

T.C
MARMARA ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
SİYASET BİLİMİ VE ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER
ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER

ETHIOPIA'S PROBLEM OF DEMOCRATIZATION SINCE THE 2005 ELECTIONS:
LIMITED DEMOCRACY AND AUTHORITARIAN RULE?

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

YUSUF MUSSA

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Danışmanı- Dr. Günay Göksu Özdoğan

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List of Acronyms

AEUO	All Ethiopian Unity Organization.
AI	Amnesty International.
ANDM	Amhara National Democratic Movement.
AU	African Union.
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency/USA.
COEDF	Coalition of Ethiopian Democratic Forces.
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalist.
CRDA	Christian Relief and Development Association.
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations.
CUD	Coalition for Unity and Democracy.
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States.
EDP	Ethiopian Democratic Party.
EHRCO	Ethiopian Human Rights Council.
EPRDF	Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front.
EPLF	Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front.
EPRP	Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Party.
EU	European Union.
EWLA	Ethiopian Women Lawyers' Association.
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.
GDP	Growth Domestic Product
HPRs	House of Peoples Representatives.
HRW	Human Rights Watch.

ICG	International Crisis Group.
IGAD	Inter Governmental Authority on Development.
IMF	International Monetary Fund.
MEISON	All-Ethiopian Socialist Movement.
Medrek	Forum for Democratic Dialogue in Ethiopia.
MPs	Member of Parliament.
NEBE	National Election Board of Ethiopia.
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations.
OAU	Organization of African Unity.
OFDM	Oromo Federal Democratic Movement.
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front.
OPDO	Oromo Peoples Democratic Organization.
SADEC	Southern African Development Community.
SAP	Structural Adjustment Program.
SEPDM	Southern Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Movement.
TGE	Transitional Government of Ethiopia.
TPLF	Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front.
UDN	United Democratic Nationals.
UEDF	Union of all Ethiopian Democratic Front.
USA	United States of America.
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.
WB	World Bank.
WSLF	Western Somali Liberation Front.

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Özet

Etiyopya’da 1991 yılında bir rejim değişikliği meydana geldi. .Rejim değişikliğinin ardından bazı demokratik reformlar yapıldı. 1994 yılında demokratik bir anayasanın yapılması ve bazı demokratik kurumların kurulması yeni EPRDF rejiminin Etiyopya’ya getirdiği önemli kazanımlar oldu. Yeni anayasanın onaylanmasından sonra arka arkaya 4 defa seçim yapıldı: 1995, 2000, 2005 ve 2010 yıllarında. Ancak Etiyopya tarihinde ilk defa 2005 yılında yapılan seçimler nispeten daha rekabetçi bir atmosferde gerçekleşti. Ana muhalefet partileri önceki deneyimlerden farklı olarak mecliste 1/3 oranında koltuk kazanarak büyük başarı gösterdi. Diğer faktörlere ek olarak EPRDF rejiminin siyasal alanı genişletmesi muhalif partilerin başarısında etkili oldu. Ancak 2005 seçimlerinin hemen ardından, iktidar partisi EPRDF ile muhalefet partileri ve onları destekleyen muhalif kesim arasındaki anlaşmazlık bir çatışmaya dönüştü..Sonunda bu çatışmalar şiddete yol açtı. Seçimler ve sonrasında başgösteren şiddetin ardından EPRDF siyasi alanı daraltmak için zorlayıcı tedbirler ve siyasal, hukuki önlemler almaya başladı. Bu tez çalışmasının temel tezi 2005 sonrası çıkarılan kısıtlayıcı yasalarla siyasal alanının ciddi biçimde daraldığı ve Etiyopya’nın, henüz gelişmekte olan demokrasisinden taviz verilerek, otoriter bir rejime doğru kaydığıdır. Sonuç olarak Etiyopya’da son dönemde yapılan seçimler otoriter bir rejimin baskısı altında gerçekleştiğinden halkın iradesini yansıtamayarak anlamını kaybetmiş ve sadece rejime meşruiyet sağlama işlevini görmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Etiyopya, EPRDF, Seçim, politikal kültür, otoriter rejim, demokrasi. medya,siyasi partiler, civil toplum

Abstract.

Ethiopia had a regime change in 1991. Following such a regime change some democratic reforms were introduced. The endorsement of democratic constitution in 1994, and the establishment of democratic institutions are the major achievements of the new EPRDF regime. After the ratification of the new constitution four consecutive elections have been conducted in 1995, 2000, 2005, and 2010. However for the first time in Ethiopian history a relatively competitive elections had taken place only in 2005 by which the main opposition parties could win 1/3 of the parliament

seats, which is a major move from their previous experiences. In addition to other factors, EPRDFs willing to open up the democratic space contributed to such great success of the opposition parties. However the post 2005 elections period was full of disagreement and confrontation between the ruling party and the opposition. Finally these confrontations led to violence. Following such electoral violence, EPRDF began to take coercive measures to narrow the political space. These efforts were latter accompanied by ratification of restrictive legislations. This study argues that the legal and political measures taken by the EPRDF government in post 2005 elections period further narrowed the political space. Since then, EPRDF is becoming more authoritarian and the country's infant democracy is moving backward. The study concludes that there is an electoral authoritarian regime in the country by which elections have lost their relevance in reflecting the will of the people and that they serve as an instrument of legitimizing the authoritarian regime.

Key words: Ethiopia, EPRDF, democracy, authoritarianism, elections, media, civil society, political parties, political culture.

CHAPTER ONE.

1. Introduction.

1.1. Background.

Ethiopia is one of the ancient African states, which has a statehood tradition. It is the successor of the ancient Axumite Empire, (2nd -7th century), one of the strong empires in the world (Lunn 2009, 2). The state of Ethiopia has existed since then with different geographical size. But the modern Ethiopia with its present geographical size came to exist at the end of 19th century by emperor Minilik II (1889-1913). [Although Ethiopia has more than 80 ethnic groups, the state has been dominated by the Amhara ethnic group till 1974 and by the Tigryans since 1991] “Ethiopian statehood has always had a strongly ‘imperial’ character.”(ibid). Today Ethiopia has 1,127,127 km² area size and 93,877,025 population size (July 2013 Est) (CIA 2014, 2). The population is divided into nearly half Muslim and half Christian. The largest ethnic groups are the Oromo and the Amhara which respectively constitute 34.5 and 26.9 % of the total population. The rest of ethnic groups constitute : Somali 6.2%, Tigray 6.1%, Sidama 4%, Gurage 2.5%, Welaita 2.3%, Hadiya 1.7%, Afar 1.7%, Gamo 1.5%, Gedeo 1.3%, other 11.3% (ibid).

Democracy as a phenomenon does not have a long history in Ethiopia. The whole Ethiopian political history was largely dominated by centralized monarchical system. It was only in 1974 that the centuries of monarchical dynasty was overthrown. During the monarchic period, the basic essence of democracy did not exist at all, kings had unquestionable rights to rule and the people were in state of total obedience to the rulers. Such kind of socio-political system has also been observed in the authoritarian elite culture of the recent regimes.

When the long standing monarchical system was overthrown in 1974, the state power was taken by the army officers, *Derg* and headed by col. Mengistu Hailemariam. They were different in their basic ideological principle and declared “Marxism and Leninism” as the principal guideline of their regime. A few revolutionary measures had also been declared: “lands to the tiller”, and lands confiscation and redistribution to the landless farmers (Abbinik 2009, 9: Carter Center 2009, 9). But generally speaking, the *Derg* regime was not different from its predecessors with regard to protecting civil and political rights. The

regime was officially declared as a single party system with centralized command economy. Criticizing the regime and its policy was impossible. Those who tried to do so had received severe punishments.

The year 1991 is considered as an important historical time for Ethiopia. It has brought a regime change in the country. The new regime under the leadership of the Ethiopian Democratic Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) has ruled Ethiopia since then. However, there are different opinions on the post 1991 democratic situation in the country. One group argues that, Ethiopia has made democratic transition since 1991 and there continues democratic development in the country since then. The second group argues, although there had been some democratic transition in the early period of 1990s, the democratic process is moving backward since 2005. They illustrate the anti-democratic measures taken by the EPRDF government in the aftermath of the 2005 elections as an evidence for their claim. The third group claims, except from installing “democratic” institutions, Ethiopia is far from democratic path. This group argues that even the existence of democratic institutions are not the genuine reflections of the regime’s interest to build a democratic community; instead it was an outcome of a reaction to the internal and external pressures in early 1990s. Having these different opinions in mind, this paper is aimed at assessing the post 2005 political development in the country and identify whether the country is moving forward to enhancement of democratization or dragging backward to the old style of authoritarianism.

1.2. Statement of the Problem.

Couple of decades have passed since the new EPRDF regime took power. In these 23 years of EPRDF rule, a new democratic constitution and some other democratic institutions have been installed. Civil society, private media, political parties, “multiparty system” are all the outcomes of the new political order in the post-1991 period (Teshome 2009, 64; Joireman 1997, 396; Carter Center 2009, 10; Vestal 1999, 9). As peaceful means of taking power, elections are critical. In the post 1991 period there have been five consecutive elections in the country where we observed absolute monopoly of the EPRDF except in 2005 elections. In the elections of 1992, 1995, 2000, most of the strong political parties did not participate on the ground of alleged harassment and intimidation of the EPRDF government. As the result EPRDF and its regional allies were able to control more than 99 % of the seats both in the federal and regional councils. (Joireman, 1997, 399; HRW 2010, 11; ICG 2009, 7; Carter Center 2009 ; Merera 2011, 121 cited in Teshome 2009, 64).

