Challenges and Prospects of Democratization Process in Ethiopia

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Abstract

The Central objective of this paper is to examine democratization process in Ethiopia by focusing on the challenges and prospects of post 1991 situations. To this end qualitative methodology was employed to gather data from secondary sources. For this purpose journal articles, official documents, constitution and other legal documents and policies were used. Based upon the data the study revealed that Ethiopia was experienced a deep rooted undemocratic political culture and submissive behavior of citizens vis-vis state until 1991. But, post 1991 the Transitional Government Charter and FDRE Constitution espouse a new democracy friendly laws and orders which contains a bill of rights which guarantying freedom, equality and social justice. So the post 1991 FDRE Constitution, other laws and development programs are the prospect for accelerating democratization process in Ethiopia. However, there are problems in implementing these opportunities on the grounds. Among others, the force of inertia (history of undemocratic political culture), weakness of actors in democratization process, Political polarization among political parties, weakness of democratic institutions and corruption are the major challenges to the realization of democratization process in Ethiopia. Hence, the study implies that there is the need to strengthen actors in democratization process like political parties, Civil Society and media on the one hand and democratic institutions on the other hand.

Keywords:Democratization, Ethiopia, Civil Society, Political Parties, multi-party politics, Media

1.   Introduction

Although, historical Ethiopia going back to 3000 B.C, the formation of modern Ethiopian state in European style is a 19th century process. In the historical continuum that informs the making of modern Ethiopia, the second half of the 19th century was shaped by the wars of incorporation and state formation on unequal terms. Whereas, the class and national struggles intended to end the asymmetrical relations have shaped the second half of the 20th century, which scholars call as remaking of Ethiopia (Keller, 2005). In other words while the wars of the 19th century were for the making of modern Ethiopia, state formation, the struggles of the 20th century were for the reversal of the same historical process that created the multi-ethnic polity of Ethiopia , nation building (Merera, 2006). To be more specific, the class struggle and national/ethnic struggles of the 1960s and 1970s that precipitated the revolution of 1974, the various struggles that led to the change of regime in 1991 and the ongoing struggles for self-rule and democracy are part of the remaking of Ethiopia (Merara, 2004).

The class and national struggles for the remaking of Ethiopia since the creation of modern Ethiopia resulted in the introduction of democracy friendly constitution since 1991 (from 1991 to 1994 TFG Charter and since 1994 FDRE Constitution). Hence, the focus of this study is to examine the prospects and challenges of democratization process in Ethiopia. It explores and assesses the prospects of democratization process in Ethiopia and challenges ahead of implementing prospects of democratization process since 1991.

2.   Methodology

This study is based upon qualitative study. It is an investigation of the direction and contents of the democratization initiatives in Ethiopia. It has reviewed the prospects of democratization in Ethiopia and challenges facing during implementation of the host of policy initiatives in Ethiopia since 1991 based on secondary sources of data. Hence, it is a desk research.

3.   Theoretical Backgrounds: Democratization

Following the end of the Cold War, which Fukuyuma dubbed as "end of history", in which what initially seemed to have ended the era of authoritarianism in Africa, when the continent's most brutal dictators like Said Barre of Somalia, Mengistu of Ethiopia and Mobutu of Zaire were removed from power. These waves of attempts at democratization have created a condition where democracy can be studied both in theory and practice (Merera, 2004).

Following this situation many scholars tried to analyses the waves of democratization in Africa. In this regard, Bangura (1991), in a serious attempt to analyses the problem of the African democratization around 1990s, has identified three interlinked process in the African democratization drives. They are; demilitarization of social and political life's, the liberalization of civil society and the democratization of the rules governing political and economic competition. According to him, they involve assuring the supremacy and regulation of civilian governmental authority; the democratization of a state apparatus and the relative freedom of civil organizations and the capacity to democratically manage conflicts in civil and political society and economic practice (Bangura,

1991).

In the same vein to Bangura, Bratton and Van de Walle in their book entitled as 'Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transformation in Comparative perspective' tried to distinguish between political liberalization and democratization in order to clarify about democratization. To be clear they described political liberalization as follow;

> Political liberalization entails the reform of authoritarian regimes. It comes to pass when public authorities relax control on the political activities of citizens. Often described as a political opening, political liberalization involves official recognition of basic civil liberties. In such openings, government restores previously repudiated freedoms of movement, speech and associations to individuals and groups in the society. Examples of political liberalization include the release of political prisoners, the lifting of government censorship and the re-legalization of banned political parties (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1997: 159).

