPRDF perceives the opposition as a threat to the survival of Ethiopia. Therefore, multiparty democracy, the constitution, the rule of law and elections are mere instruments to guarantee the security and survival of the regime.

The EPRDF officially declared its political opponents (OLF, ONLF and Ginbot 7), to mention but a few prominent opposition forces or 'terrorist organizations'[54]. Because the EPRDF has developed an integrated system of party, security organs and the machinery of the state (executive, judiciary and legislature), peaceful protests, strikes, demonstrations or election rallies are considered acts of terrorism that aim to overthrow the government by the use of force. In short, oppositional politics were perceived as a threat to the state, and hence are defined as a security matter. In other words, any acts and pronunciations or protests against the TPLF/EPRDF and its order, which are part of democratic politics, are securitized, and hence, competitive democracy is by extension considered a security threat.

The securitisation of opposition political discourses and their agency in turn seem to have generated a particular type of politics. A politics of the extraordinary in which the EPRDF government attempts to build a 'democracy' while at the same time uses force against its opponents (the opposition forces that according to the TPLF/EPRDF, cross its red line) or to put it more appropriately, its "enemies". It has enacted different legislation (Anti-Terrorism laws, Media laws et cetera) over the past twenty-five years to deal with any opposition to its rule. As discussed, a number of political dissidents, opposition party leaders, members and supporters had been arrested continuously since the start of its rule in 1991. Typical of the practices under the politics of this state of exception - the politics of the extraordinary- TPLF/EPRDF seems to be ruling the country with both declared and 'undeclared' state of emergencies. In recent years, the EPRDF-led government had declared three states of emergencies - all of them induced by the political crises emanating from the TPLF/EPRDF-espoused political process of the post-1991 period. In particular, the last two years (2015-2016/17) of the TPLF/EPRDF rule, has shown a heightened state of exceptional politics as the regime had switched to ruling the country by military force through these states of emergency in the face of popular violent protests to its rule from the two largest regions (Oromia and Amhara regions) of the federation. Thus, EPRDF's

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[54]As part of the political developments (reforms), the Ethiopian government under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, took three rebel groups (the OLF, ONLF and Ginbot 7) off the country's list of terrorist organizations in July 2018.

political discourse is marred by a perpetual state of exceptional politics (politics of the extraordinary) in which security measures/issues takes precedence over the normal state of affairs of politics (normal politics). This practice of exceptional politics is embedded in its conceptualisation of politics in general but more so, in its understanding of the role and meaning of opposition politics and its interaction with the opposition's political discourse.

The political discourse of the Pan-Ethiopianists opposition forces problematizes and securitizes the EPRDF's political discourse and the regime itself in a more fundamental way. First, it questions the TPLF/EPRDF's legitimacy to rule. The political discourse of the Pan-Ethiopianist forces dismisses the TPLF/EPRDF as an illegitimate regime imposed by occupation and rule by force. The Pan-Ethiopianists further believe the TPLF/EPRDF are engaged in a process that will ultimately lead to the disintegration of Ethiopia. The EPRDF's 'New Ethiopia, 'in which the country is reconfigured based on ethnicity under the auspices of addressing the nationality question, is in fact diametrically opposite to the Pan-Ethiopianists 'vision of democracy for the country. In this regard, despite their differences on how the nationality issue is to be addressed, the Pan-Ethiopianist forces strongly oppose and condemn the TPLF/EPRDF's 'New Ethiopia – 'the ethnic federalist project. Moreover, the Pan-Ethiopianist forces believe that reconfiguring Ethiopia along the lines of an ethnic federalist state is a recipe for disintegration and a danger to unity and national sovereignty.

Similar to the EPRDF discourse, at least methodologically, the Pan-Ethiopianists 'discourse resembles a speech act, and not only securitizes the TPLF/EPRDF regime and its discourse, but also perceives their own struggle as one that has been an act of popular mobilization to remove a threat to the very survival of Ethiopia as a unitary state. In doing so, it appears their vision of democratization is predicated on the complete dismantling and removal of the EPRDF regime.

The discourses of the ethno-nationalists, on the other hand, diverge remarkably from both the discourses of the EPRDF and the Pan-Ethiopianist forces. Apparently, insofar as its assessment of the discourses of the Pan-Ethiopianists are concerned, the ethno-nationalists are radically opposed to the tenets of the Pan-Ethiopianists. The ethno-nationalists

struggle is conceived as a struggle against an enemy occupier, from which they have sought emancipation through both peaceful and military means to liberate their people and land. Some ethno-nationalists can uphold a revisionist stand only in a scenario where ethnic federalism is democratized and recognizes the right to self-determination for the oppressed/colonized peoples.