For the first time in the country’s history, the national and regional elections of 2005 was open and competitive. EPRDF had taken some positive measures to make those elections more free and fair: Electoral

reforms were introduced, international election observation teams were invited. The state media that had been exclusively dominated by the regime gave air time for the opposition parties. Even live televised debates had been transmitted. The infant private media also participated in providing election related information, civil society also contributed by giving voter education, election monitoring and facilitating public debates on policy alternatives of political parties. As a result, the political “passivism” of the public had been broken and it helped to increase the voter turn out to be more 90 %. (Aalen and Tronvoll 2008,112; Lyons 2006 ,1 ;Abbink,2006,176 ; Lefort 2007,261; ICG 2009,8 ;Carter Center 2005, 2-3; Milkias 2011,94).

All the above democratic reforms made the 2005 elections to be more attractive and opposition parties had a chance to get 1/3 of parliamentary seats. However things dramatically changed in the aftermath of the elections (Abbink 2006, 184). The whole situation turned upside down. Mass protests and violence had taken place in which thousands of protesters were arrested including major political party leaders, journalists and civil society leaders (EU 2005, 1; Carter Center 2005, 5). The partially open political space began to be narrowed and reached its climax in the post- 2005 period. (Lyons 2006, 1-2; Lunn 2009, 5).

This paper intends to identify the basic challenges of democratizing in post-2005 period. What kind of restrictive measures have been taken by the EPRDF government, how such measures affects the infant democratic situation of the county? In doing so, this thesis has a major research question [hypothesis] that is to be answered or proved at the end of this study.

1.3. Hypothesis/ Main Research Question /

- The EPRDF regime is becoming more authoritarian in the after math of 2005 elections.

1.3.1. Specific Research Questions

In addition to the above stated hypotheses, the research is also aimed at answering the following specific questions, which could help to prove the hypothesis:

- Why did EPRDF make the 2005 elections environment more open for competitive elections?
- What characterizes the more authoritarian nature of EPRDF in the post- 2005 period?
- Why EPRDF decides to be more authoritarian in the aftermath of the 2005 elections?
- Was EPRDF more inclined towards democracy in the pre-2005 period than the post-2005 period?
- What Ethiopian media, civil society and political parties can contribute for the development of democratic environment?

- What legal and administrative measures have been taken by the EPRDF government in the post-election periods, which hinder the democratization process?
- Was there a real democratic transition in Ethiopia in post- 1991 period?
- How EPRDF could not build democracy in the last 23 years?
- What other factors contributed for Ethiopia's failure to develop a democratic system?
- Why did the EPRDF revert to its old style of authoritarianism after a brief show of democratic gesture in early 2005?

1.4. Objectives of the Study:

The main objective of the study is to demonstrate how EPRDF is moving towards more authoritarianism in the aftermath of the 2005 elections.

1.4.1. Specific Objectives of the Study:

- To identify the basic instrument of EPRDF's authoritarianism in the after math of the 2005 elections.
- To explain How and Why EPRDF decides to be more authoritarian in the post-2005 elections period.
- To show the importance of media, civil society, political parties in making elections more competitive.
- To indicate what political and legal measures have been made in post-2005 period that hinders political participation of citizens?
- To show how the post-election government's measures affects the 2008 and 2010 elections results.
- To indicate how the new restrictive laws have affected the media's, civil society's and the political parties' role in democratization process of Ethiopia
- To show how the long standing Ethiopian political culture affects Ethiopia's democratization process.

1.5. Research Methodology.

The research exclusively depends on the available secondary data: Books, journals, working papers, international human rights organizations reports and other published and unpublished

documents. In addition to the above stated sources the personal observation of the researcher is used to explain and interpret some political developments in the country.

1.6. Significance of the Study

There is an ongoing debate on the post-2005 democratic condition of Ethiopia. Though this research paper may not be the only written research paper on the issue, it could contribute its own share for the ongoing debate on the issue under discussion.

1.7. Scope and limitation of the study.

The study's primary emphasis is on the post-2005 political developments in the country. In depth discussions about the pre- 2005 periods and the previous regimes would not be dealt.

1.8. Organization of the Paper

The research is organized into six chapters: the first chapter gives introductory notes about the thesis. The second chapter is devoted for theoretical discussions in which pertinent theories and concepts are discussed with due reference to major challenges in democratic transition and consolidation of democracy in Ethiopia whereby the African specific case is considered for comparative purpose. The third chapter gives emphasis on the early democratic transition in Ethiopia, from 1991 to 2005. The fourth chapter focuses on the elections of 2005 with the specific context of the democratic atmosphere surrounding it. The fifth chapter deals with the post-2005 political developments and the controversial laws adopted by the Ethiopian parliaments. The last chapter is devoted for discussions and concluding remarks.

CHAPTER TWO.

2. Democracy and Democratization Process.

2.1. Defining Democracy.

Today politicians, academicians, the media and other individuals in the societies speak about “democracy”. Although all these groups talk about the same term, democracy, they are not referring to one and the same thing. Everyone may define it in its own way differently from others. That is why it is argued, democracy does not have the same meaning that can be valid everywhere. (Kekic 2007, 1). Scholars working on the theory of democracy have two kinds of understanding of the concept of democracy: one which focuses on the minimum requirement for competitive elections and the other focuses on broader and multiple forms of participation requirement (Schmitter and Karl, 1993 cited in Jebril, Stetka, Loveless 2013, 4).

Huntington writes, that democracy as a concept and form of government first emerged in the ancient Greek city states. But in its modern sense, it is the incident that emerged in western society at the end of the 20th century. According to Huntington, in late 20th century there existed three different kinds of definitions and interpretations of democracy. Democracy has been defined as “sources of authority for government, purposes served by government, and procedures for constituting government” (1991,-5-6).

The common definition of democracy we are observing in most of the literature is the “minimalist” one, which focuses on election and its procedures. One of the prominent scholars on the theory of democracy, Schumpeter, in defining the concept of democracy and “democratic method”, states that “Democracy is a political method ... a certain type of institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions,” (Schumpeter 2003,243) and “democratic method” is “ the institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote” (ibid: 271-272). Here Schumpeter defines democracy as a means of electing a ruler and peaceful transfer of power (Przeworski 2003, 12).

Democracy is also defined as:“ a system in which parties lose elections” (Przeworski 1991,10), as a system of government that allows citizens to decide their desires and necessities via free, fair,

and periodic multiparty elections (Bradley 2005, 407 ; Lipset 1959, 69; see also Di Palma 1990,16) and as : “a regime in which governmental offices are filled as a consequence of contested elections; only if the oppositions are allowed to compete, win, and assume office is a regime democratic.”(Przeworski, et al 1996, 50-51; see also Di Palma 1990, 16).

Samuel Huntington declares that he is “following in the Schumpeterian tradition”, he argues, “the central procedure of democracy is the selection of leaders through competitive elections”. He adds that, democracy also implies the existence of those civil and political rights: the right to speak, publish, assemble, and organize that are necessary to political debate and the conduct of electoral campaigns (Huntington 1991, 6-7), We can understand from Huntington’s definition, that even if he shares the basic idea of Schumpeter’s understanding of democracy, his definition is relatively broader and demands the inclusiveness of civil and political rights.

Rueschmeyer, and his collaborators in their article; “Capitalist Development and Democracy”, explain that democracy “entails first; regular, free and fair elections of representatives with universal and equal suffrage, second; responsibility of the state apparatus to the elected parliament..., and third; the freedoms of expression and association as well as the protection of individual rights against arbitrary state action.” This definition is fairly broader and encompasses most elements of democracy in the current years (Rueschmeyer et al 1992, 43).

Abdulbaki, summarizes the basic areas of debates on how to define and understand the concept democracy as:

The most crucial point in the debate about democracy revolves around the issue of whether democracy is primarily a substantive way of life or a set of procedural rules. Two broad variants of conceptualization dominate most approaches to democracy in this regard: the ‘maximal’ conceptions that stipulate substantive or comprehensive views encompassing social and economic aspects as defining criteria, and the ‘minimal’ or procedural definitions that are mostly concerned with the process of institutional arrangements (2008,152).

Even though, there is such difference in defining and understanding of the concept of democracy, there is a simple and common definition that has survived the ages; “democracy is a form of government in which the people rule” (Held 1993, 220).

As we have seen in the above discussions, despite the existence of various ways of defining and understanding the word democracy, nowadays there is a general understanding or agreement on the minimal requirements that a democracy should fulfill. The majority rule, the consent of the governed, the existence of “free” and “fair” elections and respect for civil and political rights are seen as common elements that a country should satisfy in order to be considered as democracy (Kekic 2007, 1-2).

2.2. Measurement of Democracy.

We have seen in the previous part how elusive the definition of democracy is. Therefore, it is not an easy task to measure states’ democratic level. But still there are some mechanisms of measuring and categorizing states on the bases of some criteria.

One of the renowned writers on democracy Dahl, discussing about his concepts of “Polyarchy” or “Realistic Democracy”, argues that, there are certain basic criteria or institutions that should exist in order to consider a country as democracy:

1. Meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and organized groups (especially political parties) for all effective positions of governmental powers at regular intervals and excluding the use of force.
2. A highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and fair elections.
3. A level of civil and political liberties - freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organizations - sufficient to ensure the integrity of political participation (Dahl 2006, cited in Milkias 2009, 679, see also Diamond, Linz and Lipset 1988, xvi).