Turning to democratization the two scholars describe democratization as the end result of genuine and mature political liberalization. To be more specific they describe democratization as follow;

> Democratization involves the construction of participatory and competitive political institutions. The process of democratization begins with political challenges to authoritarian regime, advances through the political struggles over liberalization and requires the installation of freely elected government. It concludes only when democratic rules become firmly institutionalized as well as valued by political actors at large (*Ibid*).

According to the two scholars, a transition to democracy can be said to have occurred only when there has been installed competitive election, freely and fairly conducted within a matrix of civil liberties, with results accepted by all participants. In their distinction of political liberalization and democratization continuum, they emphasize that political liberalization commonly occurs without democratization but not vice versa. Democratization is theoretically and practically impossible without political liberalization because democratic institutions can flourish only in the context of civil liberty.

Generally, democratization is a process through which the institutional infrastructure germane to the construction of democratic polity is established. These are parliament, impartial judiciary, electoral institutions and police, independent media, civil liberties are codified and guaranteed, the rules of law suffice and a process of constitutionalism. Democratization involves the creation and expansion of political space for multiple actors to interact, negotiates, compete and seek self-realization with set and permissible rules. It is not a uni-linear process but one that is relative, incremental and variegated. It is not one start event but a continuous process through which democracy is involved (Nordlund and Salih, 2007). Thus, democratization has various dimensions, trajectory and distinctions. But the end goal is the same, to establish a democratic order. Using the above general discourse as parameters of judging democratic transitions, the aim of this paper is assessing the prospects and challenges of democratization process in Ethiopia by focusing on post 1991 situations.

4. Pre-1991 Democratization attempt in Ethiopia

Ethiopia has a long history of statehood with the ancient civilization of Axumite Empire. However, the borders of the present day Ethiopia were mainly demarcated by the end of 19th Century. The process of centralization of state power which began since the reign of Emperor Tewodros II in the 1850s marks the beginning of Ethiopia's nation building (Keller, 2005). The subsequent rulers of the country pursued the same path except Lij Iyasu, (1913-1916). The nation building strategies employed by many of the Ethiopian rulers were mainly concerning with centralizing state power, conquering and expanding territory which eventually gave the present day Ethiopia and its current geographic and demographic shape. Except short term Lij Iyasus rule all pre-1991 Ethiopian governments follow homogenous nation building strategies. Especially the territorial expansion of Menelik II towards the south, East and West transferred the relatively homogenous Abyssinian Empire into a mosaic of different ethno-linguistic groups and diversified cultures (Merera, 2006). Menelik II completed the first stage of state formation in Ethiopia. The second stage of state formation (Nation building) left for its follower, Lij Iyasu.

Lij Iyasu was unique from Ethiopian emperors before and after him both in his domestic and international political outlooks. His domestic policy was very liberal, accommodative policy vis-à-vis the different religious, ethnic and language groups that prevail in the country. He pursued politics of reconciliation of various diversities. His idea was very revolutionary. He introduced a modern policy in Ethiopia and changes many traditional and old government systems. For example, he changes the old Asrat system, quaragn system and lebashay and replace by modern system, but his regime was too short to judge the realization of his accommodative policy (Shimelis, 2015). Unlike Lij Iyasu who depends upon accommodative nation building, Haile Silassie wanted to cultivate nationalism through establishing one state, one national religion and one official language as well as making this language a medium of instruction in schools. But, Haile Silassie was the most modernizing emperor in Ethiopia. During his time the first written constitution was drawn in 1931 following partly the older Japanese model which the imperial regime in Ethiopia seemed to perceive as a safer entry to start modernizing the country (Mohammed, 2010).

At the same time, measures were taken to introduce modern education in which some significant progress was made before the occupation. Unfortunately, the Italian administration halts the Ethiopian initiatives. The end of the Italian occupation in 1941, therefore, signified the beginning of a new era in which foundations were laid down for the considerable portion of the achievements that the country could depend virtually until very recently. These were evident in the spheres of education, urbanization and related social and economic sectors. In the political spheres, there were more or less similar developments that demanded a more speedy progress towards reform (Shimelis, 2015).

The incorporation of Eritrea in a way that accommodated its distinct colonial experience and the introduction of the revised constitution of 1955 were expected to create a more conducive environment towards greater degree of open-mindedness and at least some measures of gradual democratization. But a subsequent events including the aborted coup of 1960, seemed to demand at the time. Thus, the imperial government's control on democratization process gradually bore the 1974 revolution (Young, 1998).

The military government, Derg took over power in September 1974 and during the first two years after the end of imperial rule; the derg proclaimed Ethiopia a new socialist state with national progressive unity as its goal. To answer the Ethiopian students request of "Land to the tiller", introduced the land reform policy which nationalized all private and public lands as well as distributed farm land for the farmers. The regime also introduced the policy of equality of languages and at least nine local languages included in the country's educational curriculum (Merera, 2006 and Keller, 2005).