Ethno-nationalist forces recognize the TPLF/EPRDF doctrine, mainly in the historical context of the Ethiopian empire and its evolutionary process in which the ruling class shifted from the Amhara elites to the Tigrayan elites (till 2018), while other elites were regarded as a subordinate class, serving as surrogates in their respective regions since 1991. Hence, the ethno-nationalists perceive TPLF/EPRDF policies and governance practices to be devoid of any democratic content, and harboring divisive tactics aimed at sustaining TPLF minority rule. Therefore, the ethno-nationalists justify their struggle against the TPLF/EPRDF regime in a political discourse that aims at completing the unfinished business of pre-1991 struggle.

A close examination of the interplay of the political discourses, as discussed herein, reveals the characteristic features that explain the Ethiopian political scene. In this regard, as one goes through the terrain of the meeting points of the political discourses, it becomes plain that the Ethiopian political forces' political conceptualiazations differ greatly and that the differences are not just mere differences of political opinions. The radically contradictory differences arise from how the political elites understand and conceptualise politics as it relates to the past, present and future of the country. These are differences in which the other's political visions, alternative understandings, conceptualizations and their agency itself is fundamentally disputed, rejected and a reversal/dismantling is sought against it. The interactions of the discourses is characterised by the mutual exclusions of the other's conceptualisations of politics and in which the depiction of the 'enemy/friend' runs throughout the narrative, as manifested by the binary oppositional terms, self vs the other, us vs them, oppressor vs oppressed, colonised vs coloniser, democratic vs anti-democratic, pro-people vs anti-people, revolutionary vs anti-revolutionary, peace vs anti-peace et cetera. Underpinning these differences are deeply rooted feelings of animosity, hatred, mutual distrust/suspicion that is often expressed in the form of political violence that is employed against one another. Indeed political violence remains the major outlet

through which political differences are 'resolved' - only to result in the vicious circle of a process that produces provisional 'winners/losers'. This tends to result not only in the underdevelopment of the politics of the country but also in a huge human and capital loss to one of the already poorest countries in the world. The difference is then a political process in which the other (the agency) and the other's discourses (vision of politics, alternative understanding, policy options) are essentially presented as a "serious threat" to the country, for which an action/reaction is sought in the form of mobilisation of forces/resources. In other words, it is about securitising the alternative political agency and their discourse by presenting them as posing a danger to the existential threat of the country. This securitisation of politics is one of the major features that arise from the interplay of the discourses.

The political scene seemed to be turned to the field of mobilisation arena as the securitisation of politics further marks the political terrain of the country. The ruling TPLF/EPRDF presents the other alternatives and political actors as "a serious threat" to the existence of the country, the constitutional order, the rule of law and democracy. Using the official state apparatus (the parliament, legislation, policies and most importantly, the security apparatus) it activates its use of force against the opposition political forces by reducing them to the status of a "force of destruction", "terrorist", "anti-peace" et cetera, as discussed previously. To effectively mobilise its use of force, the ruling party often employs such governance practices as declaring a state of emergency and enacting different restrictive laws - all to facilitate its use of force against the opposition forces it deems a threat to the political order that is is establishing. The political opposition also take the same approach. Both the pan-Ethiopianist and the ethno-nationalist discourses portray the ruling TPLF/EPRDF regime and its vision/alternative as a "existential threat" to the survival of the country or a threat to their cause and hence, they justify the use of force - including popular revolt or through armed struggle, to dismantle/remove the threat-EPRDF rule poses and reverse its policies. In the opposition category, this presentation of the other as a threat, extends to other competing political visions and actors and hence the threat construction exercise also runs horizontally, among themselves, as highlighted above. The political scene is then a site in which a web of different securitising

moves arise from the interplay of these political discourses. It is also a scene in which, as a result of the securitisation of politics, there is a mobilisation of the use of force by all political actors. It is a politics of the extraordinary, of the exceptional type, that is at play.

As highlighted under chapter two, in a state of affairs where the politics of exception is at a play, it is hardly possible to build an inclusive democracy. The main reason for this is that it often creates a situation of more security, less politics. In the sense that the room for normal politics, in which political actors debate, negotiate and compromise on the socio-economic issues of the country, is either highly restricted or non-existent. Instead, the political actors seem be interested in sustaining (in case of the ruling party) or creating a situation in which they or their discourses become the 'winner'/have hegemony, to the exclusion of the others. Indeed, as uncovered above, the political actors themselves regard each other as 'enemies' and unsurprisingly, enemies have rarely ended up building a democratic inclusive governance in the history of modern democracies unless they move away from the enmity mentality and collaborate instead. Clearly, this can be taken as a major explanatory factor for the failure of the political process from 1991-2015, to generate legitimacy.