However, some others argue that states should not be dichotomized as either democracies or non-democracies, states are not only two types. There must be some other levels of democracy between the two opposite possibilities. For example the U.S based, Freedom House has its own measurement; it divides states into four categories: Full Democracy, Flawed Democracy, Hybrid Regimes, and Authoritarian Regimes (Kekic 2007, 1). This classification seems realistic, if states are not democracies it does not necessarily mean they are authoritarian, there are also other middle grounds between the two extreme conditions.

Epstein classified states in to three type; full democracy, partial democracy and autocracy. He also sets three criteria to categorize states: [1] Measures of executive constraints, [2] political competition, and [3] the quality of political participation. In further explaining this categorization he argues:

In full democracies, the executive faces binding constraints on the use of power; there are institutionalized forms of political competition; and citizens openly propound and associate openly, champion civic causes... in partial democracies, the chief executive may be elected, but then face weak constraints; and his selection may not result from open and organized competition, but rather from lobbying by a politicized military or from selection by a committee of a ruling party. Alternatively, the election itself could be uncompetitive, either because of political manipulation by the authorities or because political parties were highly factionalized. In autocracies, the executive retains a high level of political discretion, often due to the absence of a strong judiciary or powerful legislature. There is no organized competition for political office. And political participation is orchestrated by those who hold power (2006, 555).

The other international human rights organization, Freedom House has also its own measurement of a narrower concept, of “electoral democracy” which constitutes:

1. A competitive, multiparty political system;
2. Universal adult suffrage;
3. Regularly contested elections conducted on the basis of secret ballots, reasonable ballot security and the absence of massive voter fraud;
4. significant public access of major political parties to the electorate through the media and through generally open campaigning” (Kekic 2007, 1).

Freedom House also explaining the difference between the concepts of “electoral democracy” and “political freedom”, states that the criteria for measuring political freedom are tougher and more demanding than that of electoral democracy. Accordingly, most states, which are viewed as electoral democracies are not grouped in those states that are considered as politically “free” states (ibid).

The Economist Intelligence Unit has also its own ways of measuring democracy. It proposes five indicators: “Electoral process and pluralism; civil liberties; the functioning of government; political participation; and political culture. The five indicators are interrelated and form a coherent conceptual whole.” (ibid: 2).

Table 1. The following table shows us how many of states are democracies, authoritarian and in the middle (out of 167 of the world states).

Democracy index 2006 by regime type

	Countries	% of countries	% of world population
Full democracies	28	16.8	13.0
Flawed democracies	54	32.3	38.3
Hybrid regimes	30	18.0	10.5
Authoritarian regimes	55	32.9	38.2

“World” population refers to total population of the 167 countries that are covered. Since this excludes only micro states this is nearly equal to the entire actual estimated world population in 2006.

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit; CIA World Fact book (ibid: 6).

Democracy across the Regions

Table 2

	Democracy Index Average	Number of Countries	Full democracy	Flawed Democracy	Hybrid Democracy	Authoritarian Regimes
North America	8.64	2	2	0	0	0
West Europe	8.60	21	18	2	1	0
Eastern Europe	5.76	28	2	14	6	6
Latin America & the Caribbean	6.37	24	2	17	4	1
Asia & Australasia	5.44	28	3	12	4	9
Middle East & North Africa	3.53	20	0	2	0	16
Sub-Saharan Africa	4.24	44	1	7	13	23
Total	5.52	167	28	54	30	55

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit; CIA World Fact book (ibid).

As we can clearly observe from the above figures the uppermost score for full democracy is seen in Northern America and Western Europe; 20 out of 23 states in these regions are full democracies, and there are no authoritarian regimes at all; and only 2 flawed and 1 hybrid democracies are registered. Whereas when we see the figure in Sub Saharan Africa; it's exceptionally different. There is a single state, Mauritius recognized as full democracy while 23 and 13 states are registered as authoritarian and hybrid regimes respectively, out of 44 states. According to The Economist Intelligence measurement index, Ethiopia is among those states categorized as Hybrid regimes; mainly authoritarian with some features of democracy.

2.3. Democratic Transition and Consolidation.

Democracy cannot be established or installed within a moment, in fact, it needs time to transform from the previous non- democratic regime to democracy, and the new democracy also needs time to strengthen and consolidate itself. Rustow has described the phases of democratization as a sequences of tasks in four phases: [1] background conditions, [2] the preparatory phase,[3] the decision phase and[4] the habituation phase (1970, 340 cited in ,Robinson 1994, 43).

Following Rustow, Robinson has adapted his own conceptual map of phases of democratization, and further divided the democratic phases into eight: decay, mobilization, decision, formulation, electoral contestation, handover, legitimation and consolidation (1994, 43).

Considering the above ways of classifying the different phases of democratization, in this paper it is preferred to focus on the two core phases of democratization: the Transition and Consolidation phases.

2.3.1. Democratic Transition

Transition to democracy is defined as a shift from authoritarian system to institutionalized democratic governance (Przeworski 1991, 10, Stradiotto and Guo 2010, 10).This transformation can be initiated either from above or below or from both directions. Here the transfer of power is the key element of the transformation process and it has two interrelated processes: the dissolution of the old regime and the emergence of the new democratic regime and institutions (Stradiotto and Guo 2010, 10).The basic difference between the authoritarian regime and the newly transformed democracies is that the latter should recognize and protect basic civil and political rights and allow periodic free and fair election on competitive bases. Those who are in power must also be willing to give up their power when they lose elections (ibid: 9-10).

Democratic transition can be either ideological or organic. “Organic transition involves gradual social transformation serving as a "pre-condition" of the political shift from autocracy to democracy”. Noida classifies the democratic transition in USA and England as an example of organic; in both countries the democratic transition took place through gradual process and takes centuries. Whereas, the democratic transition which started in France in 1789 is considered as a typical illustration of the ideological transformation. “Those who stormed the Bastille were not

inspired by the desire to protect anything that they already had; rather, they wanted to destroy the old and build a new one.” (Noida 1996, 18-21 cited in Milkias 2009, 681).

Scholars also argue that different kind of transition methods result in different outcomes on the durability of democratic transition and consolidation. According to some scholars, a Negotiated or “Pacted” Transition, which is based on agreement from all the stakeholders, the incumbent rulers and opposition parties, and the broader public, has higher chance of bringing democracy and lower risk of reversion than other methods of transition (Karl 1987;Przeworski 1991;Hagopian 1996 cited in Stradiotto and Guo 2010,5-7).

There are also opposing arguments against the “Negotiated Transition” by claiming that “Pacted” Transition can potentially harm the democratic consolidation by bringing disagreement and competition among political parties. This competition can even hinder consolidation process of the new democracy. Przeworski also shares this argument and states:

The danger inherent in such substantive pacts is that they will become cartels of incumbents against contenders, cartels that restrict competition, bar access, and distribute the benefits of political power among the insiders. Democracy would then turn into a private project of leaders of some political parties and corporatist associations, an oligopoly in which leaders of some organizations collude to prevent outsiders from entering" (1991 ,90-91 cited in ,Gary A. Stradiotto and Sujian Guo 2010,8).

Some others argue a transition brought by a revolution is the best method to secure democratic transition and the least problematic in enduring the new democracy. Since the old regime is removed totally the new leaders have a chance to lead the country in the best way they wish without any interference from the earlier regime (Gary A. Stradiotto and Sujian Guo 2010, 8).

Generally, when we see the world’s democratic situation in 1950; the number of democracies, anocracies¹ and autocracies were almost equal. In 1977 the number of democratic states decreased

¹ Anocracy defined as a "regime that mixes democratic with autocratic features" (Fearon and Laitin 2003, 81 cited in Regan and Bell 2010, 748). Marshall and Gurr also distinguished anocracies from democracies in terms of institutions and political elites. In anocracy political elites and institutions are that are far less capable of maintaining central authority, controlling the policy agenda, and managing political dynamics in their country (2003 cited in Regan and Bell 2010, 748).

in favor of Autocracies, hence there were 89 Autocratic, 35 Democratic and 16 Anocratic states. However in 2006 the number of Democracies has showed a double increment ie,77 states recognized as Democracies while, 49 as Anocratic and 34 as Autocratic (Hewitt, Wilkenfeld and Gurr 2007,13 cited in ,Aleman ,Jose and David D. Yang 2007,7-8).

2.3.1.1. Democratic Transition in Africa

Africa in 20th century had passed through four “distinct but interrelated phases of political transition that have had profound implications for democracy and development”. These are:

- 1, the struggle for independence from colonial rule;
- 2, the post-Independence experience with development and nation building;
- 3, the post-1980 experience with market-oriented economic reform, under the ‘benevolent’ guidance of the IMF and the World Bank; and
- 4, the post-1990 experience with multiparty democracy (Cheru 2012, 268-269).

After Africa gained its “independence” from colonial powers, there had been much expectation of democracy. But in most African states, what happened was contrary to the expectations. Even in some states the condition of democracy was worse than the colonial period. In most countries the new leaders had turned themselves to dictators. The end of Cold War has brought some positive opportunity for African democratic development. Those autocratic leaders had no more opportunity to ally themselves to one or the other of the super powers and exploit their support to maintain their dictatorial rule. Therefore, the end of Cold War was regarded as the period of second independence in Africa (Joseph 1997,363, Cheru 2012, 266). In addition, the international realities in post-Cold War era and the subsequent pressure from the international financial institutions, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB), have compelled African dictatorial governments to introduce some kinds of democratic reforms. These financial institutions have also put some “pre-conditions” that should be met in order to give “loan” and “assistance” to countries. Thus this international circumstance and the public demands at home forced African leaders to introduce some kinds of “reforms” (Bates 2010, 1142).