Yet, that was not as far as sharing power with its political opponents who were largely left oriented civilians political groups. In other words, the progress towards ideological solidarity was not accompanied by political reconciliation. Of all the contentious issues, the political differences on the national question posed probably the toughest challenges to the government (Merera, 2004 and 2006). Derg was too late to give at least some measures of recognition to the issues of nationalities. Therefore, the Derg government had established the institute of nationalities with the mandate to study the situation of the nationality groups and recommended solution. As a result, the constitution which was introduced about four year before the end of the Derg regime had contained provisions that purport to address the nationality questions. Once, again it appeared this too came very late. After all the door still closed against any move towards multiparty negotiation and the possibility of substituting the age old centralized rule by some sort of decentralized, if not a federal alternative (Shimelis, 2015).

On the other hand by the time when the Derg regime introduced the new constitution, the different liberations fronts had already consolidated themselves into a significant political force. Consequently, the Derg regime came to an end when the liberations movement fighting for the right of the different nationality groups took over in May 1991 (Keller, 2005 and Young, 1998).

5. Post 1991 Democratization process in Ethiopia

With the demise of the Derg government and the apparent end of the Civil War that ravaged the country for over two decades, the call for "peace, democracy and the rule of law" is every once hope both at home and abroad. Accordingly, on July 1, 1991, peace and democracy conference was convened in order to establish a 'legitimate, broad based' transitional government that can prepare the country for a smooth democratic transformation as agreed at the American brokered London peace conference (Merera, 2004). The July conference resulted in the adoption of a transitional period charter to function as an interim Constitution. Pursuant to the Charter, a Council of Representative was set up to govern the nation until a permanent government could be elected (Vaughan, 1994). The new Charter provided some legal ground for democratization in Ethiopia. It contained beneficial provisions for the country's quest for democracy. To cite some, it stipulated the new regime's commitment to respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) especially the freedom of consciences, expression, association, and assembly, the right to engage in unrestricted political activity and to organize political parties which are hitherto institutionalized in Ethiopia. The Charter also contained the provision that promised to address the historical grievances of the hitherto marginalized ethnic groups (Transitional Period Charter, 1991).

Pursuant to this promise the Transitional Period Charter (TPC) legalized the rights of nations, nationalities and peoples to self-determination. According to the charter, each nations, nationalities and peoples have among others the right to preserve its identity and have it respected, administer its own affairs and exercise its rights to self-determination of independence, when the concerned nation/nationalities and people is convinced that the rights promulgated in the Charter are denied, abridged or abrogated (Transitional Period Charter, Article, 2; a, b, &c, 1991). This provision later on canonized as Article 39 in well elaborated form in the national Constitution of 1994. Hereunder an attempt is done to explore the prospects and challenges of democratization process in Ethiopia since the adoption of FDRE Constitution.

5.1. Prospects of democratization process in Ethiopia since 1991
a.   Introduction of Multi-party Politics
The year 1991 was the turning point in multi-party politics of Ethiopia. After many years of centralized and one

party rule, the country has started to follow multi-party system by attempting to modernize Ethiopian multi-ethnic society within the ethnic based government system and multiparty democracy (Merara, 2003). Following the down fall of the Derg regime on May, 28, 1991, the EPRDF has opened the country for multiparty democracy by declaring that, every political group inside and outside the country is invited to come to the July conference which was held in Addis Ababa, although, some scholars argued that some political parties are systematically excluded from attending the conference (Vaughan, 1994). The July conference comes to found the Transitional government by establishing the Transitional Period Charter as the supreme law of the transitional period.

This Charter which later becomes the base for the Constitution of 1994 has assumed multiparty politics in Ethiopia by declaring every Ethiopian has the right to engage in unrestricted political activities and to organize political party for the purpose of achieving political power through peaceful means (TPC, 1991; Article, 1). Pursuant to the Transitional Period Charter the 1994 Constitution permanently legalized multiparty system in Ethiopia. To further strength the protection of constitutionally promulgated multiparty system has been given form and subsistence by the enactment of the political party registration proclamation No.46/1993. The proclamation asserts that citizens can form and join any political organizations. This marked the emergence of new political parties to the scene by granting legal personality to operate in the country (Engedayuh, 1993). So the introduction of multiparty politics after the 1991, open the political space in the country allowing opposition parties to freely campaign and competes for political powers. Thus, one of the most important development/prospect in the post 1991 Ethiopian politics is the introduction of multi-party politics.

b. Introduction of Decentralization

In the past, Ethiopia had made some preliminary attempts at decentralization. One of the earliest attempts was order No.43/1966 which establish local self-administration at Awaraja or sub-province level. Though this indicates an interest and was rejected by the then members of parliament. During the Derg period, Peasant Association and Urban Dwellers Associations were established as the lowest forms of local administration. The officials, although, elected by the people, were mainly serving the government and were acting as defenders (Tegegne, 1998).