Despite a declared commitment to building 'democratic' governance in post-1991 Ethiopia, the ruling party has not recorded success to that end, notwithstanding the formalistic exercises undertaken so far (having a liberal constitution, conducting elections et cetera). It follows that the ruling party's approach - securitising politics to build a democracy – has not only failed but is also a major factor in explaining the failure of the political process - given its leadership role of the country. As another major actor in the state of affairs of the politics of exception in the country, the opposition political forces (in both camps) are also clearly the players in the failed politics of the country. Their approach to building democracy in the country is very much a reflection of the ruling party's approach, as discussed above. They advance securitised politics that make their approach problematic in a similar way to that of the ruling party. Perhaps another interesting matter with the case of the opposition is that, even if ones removes the ruling EPRDF party from the picture, the state of affairs of the politics of the country might still remain a failure

given the existence of horizontal securitization approaches among themselves; A relationship that regards each other as the 'enemy' informs their discourses toward one another. Thus, the present political practices in which the politics of exception widely feature, is a failure and could not reasonably result in democratization of the country as markedly demonstrated with this study - and this clearly problematizes the democratization visions of the Ethiopian political actors across the spectrum.

In sum, the interaction of the discourses of both the ruling and opposition parties seems to have resulted in an exceptional type of politics – politics of the extraordinary – in which all the actors understand politics mainly in terms of security. This has resulted in the use of violence, which has left little room for normal politics in which compromise, negotiation and deliberation occurs[55]. Both the governing party and the opposition's conceptualization of politics (the politicization of socio-economic issues, history and *modus-operandi* of the country in general) is not only in security terms but has resulted in a competing visions/alternatives of democracy that fundamentally antagonize and reject one another. This seems to be the major explanatory factor for the political impasse facing the country.

The findings from this study appear to have also uncovered several issues related to the limitation of the theoretical framework employed. While the explanatory power of securitization theory, particularly its (in)security logic, has been particularly helpful in explaining the post-1991 political processes, there are some aspects of the theory that need

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[55] Some scholars have written on the subject of the state of exception and the EPRDF's governance practices in relation to issues such as (a) development projects by Fantini and Puddu (see Fantini, E., and Puddu, L. (2016)). Ethiopia and international aid: development between high modernism and exceptional measures. Aid and Authoritarianism in Africa: Development without Democracy. Nordic Africa Institute. London: Zed Books; and (b) the practice of governance on the periphery, by focusing on the case of Ogaden by Hagman and Korf (see Hagmann, T., and Korf, B. (2012)). Agamben in the Ogaden: Violence and sovereignty in the Ethiopian–Somali frontier. *Political Geography, 31*(4), 205-214, on how successive Ethiopian regimes used states of emergency for policing/arresting opponents (see Toggia, P. S. (2008). The state of emergency: police and carceral regimes in modern Ethiopia. *Journal of Developing Societies, 24*(2), 107-124; and Awol, A. *(2017).* 'Protests, terrorism, and development: On Ethiopia's perpetual state of emergency.*' Yale Human Rights Law and Development Journal, 19, 133.*

reconceptualization in the context of political transitions such as that of Ethiopia. Its (in)security logic, for instance, seems to operate on the assumption that (in)security can be successfully established if existential threats to a specific referent object that requires emergency measures, is presented by a securitising actor (who may not necessarily be a group in power) and accepted by the audience as such, as discussed under chapter Two of this thesis. Furthermore, it envisages a situation in which securitization can be successful under certain situations, referred to as *felicity conditions*. This security logic however fails to capture the 'unsettled' nature of the transitional political reality of Ethiopia. The country has yet to forge a minimal consensus on political issues (including on the continued existence of the state itself), the contention among the multiple competing 'authorities' emanating from the manifold securitizing actors who mobilize political violence against each another.. In other words, while the theory is a valuable tool in explaining exceptional politics, it seem to offer less in the area of political space/realities, in which one can envision either normal politics or exceptional politics that might have a consequence on this somehow 'linear' security logic of the school.