According to Bates (2010, 1142) and Cheru (2012, 266,274-275), the post-Cold War reforms started in French speaking West Africa. There was open call for elections for legislative and executive offices. Opposition parties were allowed to run in elections. Later these kind of measures spread to the neighboring countries and towards other regions. Herbust adds, “Even military leaders who had taken power from civilians in Gambia, Niger, and Sudan in 1990s have felt compelled to announce that, they will hold elections as part of an attempt to legitimate themselves” (2001 361-362).

However, the “reforms” and “democratic transitions” that had been started in 1990s had faced serious challenges and soon a reversal to dictatorship occurred. In 1990s, 49 out of 54 African countries were ruled by dictators, either civilian or military. Latter in 2000, African states again began to introduce some democratic “reforms” and some of them were able to build democracy and some others were on the process to it. Hence, 42 African countries had peaceful transfer of power after democratic elections. In many other countries there were fairly competitive elections, though the incumbent regimes were able to retain their power. In other countries like Uganda and Ethiopia democratic transition was introduced from above by former guerilla fighters in 1990s and these guerilla fighters transformed themselves into political parties and they are still in power in both countries (Cheru 2012, 266).

2.3.1.2. Challenges of Democratic Transition in Africa.

Cheru explains the situation of African democracy soon after Africans got their independence in 1960s as:

The euphoria over democracy and multiparty elections quickly evaporated, as corruption, nepotism and mismanagement of the affairs of state by a narrow elite spread like a cancer. The new democratically elected leaders displayed poor leadership and uninspiring visions to mobilize the population towards a common national purpose. For them, democracy was largely a strategy for power, not a vehicle for popular empowerment (2012, 275).

In most African states even after they introduced some democratic reforms the old “patrimonial”² or “clientelist” practice existed alongside with the newly introduced democratic institutions (Bratton and Lewis 2005,6; Mercurio 2008,2-3). The continuation of the patrimonial practice definitely hinders the process of “formal institutionalization” of the democratic reform (Mercurio 2008, 9).

Hurbest gives emphasis to the problem of African democratic stockholders. He criticized them as weak and unable to bring and sustain democracy in Africa. He argues, many of the opposition movements in 1980s and 1990 were not democrats and were not concerned about democracy, they were simply interested to get rid of the regime in power to take power for themselves. Those kinds of opposition movements were successful in toppling down the dictatorial regimes not because of their being democrats and strong but, the then international reality favored for their victory (Hurbest 2001, 362). With the exception of some trade unions in South Africa and Egypt, the vast majority of civil society in Africa, suffer from many weaknesses and have little contribution to democratic transition (Cheru 2012, 276-277).

There are also some extreme arguments claiming that Africa’s socio- economic and political situation does not allow Africa to develop a democratic culture. Joseph claims:

African countries were too poor, too culturally fragmented, and insufficiently capitalist; they were not fully penetrated by western Christianity and lacked the requisite civic culture. Middle classes were usually weak and more bureaucratic than entrepreneurial, and they were often coopted into authoritarian political structures’ working classes, except in a few cases such as Zambia and South Africa, were embryonic. Who would be the social agents of democracy?’ According to the main theories about the prerequisites

² Patrimonialism and neo-patrimonialism are commonly understood (with reference to Weber) to denote systems in which political relationships are mediated through, and maintained by, personal connections between leaders and subjects, or patrons and clients. Authority and the social linkages through which it is exercised are vested almost as personal property in an individual, rather than in impersonal institutions or in a mandate conferred and withdrawn by citizens. Ironically, while patrimonialism is said to cement social bonds in small-scale situations through a reliance on trust, reciprocity, and material exchanges, it is believed to distort power, corrupt authority, and fuel personal aggrandizement when it permeates larger political institutions such as bureaucracies and states. See Pitcher, Anne, Mary H. Moran and Michael Johnston. 2009. “Rethinking Patrimonialism and Neo-patrimonialism in Africa”: *African Studies Review*, Vol. 52, No. 1 :125-156 pp.29-30

or favorable conditions for democracy, most African countries constituted infertile terrain (1997, 363).

In spite of the fact that, most of African countries are among the poorest nations of the world, it is unacceptable to associate democracy with western culture and Christianity. Basically there are significant numbers of Christian populations in Africa. In addition there are some Non-Western and Non-Christian countries which have managed to develop exemplary democracy, like India, Japan, Botswana and Mauritius

Some others like Yi Feng and Paul Zak also argue that, there are certain pre-conditions to democratic transition to take place: country's level of per capita income, educational conditions, the level of wealth distribution, the strength and preferences for political rights and civil liberties are critical pre-conditions that should exist in a country to make a democratic transition (1999,162). Yi Feng and Paul J. Zak, further elaborating the precondition for democratic transition argue that "democratic transitions are more likely to take place in nations where gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is relatively high, income inequality is relatively low, the citizenry are better educated, and there is a history of democratic experiences" (ibid 74,76).

During the transitional phase, since the newly installed democratic institutions are fragile at first, many new democracies fail to take root. States may revert back to authoritarianism, if the newly elected leaders exploit their power at the expense of democratic institutions or if those left out of power seek to regain control by destroying the new democratic institutions (Przeworski 1991, 41-43).

According to Hurbest the initial reform measures that had taken place in most African states since 1960s were soon reverted. Some of the leaders like Nyerere of Tanzania and Mengistu of Ethiopia, and leaders in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, even tried to justify their *de facto* single party system and undemocratic behavior of their regime as ideologically compatible with their version of socialism. They further claim:

Electoral competition was foreign to Africa, that poor countries did not have the luxury of diverting attention away from the prime goal of economic development, or that the creation of socialism demanded a monopoly on political power. In other African countries the military seized power. By the late 1980s there had been sixty successful coups and at

least as many unsuccessful attempts to seize power across the continent. Coups and military rule became the most pervasive political phenomena in Africa (Hurbest 2001, 360).

Today Africa is experiencing a “glaring disjuncture between the high GDP growth registered since 2001 and the corresponding erosion of democratic practice by governing elites”. Political leaders try to justify their undemocratic rule for the sake of economic development. They further argue, economic progress is the pre-condition to bring democratic development in Africa. Although the above argument is a controversial, most African countries have neither managed to bring democratic development nor progress in economic spheres. Even those countries that have scored a significant economic growth since 2000, (Ghana, Kenya, Ethiopia, Malawi, Uganda, Tanzania and South Africa), they have not changed to improve the lives of majority of their citizens (Cheru 2012, 267).

Moreover, democratization process in Africa has faced serious challenges in post 2001 period. The 2001 “Terrorist Attack” against the USA and its subsequent reactions by the US Administration affects African democracy negatively. Following the US mission against “terrorism” many African states have endorsed “Anti-Terrorism” Legislation and manipulate these legislations to attack their domestic opposition. Ethiopia, Egypt, Mali and Uganda are prime examples of this phenomena. Mubarak of Egypt used to attack Muslim Brotherhood members labelling them as terrorists. Ethiopia applies the same trick of labelling any opposition, which can pose a potential threat to the regime in power. Ethiopia following the controversial elections of 2005 has penalized many politicians, journalist, and activists for more than 20 years long sentences using this “Anti-Terrorism Law” (ibid: 267-268).

All in all, in spite of long years of efforts exerted since 1990s, African democratization is still far behind. It cannot go beyond conducting “multi-party elections.” Still democracy is one of the critical things Africans wish for. Democracy is not about merely election, it should be further concerned about the socio-economic and political demands of the people (ibid: 266-267,274-275).When we generally evaluate the overall process of African democracy, it is characterized by full of ups and downs, but vastly dominated by authoritarian rule. Hurbest summarize it as:

It is legitimately hard to characterize the current situation in many African countries. They are not one party states because parties are allowed, although parties often do not have programs beyond electing leaders and ideology is almost unknown. They do not prohibit elections, even if elections are not always free and fair. Transitions, to the surprise of some incumbents, have sometimes occurred, although not frequently, and they are sometimes, but not always, reversed. Similarly, while the press is not free, it is not as constrained by formal and informal censorship as before 1989 and there are innovations (for example, private ownership of radio stations) that suggest far more dynamism than the stagnant environment of the one party state (2001, 359).

Generally, Africa does not need the abstract theoretical debates on what kind of democracy is better or bad. Democracy in whatever form and whatever adjectives is labelled on it, it is good by itself. Africans can adopt democracy with the historical and existing reality of their respective countries. The basic elements of democracy are universal. Thus the problem in Africa is not the kind of democracy rather it is the democracy itself Africans are eagerly looking for (Mkandawire 1998, Nyong 1992 and Ake 1990, cited in Cheru 2012, 276-277).

In Ethiopia, like most African countries, democratic transition was initiated in 1990s when the new Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government took state power in 1991. The pre 1991 period was dominated first by the centralized monarchical rule till 1974 and followed by military junta rule, *Derg* till 1991. The new EPRDF government had tried to introduce some democratic reforms in early transitional period even though the democratic transition was dominated by the EPRDF. There has never been other entities which have significant influence on the country's democratic direction. Thus the "democratic transition" was totally dependent on the willingness and capability of the EPRDF's government (Milkias 2009, 681).