Since the incumbent government took power in 1991, it has taken significant steps to introduce elements of democratic accountability. It has also embarked on a process of decentralization that seeks to recognize the cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity of people living within Ethiopia's borders and embodied this in the 1995 FDRE Constitution (FDRE Constitution, Article 39 and 55, 1995).

The 1991 government change in Ethiopia has ushered in a decentralized system which did allow for self-rule and institutional development and harmony between the different ethnic groups. The 1994 Constitutional response involved the elaboration of a new institutional framework built around the formal devolution of hitherto highly centralized authority. The government initiated successive rounds of deepening decentralization to regional states and then to Woredas authorities which is an outcome of the adoption of a federal system of government in Ethiopia. With the devolution of power to regional governments, implementation of economic policies and development program is shifting to a large extent, from the centre to the region (MOFED, 2002).

The decentralization drive in Ethiopia has proceeded into two phases. The first wave of decentralization (1991-2001) was centered on creating and empowering national/regional governments and hence was termed as mid-level decentralization. During this period national/regional state governments were established with changes in local and central government system. The national/regional governments were entrusted with the legislative, executive and judicial powers in respective of all matters with in their areas of jurisdiction (Tegegne, 1998).

Although, the first wave of decentralization has registered significant achievement in local governance and regional self-rule, it was not capable of bringing genuine self-rule particularly at lower levels of administration where governance and decentralization matter most. This circumstance prompted the central government to take an initiative to further devolve powers and responsibilities to the Woredas in 2001 (*Ibid*). This initiative was achieved through the district level decentralization Program (DLDP) and Urban Management Program (UMP). Thus, the deepening and broadening of the decentralization process paved the way to strengthen Woredas as the centre of socio-economic development and local autonomy on resources. By doing so it enhances meaningful participation of local people in democratic activities (Shimelis, 2015). In this way the introduction of decentralization in post 1991 Ethiopia pave the way for the realization of democratization process at grass root level in Ethiopia.

c. Building Democratic and Human rights Institutions

The period after 1991 in Ethiopia witnesses the significant political institution building, human rights institution and a democratic reform. Among others inter alia the following; establishment of election board, human rights commission and Ombudsman institution. The immediate democratic institution established by Transitional Government of Ethiopia was National Electoral Commission in 1992. The Transitional Government National Electoral Commission established by proclamation No.11/1992. In February the same year the commission conducted the election for transitional administration committee members at Woreda and Kebele levels. In May, it conducted elections for national, regional and Woreda councils (NEBE, 2015).

After completion of its missions the National Electoral Commission was replaced by the National Election Board of Ethiopia in 1992. The National Election Board of Ethiopia was established by proclamation No.64/1992 with the objective of among other, ensuring the establishment of government elected through free, fair and impartial elections held in accordance to the Constitution. The board is an independent and autonomous organ for conducting elections having its own legal personality (NEBE, 2015). Thus, the establishment of like this institution is the first and foremost important ingredient for democratization process.

The other commendable measure of post 1991 in Ethiopia government is an explicit commitment to ensure protection of human rights within the new federal political structures. As far as FDRE Constitution-human rights nexus is concerned one-third of the Constitution is covers matters related to human rights. Basic rights of citizens entrenched in the constitution include, among others, the right to life, property and privacy as well as safeguard against inhumane treatment of persons held in custody, including security of those convicted to serve certain prison terms (FDRE, 1995).

The Constitution also does stress citizens' right to honour and reputation, liberty, equality and movement irrespective of ethnic, religious and racial differences. These rights are very interesting safeguards in the context where several nationality groups or communities are also entitled to certain collective cultural and social rights. It is also very interesting remedies to past injustices and prospects for democratization process (*Ibid*).

In the same way, there are explicit constitutional provisions that recognize the rights of people to enjoy political rights such as the right to vote and be elected, freedom of association and press (FDRE Constitution, Article 31 and 38). Apart from the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals the FDRE Constitution provides a number of rights otherwise known as group rights. Among these the famous and debatable Article 39 of the Constitution carries a number of fairly detailed rights. These include the right to speak, to write and develop one's own languages; the right to express, to develop and to promote its own culture and to present its history. Furthermore, the different nationality groups are entitled to a full measure of self-government which includes the right to establish institutions of government in the territory that it inhabits and the equitable representation in state and federal government.