7.2. Conclusions

Methodologically, this study analyzed the political discourses of Ethiopia's major political forces, mainly the governing EPRDF regime and the major opposition political forces from 1991 to 2015. It analyzed primary sources of political discourse as presented in their founding documents, charters, manifestos, constitutions, policies and strategies expressing political orientations and positions vis-à-vis major national issues. The study also reviewed a broad range of post-1991 press archives made during the fieldwork, and writing expressing the views of the most influential political elite who contributed to the major developments that shaped current Ethiopian politics. By canvasing a large array of literature on distant and contemporary political and economic developments in Ethiopia, the study is able to interrogate the political discourses of those perceived to be the dominant political forces and their opponents.

Theoretically, the study used securitization theory by paying special attention to security as a speech act: an utterance that represents and recognizes phenomena as security, thus giving it special status and legitimizing extraordinary measures (Buzan et al., 1998: 26),

including the use of force or suspension of citizens 'liberties. Or, in Waever's words:
Therefore, the study treats the "speech act" as a major political discourse informing not only the governing EPRDF alliance discourse, but also counter discourses by the opposition forces, aiming at (de)securitization. In the Ethiopian context, the desecration of democracy means transcending the EPRDF revolutionary democracy doctrine and agitating for authentic multi-party democracy informed by the ethos and practice of competitive democratic politics.

To be sure, by using discourse analysis and the speech act as analytical tools, the study has demonstrated that Ethiopia's post-1991 failure to foster the requisites for democratic transition and competitive democratic politics is attributed to the securitization of democracy. In order to understand securitization and counter-securitization, the study examined discourse as an expression of adversarial positions and competing visions. The former strives to maintain the status-quo, while the latter opts for alternative policies and priorities. Both positions risk unravelling the current Ethiopian federation or redefining Ethiopia's political future, in which the country embarks on building a new, unknown political system. In this respect, the study concluded that the political posturing and policy orientations of the major opposition political forces are divided into two broad ideological strands: Pan-Ethiopianists and ethno-nationalists. The study probed these political discourses as unrelenting, divisive and non-compromising, discourses that were specifically crafted to signify not only the meaning and current implications of Ethiopia's history of the present, but also as a continuation of past struggles for democracy and development.

The EPRDF political discourse equates its political survival with the survival of Ethiopia, which justifies its struggle against 'chauvinist/narrow nationalist 'forces bent on destroying the state. On their part, the opposition forces 'discourses perceive the EPRDF as an illegitimate, anti-democratic regime that rigs elections and forcefully quells peaceful protests. For the opposition, the EPRDF political discourse and practices have degenerated into a particular type of politics characterized by radicalization, hatred, enmity, animosity and uncompromising winner-versus-loser trajectories. This discourse, in the opposition's view, has ushered in contingency politics dominated by acrimonious mobilization leading to the securitization of democracy. Apparently, the securitization of democracy is a major

contributing factor in the EPRDF's failure to lay down the necessary foundations for the emergence of competitive democratic politics.

At the time of writing this study, Ethiopia's future hinges on a political contingency mode and remains in the political doldrums in which the major political forces are combining radical mobilization and the ethnicization of politics. Political violence, hatred and animosity have permeated daily life, thus diminishing the politics of hope and exacerbating ethnic cleavages that are difficult to control. Augmented by activism, political discourses and counter-discourses have become the defining elements in validating the positions of the various players, while negating those of their opponents. At the face of these developments, there is reason to believe the two dominant powerful political discourses, Pan-Ethiopianism and ethno-nationalism, are holding Ethiopia and the Ethiopian people to ransom, as their positions are very much opposed to each other in fundamental ways. This contrasts with the situation in many multi-party democracies. The visions of the various parties seem to be interlinked with security and hence, it is difficult to achieve compromises or agreements in any way.

7.3. Future Research

The scope of this study is limited to the period between 1991 and 2105 before the onset of the political and economic reforms unleashed by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali, who assumed office in April 2018. The turbulent protests that engulfed Ethiopia between 2016-2018 and their aftermath, have not been included in this study, nor has the return of the opposition forces which were victims of the securitization of democracy who were given amnesty, and returned to participate in national politics. The post-2018 period has produced its own political dynamics and empowered the Pan-Ethiopianists and ethno-nationalists alike. It has awakened past grievances and produced new fears and anguish.

In my future research, I intend to study post-2018 political dynamics, the outcomes of the political and economic reforms and the configuration or otherwise of new alliances, including the future of the EPRDF and its contenders. I hope to be able to conduct these

studies, not as a lone PhD student, but with a larger team that comprises Ethiopian researchers drawn from different nations, nationalities, and political and ideological orientations. Furthermore, comparative studies on the securitization of democracy and development in the Horn of Africa will shed light on this pivotal aspect and hopefully contribute to Africa's democratic renewal and consolidation.