2.3.2. Democratic Consolidation

This is the most important and hard task to accomplish for most states in their phases of democratization. A country may introduce some kind of democratic measures and can be considered as a country in democratic transition. However, sustaining these reforms measures and consolidating it is not an easy task for many countries.

A new democracy is always vulnerable for many difficulties, and would be weak. Every political group has to do its individual responsibilities to consolidate their new democracy (Brender 2009,304, Linz 1996). A democracy must be consolidated in order to become the “only game in town”. Democratic consolidation can be maintained when a state is institutionalized and guided by these institutionalized rules. In other words, everyone within the state should agree with these democratic principles and when these democratic values are accepted as the only means of solving disagreements and conflicts, it can be seen as a sign of democratic consolidation (Haynes 2000, 132).

The conducting periodic, “free” and “fair” elections are often considered as an indication of democratic consolidation, but these events can only show the existence of an electoral democracy (Diamond 1997, xiv). Almost all African states have abandoned strict single-party rule or military dictatorships in favor of “multiparty” elections (O’Donnell 2001, 123). Indeed, many regimes in sub Saharan Africa have learned to “game”, the electoral system so as to escape international condemnation or sanction.

These realities clearly show us that , we cannot rely on the existence of “multiparty” elections as a truthful indicator of democracy and democratic consolidation especially in Africa, as elections may be procedurally “fair” while other elements of political and social life such as respect for civil liberties, the right to association and form political parties, individual right to join political parties and the right to promote political programs to the public using public medias, availability of independent media , etc. are harshly repressed.

Huntington in his eminent book, *The Third Wave of Democratization*, discusses and asks a fundamental question. Why some states are able to democratize and maintain their democracies for centuries while some others revert to authoritarian rule in even lesser than a decade? And which factors may improve the survival of democracies after transition? (1991, 209).

There are different arguments on what cause democratic consolidation and who could fall to the trap of authoritarian reversal. Some argue that those with consolidated democracies cannot be reverted and face zero possibility of authoritarian reversal. However “A long-lived democracy may be surviving for two different reasons: it may be either a consolidated democracy whose odds of

reverting to dictatorship are essentially zero e.g., Sweden or a democracy that is not consolidated, but survives because of some favorable circumstances. E.g. Thailand” (Svolik 2008, 153).

Svolik illustrates some possible features of state that can have an impact on the possibilities of authoritarian reversal. He states that, low levels of economic development, a presidential executive than parliamentary, and a military authoritarian past diminishes the possibility of democratic consolidation (ibid: 154). Svolik further argues that a state preceded by a military dictatorship has lower possibility of consolidation than those states preceded by civilian dictatorship or a monarchy or those democracies that were not independent prior to transition. (ibid: 162). Svolik has also put his research result that he could not find any relation that consolidation of democracy has nothing to do with aging. In other words time is not an explanatory factor to democratic consolidation (ibid: 166). Leaders have also substantial roles in deciding the direction of their states in a particular direction, either to democracy or dictatorship (Casper and Joyce 2004, 6).

Huntington argues that, one of the determinant factors for countries’ process of democratization is countries previous experience with democracy. To demonstrate his statement with practical verification he mentioned the 23 out of 29 states that were able to democratize between 1974-1990 (third wave of democratization) had some prior experience with democracy like Portugal and Greece. There were only a few exceptions that had managed to transform with little prior democratic experience (1991, 295)

2.3.2.1. Factors to Consolidate Democracy.

Range of explanations have been given on what causes a democracy to consolidate. Some argue that economic condition is the most critical factor, for others the capacity of active citizens to exercise its political rights is a “sine qua non” to democratic durability (Bratton, Mattes 2001, 451). Let us see some of the discussions raised by a few important scholars, about which factors are essential and are a pre-condition that should exist in a country to guarantee democratic consolidation.

2.3.2.1.1. Political Culture.

Democracy needs a culture of active participation of citizens in every aspect of life. Building democracy is more than building democratic institutions. A healthy democratic culture is a necessary condition for sustenance of democracy. “A culture of passivity and apathy, an obedient and docile citizenry, are not consistent with democracy.” When there is healthy political culture, it would not be a difficult task to transfer power peacefully from one party to the other and every party who loses elections accept the judgment of the electorate. This is how democracy develops (Kekic 2007, 2).Kekic further elaborate his argument as:

Participation is a necessary component, as apathy and abstention are inimical to democracy...In a democracy, government is only one element in a social fabric of many and varied institutions, political organizations and associations. Citizens cannot be required to take part in the political process, and they are free to express their dissatisfaction by not participating. However, a healthy democracy requires the active, freely chosen participation of citizens in public life. Democracies flourish when citizens are willing to take part in public debate, elect representatives and join political parties. Without this broad, sustaining participation, democracy begins to wither and become the preserve of small, select groups (ibid).

Surprisingly, Lipset, Almond and Verba, argue that democracy works better in a country where there is low level of participation than it’s opposite. They argue, public apathy against the state is not necessarily a bad thing by itself; it could also be an indication of public satisfaction and trust in the political leader or the state. Apathy could be positive and even sometimes can be helpful to stabilize democracy (1963, cited in Abrahamsen 2000, 70-71). “Too much participation and high voter turn-out could be a sign of declining consensus, increasing social tension and extremism, and the existence of a large passive population is therefore considered as beneficial to the survival of the political system” (ibid).

Muller and Seligson (1994, 635) referring to the theory of civic culture proposed by Almond and Verba (1963), have asserted that a civic culture has a significant role in sustaining democracy: the attitude of citizens that, they can influence major decisions of their governments, a feeling that, they can really affect the political system, and a feeling that other fellow citizens are normally

trustworthy. Generally countries that have critical societies with strong civic culture have a high possibility of building and sustaining democracy, regardless of countries' socio-economic status.

Paxton also supports the above Muller and Seligson's argument and further elaborate her views as:

Theorists have long argued that when a country has a vigorous associational life, it is better to create and maintain a democracy. When citizens interact often, join groups, and trust each other, their relationships aid democratization by crystallizing and organizing opposition to a non-democratic regime. Once a democracy is established, these relationships expand citizen access to information and political ideas, which increases governmental accountability. Furthermore, voluntary associations provide a training ground for new political leaders, help members practice compromise and learn tolerance, and stimulate individual participation in politics (2002, 254).

Generally, political culture is shaped by history, economics, religion and tradition. "It is a phenomenon typical of a particular set - a well-defined constellation of people identifying one another as members of a group..." (Milkias 2009 687). Political culture is not short lived, it is the output of many years of people's interaction. Therefore, it passes from generation to generation (ibid: 692). Countries' political culture can be classified into three distinct features: participant, subject and parochial (ibid: 688).

According to Milkias "participant political culture" is found in a few developed countries like USA and Britain. The main characteristic features of such kind of political culture is, people feel as citizen and feel proud of their political system. They give much emphasis to politics, regularly participate in political activities; people feel they can influence their government's decisions by organized campaign and protest. They are free to discuss about politics and are highly engaged in communal works. This is the most ideal type of political culture to develop and sustain democracy. But such kind of political culture and individuals are rare in Ethiopia (ibid: 688).

"Subject" is another kind of category a little below from the participant political culture. In this category people do not feel proud of their countries political system and do not have a strong emotional attachment to their government. People are concerned about politics but in a passive manner. They feel that their capability to influence their government's decisions is limited. Thus they rarely organize groups to influence their government and to some extent people feel powerless. People may vote but with little enthusiasm. Such kind of political culture is common

in Germany and Italy. Subjects consider themselves obedient to political decision makings. Such kind of individuals and political culture is also common in Ethiopia (ibid: 688-689).

The third type of political culture is, “parochial”. It is the extreme opposite of the participant political culture. Here people do not consider themselves as citizen of a particular nation but simple resident of a particular village. They do not care about politics. They are simply concerned about what happens in their respective localities. This kind of political culture is prevalent in the Latin American countries. In such kind of communities people expect little from politicians and do not feel proud of their country. According to Milkias it is tough to build democracy in a community where parochial political culture is widespread. Much of Ethiopian population lay under this category (ibid: 689). There is a common Amharic proverb in Ethiopia which can illustrate the prevailing political culture of majority of the communities. “Politics and electricity should be handled from a far.” (Abbink 2009, 8).

The basic elements of political culture are static and are transferred from generation to generation. Thus people learn the values and norms of their societal political culture from their families, schools and their surrounding environments (Milkias 2009, 691). Individuals receive their personality from their community and each community reflects the political culture of its predecessors. But through time individuals political culture can be modified and changed through media and interaction with other communities that have different political culture (Pye 1985, 21 cited in Milkias 2009, 691).

2.3.2.1.2. Civil Society and Democracy

Civil society is one of the few concepts which attracts much attention in the academic area of political science (Kumar 1993; Calhoun 1993; Chandhoke 1995 quoted in Singh 2013, 1). And it is commonly defined as “the realm of organized social life that is open, voluntary, self-generating, largely self-supporting, relatively autonomous from state and bound by a legal order or set of shared values,” (Diamond 1999,221 cited in Toros 2007,396). It is also defined as an “intermediate sphere between individual/ family and state” (Kumar 1993; Calhoun 1993; Chandhoke 1995 quoted Singh 2013, 1), and also as “voluntary associations which replaced

primordial community; properly speaking, it was the base for political society, defined as government of the people” (Kumar 1993 cited in Singh 2013, 1).