The FDRE Constitution also provides the social and economic rights to Ethiopian citizens (Article 41 and 43). One of such right is the right to participate in national development and in particular to be consulted with respect to policies and projects affecting their community. At last, the most important human rights provision under FDRE Constitution is it provides that the interpretation of all these rights is in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as well as it declared all international and regional human rights conventions which Ethiopia ratified as integral part of the FDRE Constitution.

Also the FDRE Constitution does require that appropriate institutional mechanism should be in place as a means for implementing human right laws of the country. To this end, the House of Peoples Representatives (HPR) is constitutionally obliged to establish National Human Rights Commission and Institution of Ombudsman with primary function of investigating human rights violation and maladministration respectively. Although, with some delay the HPR established both institutions in 2000 conferring on them to take various measures necessary for human rights protection, promotion of democracy and good governance in the country.

The establishing proclamation of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) states that the commission is established primarily for the enforcement of human rights as are enshrined in the FDRE constitution. It is designed to act as one of the organs in enforcing rights and freedoms of Ethiopian, with one of the primary functions being 'to advocate and promote respect for and an understanding of human rights and other beings to advocate the public regarding the nature and contents of such rights'. The commission is also entrusted with the task of investigating cases of violation of human rights enshrined in the constitution, in its own initiatives or upon complaint submitted to it. The commission can also engage in activities aimed at awareness creation and educating people on human rights (Mohammad, 2011 and Shimellis, 2014).

In similar vein, Ethiopia has expanded the human rights regime by providing for the establishment of the institution of Ombudsman. As it is set out in the establishing legislation of Ethiopian Institution of Ombudsman (EIO) which was passed by the parliamentary proclamation No 211/2000; the basic function of the Ombudsman is 'to protect citizens against administrative injustice and bureaucratic oppression and to provide citizens with accessible avenue for complaint when such injustices and oppression occurs' (FDRE Negarit Gazet, 2000). Meaning, making government organs a duty bound to respect and enforce human rights as are enshrined in FDRE Constitution or any others legislations. The institution can investigate action taken by ministry or department of government or any members of such ministry or departments. In general, this institution is much important especially in redressing human rights violation at work place. Hence, the establishment of election board, human rights commission and institution of Ombudsman are step forward for democratization process in Ethiopia, meaning prospect of democratization process.

5.2. Challenges to Democratization process in Ethiopia Since 1991
a.   History of undemocratic political cultures (the force of inertia)

The first and foremost challenge to Ethiopia's on its path to democracy is the country's authoritarian traditions. Constitutionalism and the rule of laws are alien concepts to all people of Ethiopia for a long time in past. When for several thousand years, the sources of law has been external to the Ethiopian people, such a radical concept as self-governance is understandably difficult to fully comprehend (Alemante, 1992). In the same vein, Tronvoll and Vaughan characterized the dominant socio-political culture in Ethiopia as historically been vertically stratified and rigidly hierarchical. The two scholars conclude that the process of socialization in Ethiopia beginning from birth teach Ethiopians that people are not equal. Newly born children instilled with the understanding of the roles and status of which assigned to different individuals making them as either marginalized or privileged usually on the basis of ethnicity, clan, class, wealth, gender and age (Tronvoll and Vaughan, 2003).

The other force of inertia in Ethiopian politics is the spillover effect of 1960s Ethiopian students' movement political polarization. The bitter ideological differences and violent infighting between the students' movements and the Derg shaped many of Ethiopia's current intellectuals and leaders. Therefore, ideological and personal schisms within secretively organized parties and rebel groups have spillover effect to today's attempt of Ethiopian democratization (Alemante, 1992). Therefore, the long lasting undemocratic government system in Ethiopia was not seen only as historical facts but also serves as a potential source of a force of inertia to challenge the upcoming realization of constitutionally promulgated democracy.

b.   Weakness of actors in democratization process
i.   Political Parties

Among others the major actors in democratization process are; political parties, civil society and mass media. The strength and weakness of these actors have direct impacts on the strengthening of democracy in one country. When we see in the African context the weakness of these actors led to the weakness of democratization process (Chege, 2007). For the purpose of this sub-section focus is given to opposition political parties.

Theoretically speaking, in situations where inter-party relations between ruling party and opposition parties are cordial, this creates an environment conducive to effective functioning of parliaments and the deepening of multi-party democracy. Nevertheless, in Ethiopia, interparty relations tend to be marked by mutual suspicion. The country's political organizations are still seeing each other antagonistically and as 'blood enemies' rather than as responsible political actors and worthy partners in nation building who have equal rights to govern the country without encumbrance from anybody or any organizations (Gudeta and Alemu, 2014).

In the current Ethiopia's body politics, democratic principles like political pluralism, accommodation of different ideas and peaceful coexistence of competing forces have no roots. Rather the country's national politics is characterized by animosity and mutual destruction which Tronvoll and Vaughan described as 'hierarchical, exclusionary and polarized socio-political cultures' (Tronvoll and Vaughan, 2003). Furthermore, Dr. Merera characterized the patterns of Ethiopian interparty relations as 'interparty relations can be explained largely by the political polarization and fragmentation between and among Ethiopian political parties' (Merera, 2007).

To see in detail, many opposition political parties in Ethiopia are facing both external and internal challenges which are the source of their weakness. Externally, the implicit and explicit challenges a rise from ruling political party or government. Sarah Vaughan suggested that the operation of the political system in which part of the country is almost impossible for opposition political parties to use the democratic institutions to effectively challenge the dominance of the ruling party. Many reports show that a range of tactics commonly disadvantages the opposition prior to and during election are practiced in woredas specially to weaken the opposition.

These have included systematic closure of opposition office, harassment, arrest and systematic suspension of candidates (Vaughan, 2004).

Internally, many opposition political parties in Ethiopia are established around individual personality. Personalistic opposition parties which usually rely on the charismatic appeal of single individuals lack structures extending beyond the national executive and decision making is highly centralized. These kinds of parties face split whenever another rising star challenges the founder of the party. This is one of the reasons for the presence of many fragmented political parties in Ethiopia at present. For example the major opposition party which was strong competent in the 2005 election, CUD, disintegrated into many factions due to leadership problems, the Diaspora Ethiopians too much interference in the day to day activities of the party. Due to the disintegration of the party, some left the party and others created at least five political organizations[1] (Chege, 2007).

The other chronic problem of opposition political parties in Ethiopia is their failure to forward distinct national wide policy alternatives to the voters. Some of them are weak in terms of developing a comprehensive policy vision and having nationwide agenda. Specially, political parties which are led by single individual leader (personalized party) usually do not offer alternative policies to the voters rather emphasize the ability of the

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[1] Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ), UEDP-Medhin, All Ethiopian Unity Party (AEUP), Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) and Ginbot 7 Movement for Justice, Freedom and Democracy.

opposition party leaders to run the government better than the incumbent party and government leaders (Gudeta and Alemu, 2014). In support of this view Tronvoll and Vaughan in their work on Ethiopia entitled as 'the culture of power in contemporary Ethiopian political power' concluded that although, opposition parties always complained government intimidation and harassment, they are weak, lack clear program and enjoy only limited support in the rural areas (Tronvoll and Vaughan, 2003). Hence, currently the existing opposition political parties are too weak to forward alternative policies and program in the country which in turn become another challenging factor of democratization process in Ethiopia.

ii.   Political Party Polarization

The other political party related problem in Ethiopian democratization process is political polarization among Ethiopian elites in general and political parties in particular. The history of party formation in Ethiopia is associated with Ethiopian students' movement (ESM) and engulf of socialism to Ethiopia. The positive development in Ethiopian students movement which bring the history of party formation in Ethiopia and dismantlement of old feudal regime soon began to be overshadowed by political polarization and fragmentation that precipitated an endless polarization in the Ethiopian state.

Hiwot Tefera, one of the 1960s Ethiopian students offspring explains in her book entitled as 'Tower in the sky' as the founder of Ethiopian People Revolutionary Party (EPRP) were killed because of they propose a medium ground for Ethiopian politics, proposing agenda of dialogues with others. In support of this argument Dr. Merera explains that the 1960s Ethiopian political polarization is based on becoming who is the left of left (more socialist than others) irrespective of national interests (Merera, 2006). Thus, in the 1960s and 1970s, thousands of Ethiopians deceased due to political party polarization, save other problems like red terrorism.

But the effects of political party polarization of 1960s due not end with the dawn fall of derg and socialism. Rather it continued in Ethiopian politics as a challenge of democratization taking other dimensions. As Merera (2006), explains the main cause of Ethiopian political polarization at early stage was to become the left of left while the contemporary polarization is caused by an attempt of democratization without national consensus among political parties. Currently, as many researches show, Ethiopian political parties have no internal party democracy.