There is an extensive body of literature which indicates the linkages between civil society and democracy. The only way states can sustain democracy is when there is a strong interaction between the state elites and the independent associations (civil society); even though, civil society is not the only determinant element to sustain democracy, it has substantial role in facilitating and strengthening the infrastructure for civil rights and liberties to “take off” if not “stick” (Chazan 1982, 1994; Rothchild and Chazan 1987; Cohen 1992; Dorman 2002 cited in Bradley 2005, 424). Robinson shares the above argument and he further explains that civil society plays an important role in putting the government accountable. Political accountability is an element of democracy and the existence of a vigorous civil society can monitor the domination of the state, hence helps to enrich democratization (Robinson 1994, 44). Linz and Stephan also recognize the indispensable role of civil society and consider them as compulsory elements in consolidating democracy (2001, 97).

Diamond, while explaining the critical role of the civil society for democracy, states that:

Through vocalizing their problems and needs, civil society organizations can produce warnings for elected officials and pinpoint the problems related to democratic shortages. On the occasions that the governing elites do not take action in solving problems related to democratic deficits, civil society appears to be the only tool for identifying these difficulties. These organizations, by intercommunicating through mass media or by directly gaining the attention of elected officials by utilizing different tools, such as campaigns, may elevate and attach the issues of democracy to the political agenda. In areas such as public administration reform and human rights, upon which elites seem reluctant to act, civil society may fill the gap and raise the issues in public circles. All these examples refer to the fact that democracy as a political system necessitates a public that is organized for democracy, digests its values and norms, and is committed to its common “civic” ends. A possible way to construct this public is through civil society (1999, 219, quoted in Toros, 2007, 396).

However, civil society needs favorable environment to perform its basic function of democratization. The legal and socio-political environment should be supportive of its day to day responsibilities and there should not be unnecessary legal restriction against its independence and

freedom (Toros 2007, 399-400). Autonomy of civil society from government authorities is a necessary condition to maintain its impartiality (Ibid). Big civil society organizations usually have many branch offices with sufficient resources to finance their day to day activities. Therefore these kinds of strong civil society have a better chance to play more in the countries' democratization processes. (Ibid, 399).

Civil society provide a platform for different social groups to entertain their different values and ideas and help to develop the culture of tolerance and compromise. "Thus the pluralism in civil society is a guarantee that, the state will not be controlled or swallowed by one interest" (Singh 2013, 3).

The other important contribution of civil society organizations to democracy is their huge investments in training and education to boost civic and democratic culture in a society. Consolidation of democracy much depends on the existence of a culture of tolerance, pragmatism, trust, willingness to compromise, co-operation, bargaining and accommodation. Civil Society is an important agent who primary focuses on and initiates to bring a democratic culture in a given society (ibid)

Therefore, as civil society is one of the fundamentals of democratization process, there must be a democratic government to allow strong civil society to perform its duties. State and civil society should work together in a complementary manner not in competitive one (ibid: 5). However, civil society is not always seen as "blessed" actor, sometimes it can pose a threat to democracy. Some time it is observed that civil society involves in pure political matters directly supporting or opposing either opposition or ruling parties. Its alignment with the ruling political parties may help it to get access to state's resources, but it would definitely endanger its independence and impartiality of its existence (ibid: 4). And its alignment with the opposition parties also put it in a difficult situation with government. Sometimes it may result in closing up of the civil society organizations themselves.

Generally the basic principle of democracy divides governmental power between different political actors. In democracy the government in power is responsible to the people. Citizens may ask and

challenge their government in various ways. Civil society organizations are one of the mechanisms, which provide good opportunity to make the government accountable and responsive to the public. There had been hundreds of civil associations (groupings, organizations), which had substantial contribution to the infant Ethiopian democratic process in the post 1991 period. Unfortunately following the 2005 Election, the government has legislated a new law which limits the activities of the civil society to “pure developmental” and social matters only. The law clearly forbids civil society organizations to engage in issues of human rights, good governance and other democracy related issues.

2.3.2.1.3. Geo- Political Location and Democracy

Leeson and Dean (2009, 535) analyze the relationship between the level of democratization and the states’ specific geographical location. They find out that foreign investors are attracted by the favorable domestic environments to invest their capital. When governments take positive measures to strengthen their democracy, they create a better possibility of attracting investors to their country. One country’s moves and incentives to attract investors have direct consequences in the neighboring countries; the neighboring states would be in a situation that they should reform their domestic condition to attract more investors from abroad and even to keep the already existing ones. So this kind of positive competition leads a particular region to flourish with a democratic environment.

Another way that geography has impact on democratization is through the “diffusion of democratic ideas” via a “demonstration effect or “learning [effect]”. Usually countries look at their surrounding environments and take some important ideas and thoughts. If democratic idea and practice exists in a particular area, most likely it affects the surrounding areas. Democratic ideas are possibly in a position to transcend to lesser democratic areas (ibid: 536).

Recently, we are observing the emergence of regional alliances and economic cooperation. These phenomenon have a direct linkage with democracy. When we see the practical experience of European Union (EU), as a successful integration, its member states are not only obliged to harmonize their respective economic policies but their political arrangements as well. New member states have to fulfill certain “institutional requirements” and some other democratic measures. It is true that states want to join such a Union because it is believed to have benefits in

the form of “cross-country subsidization, protection alliances, and so forth”. Thus countries are obliged to take democratic reforms to join such a community. This is how regional economic communities can contribute to democracy. Because economic communities are bound to specific region, their presence in a particular area creates a higher possibility of spreading democracy in the surrounding areas (ibid).

There is a continental organization, African Union (AU)/ Organization of African Unity (OAU) since 1963, and many other regional economic organizations: Southern African Development Community (SADEC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and Inter Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in East Africa, however none of them have a compulsory “democratic” pre-conditions to membership Except Morocco the other 53 African countries are members of African Union and all of them are also members of other two or three regional organizations.

The regional organizations in Africa are handicapped with legal and institutional inability to enforce democratic measures. For example the OAU Charter’s article 3/1 and 2 clearly states that, the Union is based on recognition of sovereignty and “non-interference” on other state domestic affairs (OAU Charter 1963, 4). Surprisingly violations of human rights, even genocide committed in a member state is considered as the affair of that specific state. No other states or the regional organizations are mandated to reverse these kind of crimes. The OAU’s incapability to prevent the 1994 “Rwandan Genocide”³ and similar tragedies in other areas are good illustration of how much the existence of AU/OAU and the other regional organizations are irrelevant to promote and protect human rights in Africa.

2.3.2.1.4. Political Parties and Democracy.

The existence of active political parties has irreplaceable role in sustaining democracy. Political parties are the platform by which citizens entertain their views and the practical means to acquire government’s power to enforce political programs. Political parties also serve as a bridge between the government and the civil society. “Opposition parties can act as necessary checks on the ruling party, assure the representation of citizens' policy preferences and by doing so, increase civic

³ For details refer Hintjens, M. Helen. 1999. “Explaining the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda”. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 2 : 241-286.

participation.” Party competition can also help to develop a peaceful mechanism of power transfer, an important element of democracy (Lai, and Melkonian-Hoover 2005, 552).

Political parties are not always seen as obligatory elements of democracy. There are many regimes which do not encourage the existence of many opposition parties. “Non-democratic” regimes sometimes argue that, the existence of many political parties led to instability, thus discourage their existence. (ibid: 551).

Brian Lai and Ruth Melkonian, recognizing other factors claim that the existence of strong and active political parties are essential elements of the process of democratic consolidation. Although some governments claim that they can build democracy without the existence of opposition parties, the practical situation in those states are contrary to what they claimed, and building and preserving democracy in such states is unlikely to happen. Political parties have an indispensable role in consolidating democracy. “Political parties [help to] transmit and solidify democratic norms, helping a state to democratize (ibid: 552). Political parties have more functions in democratizing countries:

Parties are not only a means for the peaceful transfer of power, but provide peaceful means to facilitate adaptation and compromise. Political parties, opposition groups in particular, can respond and adapt to changes in society because they tend to have less of a vested interest in preserving the current regime order. In addition, parties are useful in providing a sense of longevity and institutionalization. By offering a means for future regularity, they increase an individual candidate's chance of winning successive elections and of achieving policy changes while in office (ibid).

It is not only the simple existence of opposition political parties that matter but their real capacity to mobilize the people: There has to be “fair” and “equal” opportunities for competition, and opposition parties should have access to public media, and right to introduce their program, to rally and demonstrate. In most African states, though most governments do not forbid the existence of political parties, still politics is practically dominated by single party system (ibid: 553).

Lai and Ruth Melkonian-Hoover in their research put a few hypotheses and finally proved them to be true:

Hypothesis 1: “The greater the competitiveness of political parties in authoritarian states the more likely they are to become democracies;

Hypothesis 2: The greater the competitiveness of political parties in democratic states the more likely they are to avoid a reversion to authoritarianism” (ibid: 554).

In Ethiopia, although opposition political parties have existed since 1970s they were not legally allowed to compete in elections. It was only in post 1991 period that they began to be registered and compete for power. Most of political parties formed in 1990s were organized under ethnic lines. (Wondwosen 2008a: 780-809 cited in Teshome 2013, 1020-1021 ;Joireman 1997,398,407 ;Teshome 2009,61 ;Milkiyas 2009 692). Non ethnic (pan-Ethiopian) political parties like MEISON, EPRP, that can unite multi-ethnic groups are exposed to many obstacles. Now we have only a handful of pan -Ethiopian political parties (Medrek, AEUP, and EDP) (Wondwosen 2008a: 780-809 cited in Teshome 2013, 1020-1021).