Also there is no national consensus among political parties in Ethiopia. In democracy, political parties are a loyal opposition to each others. But in Ethiopia one party see the others as natural enemy and danger to Ethiopia considering itself as the only panacea for Ethiopian political problems. There is lack of consensus among political parties on national issues like constitution, national flag, national army and police and national election board. Hence, weakness of political parties to forward alternative policies accompanied with political polarization retard Ethiopian democratization process.

iii.   Civil Society

The full realization of democratization process requires the participation of other actors than the government and intergovernmental monitoring bodies, particularly civil societies (Marcinkute, 2011). These actors, through their different strategies and engagement, provides significant asset to back up the existing system of protection, promotion and enforcement of democratic principles. Especially, now a day, the significance of civil society in the democratization process has come to light with the ever increasing acceptance and influence of their advocacy to monitor, investigate, promote and educate the society about democracy and democratic election   (Tiwana, 2008). However, the relationship between governments and civil society, especially in Africa, is mostly characterized by conflict. Indeed, the relationship of civil society with government is partly depends on the nature of services they provided to the society. Civil society which engaged in welfare provision and humanitarian relief are the least likely to experience conflict with government. They are usually welcomed by the government since they reduce the burden of the government to provide welfare to the citizens (Sandberg, n.d).

On the other hand, civil societies which experience hostility from the governments are those who engaged in advocacy works like promotion of human rights and democracy. These types of civil societies are commonly considered as opponents of government policies and structures. And the government is most likely attempt to control and monitor their activities in any means possible (Sandberg, n.d and Cakmak, 2004). The 2009 Ethiopian Charities and Societies proclamation is part of these contentions.

In January 2009 the Ethiopian Parliament passed into law the Charities and Societies Proclamation No 621/2009. The law regulates non-governmental organizations, mass membership based societies, charitable trusts and foundations. The proclamation has established the Charities and Societies Agency (CSA) with the objective to "enable and encourage charities and societies to develop and achieve their purposes in accordance to the law and to create a situation in which their operation is transparent and accountable" (FDRE, Proclamation No 621/2009, Article 5 (1&2)). This objective is appreciated because it fulfills the legal vacuum existing in the previous law.

But, the proclamation could be highly criticized as it places excessive restrictions on the work of civil societies engaged in good governance, human rights and democracy. Following the enactment of this new law, Civil Societies working on human rights and democracy have decreased in number, many have changed their mandate and those human rights organizations who survived have significantly scaled down their activities due to the major

impacts of fund restriction (Amnesty International, 2012). Among others, provisions related to funding, administrative cost and power of charities and societies' agency are the most criticized provisions of the proclamation.

The Charities and Societies Proclamation prohibits Advocacy organizations not to receive more than ten percents of their funding from foreign sources. Further, the organizations are not permitted to spend more than thirty percents of their budget on 'administrative costs', although the definition of administrative costs by itself is unclear (FDRE, Proclamation No 621/2009, Article 88). It may be read to include inter alia, the associated costs of investing and documenting human rights abuses, the provisions of free legal aid, advocacy activities and other essential activities conducted by human rights organizations in the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy (Martinez, 2009).

The law further places restrictions on the funding of human rights organization by stipulating that organizations must have written approval from the CSA for all income generating activities they undertake and must gain permits from the Agency to conduct the public collection. The law prohibits charities and societies from receiving any anonymous donations and all accounting records including full details of donations received must be disclosed and explained at any time upon request by the Agency which in turn has a direct consequence on the democratization process in Ethiopia (Amnesty International, 2012). This restriction imposed on civil society working on human rights, democracy and good governance in turn lead to the weakness of civil society which bring the weakness of democratization process in Ethiopia.

c. Media

The UDHR, drafted in December 1948, was the foundation of international human rights law and the standards of achievement for all peoples and nations. Article 19 of the document states that "everyone has the rights to freedom of opinion and expression: these rights include freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers" (Ross, 2010). In the same vein, the FDRE Constitution lays out the legal rights of citizens to hold opinions, thought and free expression under Article 29. This Article protects freedom of expression without interference including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kind regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art or through any media of once choice. It also affords freedom of the press and the mass media by ensuring the opportunity for access to information of interest of the public and prohibiting censorship (FDRE Constitution, Article 29).

Article 29 of the FDRE Constitution also provides the right of the media to institutional independence and legal protection to enable the accommodation of differences as necessary to democratic society (Article, 29) Furthermore, the Constitution takes all international agreements ratified by Ethiopia to be an integral part of the law of the land, which give assurance for Ethiopian peoples to exercise the rights provided under international human rights treaties adopted by Ethiopia (Tsegaye, 2004). These are legal prospects of media to contribute for the realization of democratization process in Ethiopia.

Despite the guaranteeing on freedom of expression and access to information as inalienable human rights and necessary ingredient of democratization process, both the private and public media in Ethiopia is unable to discharge their duties as expected. Also the government of Ethiopia has been criticized for compromising these rights. Subsidiary laws on the mass media and freedom of information has been criticized as limiting the function of the private media through forcing them to have self-censorship (Arriola, 2011). The 2008, Freedom of Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation is criticized, among other things for discouraging especially the private media from engaging actively in several topics including criticism on officials, through its provisions on defamation, excessive fine and registration system (Ross, 2010).

Following this polarization prevails in Ethiopia media and the flourished media starts to decline in numbers. Both the private and public media in Ethiopia are become weak in loudly and impartially exposing immediate, timely and important information to the public. Rather, gradually the polarization increase and implicitly private media means become opposing government while public media means disseminating the good side of the government. In this way the promised development of media following the promulgation of freedom of expression and press under article 29 of the FDRE constitution, fail to contribute for the realization of democratization process in Ethiopia as expected. Hence, the weakness of media, which is the oxygen of democracy, is become another challenge of democratization process in Ethiopia.

d. Corruption

Corruption has been described "as the abuse of public office for private gain". This includes any gains-financial, in status and it could be gain by an individuals or groups, or those linked with such an individual or group. Corruption impedes state's stability to use its available resources to progressively achieve the full realization of democratization process because national resources are instead diverted into the pockets of public officials or development aid is misused, mismanaged or misappropriated. Corruption promotes wrong choices and competition does not keep down prices rather the competition is about the size of bribe. Corruption increases distortion of policy and resource allocation inefficiency (Gudeta, 2013).

Corruption exists in both democratic and non-democratic states. But it develops into an automatic by product of the latter system and the chances for corrupt practices to be exposed, protested against and punished become diminished under it. Therefore, democratic governance is a necessary requirement to fight corruption. In other way, corruption undermines the rule of law, democratic governance, accountability and sustainable development. It breaches the contract between citizens and public officials and this has grave consequences for successful democratic government (Robert, 2012).

In the contemporary Ethiopia, corruption flourishes as the newly established democratic institutions are weak and the rule of law are not rigorously observed. Comprehensively the main causes of corruption in Ethiopia are poor governance, low level of democratic culture, low level of citizens' participation, low institutional control, poverty and inequality, harmful cultural practices and weak financial management which in turn become an impediment to democratization process in Ethiopia (Gudeta, 2013).

Corruption continued to be perceived as a pervasive problem endangering Ethiopian democratization process. Ethiopia's score on transparency international's 2010 corruption perception index was 2.7 on a 10 scale placing it 116 out of 178 countries measured (Transparency International, 2011). In 2008, Transparency's international Ethiopia chapter conducted a survey in Addis Ababa to gather information on citizens' confidence in public institutions as well as their perception of public institutions effectiveness in combating corruption. Fifty five percents of respondents claimed that corruption had worsened over the previous two years and they believe of its improvement in the next two years. Respondents paid the highest bribes, on average, for the transactions involving drivers' licenses, property registration, judicial and tax records (Arriola, 2010). Hence, the rampant corruption flourished today in Ethiopia is another impediment to democratization process in Ethiopia.

6. Concluding Remarks

Since the change of regime in 1991 Ethiopia has been undergoing a political transformation that is hoped to fundamentally transform the Ethiopian state and society. The key elements in the political transformation are political pluralism and a decentralization of power based on ethnic-linguistic criterion. As such the twin objectives of the Ethiopian politics were permanently guaranteed by inculcating in 1995 FDRE Constitution.

The adoption of Universal Declaration of Human Rights as integral part of the FDRE Constitution is a promising step on the road to democracy. The affirmation of these rights, in a country whose immediate past has been characterized by the grossest abuses, is historic and should beat the heart. Similarly the constitutions affirmation of the rights of Ethnic groups to self-determination like right to develop their languages and cultures is on the one hand an appropriate response to the ethnic question that has bedeviled Ethiopian state for long and on the other side it is a soft ground for the democratization process. Furthermore, the official recognition of multi-party politics, decentralization of power and establishment of independent National Election Board is another step forward and smooth ground for the realization of democratization process in Ethiopia.

Notwithstanding to these positive developments, the infant democracy introduced in the country experiencing long time undemocratic system is challenged by many problems. Among others, currently democratization in Ethiopia is challenged by force of inertia (undemocratic political culture). Authoritarian nature of Ethiopian politics and the political polarization of 1960s Ethiopian students' spillover effect challenged the journey of democratization process in Ethiopia. The other challenge is weakness of political parties. Many research finding show that currently opposition political parties in Ethiopia are too weak to bring alternative policies which challenge ruling political parties and strengthen democratization process. The undemocratic political culture and weakness of opposition political parties accompanied by weakness of civil society, Media and corruption are the main challenges of democratization process in Ethiopia. Hence, the study implies that there is the need to strengthen actors in democratization process like political parties, civil society, pressure groups and media on the one hand and democratic institutions on the other hand.

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