2.3.2.1.5. The Media and Democracy.

Today our life is highly associated with media; we spend considerable amount of our time in using the media outputs of any type. Media has an important role in providing information, and mobilizing peoples in a certain direction. In this globalized world a well-informed citizen can contribute to strengthen democracy. Media and democracy are highly interrelated and attached to each other (Riaz 2011, 89). Information is necessary element to make a rational decision like choosing a government. In this regard mass media has critical role in providing relevant information to make a rational decision (Riaz 2011, 90 .Venturelli 1998; Kellner 2004; McQuail 1993; Skogerbø 1996 cited in Fog 2013, 1).

Media also serve as a platform for public debates and discussions on different issues (Gurevitch and Blumler, 1990, cited in Fog 2013, 1-2). Media has the capacity of setting the agenda for discussions and can influence the attitude and opinion of their audience. Because of this role media is sometimes considered as “unelected leader” or “power centers” (Riaz, 2011, 89-90). Media is also an important tool to check and control the performance of the government and often seen as the “fourth branch of government” (Choi and James, 2007, 23, and Elmas, and Kurban 2011, 8).

However media do not have similar role in every country. Some scholars differentiate the role of media in established democracies and those in transition as:

The media have an important but rather small - in terms of magnitude - effect on political outcomes in established democracies, characterized by competitive media, stable party systems, and political parties with well-known and well-understood ideological platforms. One should, however, expect a larger effect of media on political outcomes in a country with weak democratic institutions (Enikolopov, Petrova and Zhuravskaya. 2011, 3254).

Media is also the primary tool to serve as a “watchdog” of democracy. Media has to struggle for the benefit of the public. Whenever media gets something wrong against the public interest, whether it is from government or from other side, it has to challenge it and should let the public know it. Usually media in developed democracies are capable of performing this function. Whereas, media in developing countries like Africa are weak to do that. Media in developing countries are usually under the influence of the ruling regimes and they usually serve the incumbent regimes in power than the public interest (Riaz 2011, 92).

Generally both local and international media are seen as critical forces that can influence the socio-economic and political trajectories of countries especially, in those countries which are in the phase of democratic transition. Olukoyun describes the especial role of media in post dictatorial regimes as:

In post authoritarian societies such as those of Africa and communist Europe, where the media were in the vanguard of the struggle for democratization, they continue to play important roles in shaping the course of events in the emerging democracies.(2004,72) Regarding state-media relations in transitional polities, it is note-worthy that the media continue to struggle in many countries against the legacy of authoritarianism, which manifests itself in inadequate safeguards for press freedom in the constitutions; persecution and intimidation of journalists by an officialdom eager to shield itself from public scrutiny; as well as denial of access to journalists and others seeking information (ibid: 73).

Much of the arguments regarding the relationship between media and democracy are positive. But there are some arguments which pose question on the supposed role of media and argue that, media

have some hidden agenda too. Some government in Africa blame some medias as missionaries of “neo colonialism” and as an advocator of “neo liberalism”, which is believed to be an extremist view for Africa current situations. These regimes view these media as “tools of global economic powers to colonize previously “untapped” social domains via information, entertainment, and new technology” (Galperin, 1999a, 1999b cited in Murphy 2007, 1). Jebril and his collaborators have also put their suspicion on the positive relationship between media and democracy. They argue that the “generally accepted” assumption on the positive relation between these two variables are sometimes misleading (Jebril, Stetka, and Loveless.2013 3).

When we observe the situation of media in Ethiopia, it was only in post 1991 period that the private media mushroomed in the country. However the relationship between the private media and the government has been full of mistrust ever since. (HRW 2010, 48-49; Teshome 2009, 102)

2.3.2.1.6. Economic Status as Pre Condition for Democratic Consolidation?

The other factor which is much debatable is the level of economic development and its impact on democratic consolidation. Although it is still difficult to generalize that wealth causes consolidation, there is a clear indication that there is a relationship among the two variables (Kekic 2007, 2). However, the direction of causality is debatable. Some argue it is the economic development which leads a country to democracy and the other argue, the other way round (ibid: 2, 6).

The mainstream theorists of democracy like that of Ake, believes that countries’ level of economic development and its educational status are essential elements of democratic consolidation. He recommends for Africans to solve their problems with regard to their poor economic performance and educational situations. But, Bradley poses a critical question that can be observed in reality, like the case of India’s, Botswana’s, Mauritius and Jamaica’s democracy. All these states are regarded as democracies without being economically strong, contrary to what the mainstream democracy theorists argue (Bradley, 2005, 421; Ake 1991, cited in Bradley, 2005, 421).

Diamandouros also share the idea of Ake and states that, “People with more income, in complex and widely interdependent work situations are more likely to ask for political freedom”. According to Diamandouros it also appears that societies experiencing rapid economic development undergo

a cultural change toward cooperation, compromise, tolerance of different interests and hence help to stabilize democratization (Diamandouros 1997).

Epstein, while discussing the relationship between economic development and democracy argues that even if there is a relationship, it does not mean one causes the other. Countries may democratize not because they are wealthy but because of other factors that are not related with it. But Epstein does not reject, if one country is wealthy or prosperous, its prosperity could help it not to drag back to authoritarian rule (Epstein et al 2006, 552).

Olson (1993 573), suggests that democracies emerge when there is a “dispersion of resources that makes it impossible for any leader or group to overpower all of the others.” Similarly, Vanhanen (1997 24) suggests that “democracy takes place under conditions in which power resources have become so widely distributed that no group is any longer able to suppress its competitors or to maintain its hegemony” (Swaminathan 1999 ,188). Lipset discusses the significant role of the private sector, strong middle class and increased educational condition for better democracy. (1959, 83).

Even though, it is difficult to conclude wealth causes democracy and wealth is a necessary precondition for democracy, there is a likely relationships between democracy and level of countries’ economic development.

All in all, the above discussed factors that are considered as essential to democratic consolidation are in critical situations in Africa : the absence of favorable political culture, weak civil society, lack of strong political parties, and absence of independent and free media made African states in general and Ethiopia in particular, unlikely to develop full-fledged democracy in near future.

Democratic transition is mainly initiated in Africa either by former colonizers or international financial institutions like, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB). In 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) was widely introduced in Africa and other parts of the world. According to SAP, states were obliged to introduce political and economic “liberalization” to get “aid” and “loans” from these international

financial institutions and other “donor” states. In Ethiopia, like many other African countries, democratic transition coincided with the international phenomena of the end of Cold War. The new Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government which took power in 1991 tried to introduce some democratic measures and since then there has been some achievements with regard to establishment of democratic institutions. However, after Ethiopia’s third national and regional elections that took place in 2005 many believe that Ethiopia’s democracy is reversing backward. This paper argues Ethiopia’s real democratic transition has not yet realized, although some democratic institutions exist. The more authoritarian inclination of the EPRDF regime in the post- 2005 period is not a new phenomenon it is a simple continuation of the old dictatorial system with a new form. The country’s democratic record has not shown any significant development from the previous regimes. Now the EPRDF regime reaches its highest pick in its monopoly of state’s power and the democratic space left for the public is at lowest level .Thus the main objective of this paper is to explain the above stated claim.

CHAPTER THREE.

3. Ethiopian Democratic Transition

3.1. Ethiopian “Democratic” Conditions in Pre -1991 Period.

Modern Ethiopian political history can be classified into three periods: the first monarchical period of emperor Haile Selassie, 1916-1974 followed by the Military Junta, *Derg* rule ,1974-1991, and the post 1991 period dominated by the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a coalition of four ethnic- based political parties. But what makes Ethiopian history unique from the rest of Africa is, it’s being the only African country, which has never been colonized by European powers, except for the brief period of Italian occupation (1936-1941) (Nega and Milofsky 2011,42).

The last emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie in his long years of rule exercised absolute power. No one had tried to challenge his absolutism (Carter Center 2009, 9). He presented himself as leader “appointed by God”, thus, no one was allowed to challenge his power. He introduced the Country’s first “constitution” in 1931, in which he “granted” some kind of “rights” but still his power was not questioned. Later in 1955 again he announced another “constitution”. But in both cases, the main aim of introducing those “constitutions” was not to limit the power of the government and to allow citizens to enjoy better civil and political rights, but it was to show the world that his country was a modern state.

In 1970s the public grievances against the Haile Silase rule reached its peak. There was widespread unrest in the country which forced the long existing monarchical rule to collapse in 1974. Then a group of junior military officers called “*Derg*” [a name given for the Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces from different army divisions and the Police forces] deposed HaileSilase and took state power (Joireman 1997, 387; Carter Center 2009, 9).

Initially the *Derg* was intended to “facilitate” the peaceful transfer of power from the deposed monarchical Haile Silase regime to the people. But soon the *Derg* abandoned its initial promise and began to consolidate its power. Eventually, it was able to hold state power and ruled the

country till 1991. However, the 17 years rule by “*Derg*” was not different from the Haile Silase’s with regard to democracy. It was another form of authoritarianism by a military junta. Abbinik (2009) and Carter Center (2009) explain about the “*Derg*” regime as:

The ruling military council, the *Derg*, officially adopted Marxist socialism as its ideology in 1975 and proceeded to create the “Popular Democratic Republic of Ethiopia”, with a due constitution in 1984[1987]. The *Derg*, under the upstart army officer Lt.-col. Mengistu Haile-Mariam as president, thus strived to become a regular Communist “peoples’ republic” in the name of the toiling masses, and aimed at a classless society. It nationalized all land, created a state economy, allied with the Soviet camp, was ruled with military force, and did not allow political freedoms or an independent civil society. (2009,9).The *Derg* suspended the “constitution”[of 1955], and ruled by a series of military decrees until the “constitution” of the People’s Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was promulgated eventually in 1987 (Carter Center 2009 ,9).

The post-1989 international developments and the subsequent disintegration of Soviet Union and the failure of socialism as an influential ideology has negative consequences in former Soviet blocks of East European states and other allies and client states in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Ethiopia as one of the client states of the Soviet regime was a direct victim of the collapse of former Soviet Union. (Shaw 1993; Zeleza 1994a, cited in Zeleza 1994, 475).

Some of the former Africa “socialist” regimes tried to introduce some kind of “democratic” reforms to cope-with the then international realities and sustain their regimes. For instance the regime in Benin introduced multi-party system for the first time as part of its reform measures in the post 1989 period. As the result of such measure the long server leader of Benin, Mathieu Kerekou was ousted from office by the elections that took place on April 4th, 1991 (Joseph 1997, 369). The post 1989 global dynamics triggered a democratic reforms both in former socialist and non-socialist state that had undemocratic nature. In more than half of sub Saharan African countries positive measures had been introduced to make the political situation more pluralistic and competitive (Joseph 1997, 363; Herbust 2001,361).

The regime change that took place in Ethiopia in May 1991 was the outcome of both internal and international factors. Internally, there had been armed struggle movement against the *Derg* since the military junta took power. Secondly the collapse of former socialist block led

by Soviet Union had also made the “Marxist” *Derg* regime to lose its main support to keep its authoritarian rule.

The armed struggle movements against the *Derg* was headed by the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) and Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF) in the north. Both parties had a goal of separating their respective regions from the center. EPLF’s mission was realized in 1993 when Eritreans made a referendum and decided to establish an independent state called Eritrea. However, TPLF’s initial plan was changed in due time, when they were near to defeat the *Derg* regime. They began to aspire to “free” not only their region, Tigray, but the whole of Ethiopia from the *Derg* rule. Finally TPLF was able to “free” the whole Ethiopian regions from the *Derg* rule in 1991. But TPLF was not alone in its effort to “free” the whole Ethiopian region; at the eve of victory it invited other armed rebel movements that had common goal of dislodging the *Derg* regime. (Oromo People’s Democratic Organization (OPDO), Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), and Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM)) to form a coalition party called, Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) (Lunn 2009, 3; Lyons 1996, 122). Even though, EPRDF is a coalition of four parties representing different ethnic groups, TPLF representing Tigrayans is the dominant party with its control of the military, security and other executive organs of the government.

In addition to *Derg*’s constraints to get support from its old socialist friends, USA’s assistance to other opposition liberation movements, made the balance of power to shift in favor of the opposition. Finally the main opposition liberation movement, TPLF managed to cooperate with other three liberation movements and formed a coalition Front , EPRDF and took state power in May 1991 (Lunn 2009,3 ;Joireman 1997,387; Vestal 1999, 3;Carter Center 2009 ,10). Since 1991 Ethiopian political system is dominated by this giant coalition party of former armed rebel groups.

3.2. The Transitional Period of 1991-1994

It is mostly agreed that the fall of Mengistu’s regime in 1991 marked the beginning of Ethiopian democratic transition (Carter Center 2009, 10; Vestal 1999, 9; Lyons, 1996.121). EPRDF a few months after taking state power (July 1991), organized a National Conference of Peace and Reconciliation, in which 27 ethnic- based political parties had been invited to participate. The

conference was aimed to formulate a Transitional Charter (“serve as the supreme law of the land for the duration of the Transitional Period”), and Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) for the period of two years. This kind of “inclusive” political event was a unique phenomenon in Ethiopian political history (Teshome 2009, 64; Joireman 1997, 396; Carter Center 2009, 10; Vestal 1999, 9). In this regard some scholars give credit to EPRDF for its effort of opening up the political space for other actors to participate. Finally after many dialogues and debates the participants of the conference were able to formulate a Transitional Charter, a Transitional Government, a legislative body (the Council of Representatives) and decided to hold an election in short time. But surprisingly what makes the Transitional Charter unique was that it explicitly gave recognition to self-determination up to secession to different ethno- linguistic groups (Article II and XIII of the transitional charter). Even the newly organized regions were based on these ethno- linguistic identities. It was a dramatic move from the past regimes, in which an Amhara culture and Christianity was given priority and other ethnic and religion groups were directly or indirectly subjected to discrimination (Teshome 2009,64; Lunn 2009,3; Lyons,1996.124; Aalen 2006, 2008 cited in Abbink 2009,4).

Smith argues supporting the above claim that in contrast to the HaileSilase and *Derg* regimes, EPRDF explicitly recognized the ethno-linguistic rights of citizens by giving constitutional guarantee. According to Smith, the 1993’s Eritrean referendum on independence, the scheduling and conducting of multiparty elections show that there was a meaningful transition to democracy (2007,3).

Joireman also agrees with Smith’s argument, and says EPRDF’s first measure after taking state power was to change the past single party elections system by a broader multiparty system. Civil society and professional associations were almost non-existing in the previous regimes and religious rights were not respected. Generally EPRDF has allowed citizens to enjoy their basic civil and political rights, which were at worst stage in the pre-1991 period (Joireman, 1997, 402-403; Vestal 1999, 9). Lyons also acknowledges the important steps made by the EPRDF with regard to “inclusive” Transitional Government (1996, 121). According to Vestal the establishment of the Transitional Council (mandated to overview the activities of the executive and to prepare a draft constitution), was the manifestation of a shift from undemocratic nature and domination of

few individuals in the previous regimes (Vestal 1999, 9). But Vestal adds that Ethiopia's democratic moves in early 1990s was also influenced by USA, a major ally and supporter of the regime. Ethiopia was obliged to undertake these democratic measures to keep receiving USA's aid. (ibid, 7) Lyons also shares the above views and he argues, even though, EPRDF could not solve all problems that existed in the transitional period, it tried to include all political actors and laid down the platform for political pluralism (Lyons,1996.123-124).

Abbink also recognizes the positive developments in the post-1991 period. Like the existence of a multi-party system, the improvement of press freedom, decentralization of power [socio- economic and political decisions are no more made at the center and goes down to regions contrary to what had been in the previous regimes]. But he also stresses that in all democratic reform measures EPRDF introduced, it had never put its dominance at risk (2009, 11).

On the other hand, others argue that the immediate post 1991 period of transition was a nominal incorporation of many political actors. In reality it was overwhelmingly dominated by EPRDF. Opposition parties "often disorganized, sometimes irresponsible, poorly led, and split by numerous internal differences", tried to influence the dominant role of EPRDF using different tactics (negotiation ,boycotts of elections etc.) but none of these tactics helped to achieve their goals. EPRDF was able to influence the transitional period in favor of its interests. Finally "The well-managed May 1995 elections ended the transitional period and served to consolidate the EPRDF's dominance. What had begun with a noisy diversity of views among a broad array of political organizations ended quietly with the clear hegemony of the EPRDF" (Lyons, 1996.121).

Lyons further explaining how EPRDF was able to dominate the transitional period, he describes the weakness of political parties as one of the factors. Some of them were new parties established by the EPRDF itself. They did not have bases and support from masses. Some others like the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) who had broader support from 40% of the people, were systematically forced to withdraw from the transitional government. Some other non-ethnic (pan-Ethiopian) political parties like Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), the All-Ethiopian Socialist Movement (MEISON), and the Coalition of Ethiopian Democratic Forces (COEDF) which had different ideology from EPRDF and could have potentially challenged EPRDF, were

sidelined or systematically banned from participating in the Transitional Conference (Lyons 1996, 123; Vestal 1999, 7).

Merera also agrees with Lyons; he argues that EPRDF did not genuinely intend to open the political space in early 1990s. It purposely invited weak political parties which could not put significant pressure on its power. Even some of those parties that participated in the National Conference of Peace and Reconciliation were artificial creations of the EPRDF. According to Merera the only strong parties which had long history and strong base were the EPRDF, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Afar Liberation Front (ALF), and the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) (2011, 121 cited in Teshome 2009,64).

Vestal. (1999, 9) and Teshome (2009, 64-65) state that the initial achievements of the Transitional Government did not last long. It was reversed soon. The basic human rights that were promised to be protected were violated. EPRDF after consolidating itself, began to harass opposition political parties. Vestal further explaining how EPRDF was non tolerant to opposition, he presents how EPRDF violently reacted to the peaceful protest by newly established multi-ethnic political party (constituted from Oromos, Amharas, and Tigrayans), the United Democratic Nationals (UDN) in July 1991. (1999, 23). Carter Center describes the transition period as: “violent clashes between competing political and ethnic groups throughout the country. At one point military clashes between the EPRDF and OLF (the two main factions in the Transitional Government of Ethiopia) severely threatened the transitional regime (Carter Center 2009, 10).

3.2.1. Local Elections of 1992.

One of the most important events that took place after adoption of Transitional Charter was the conduction of local elections in June 1992. But, “EPRDF controlled most of the ground by virtue of its vast military superiority [When EPRDF took state power after defeating the *Derg* regime, it totally dispersed the Ethiopian army forces and replaced it with its own royals], and by placing loyal administrators in strategic positions throughout the countryside” (Lyons 1996, 124). There had been many complaints from opposition parties. For example OLF, the main opposition party in the transitional period complained that its offices were being closed and its members had being intimidated by the EPRDF cadres and asked the election to be postponed. When its question was

rejected by the Council of Representatives, which was dominated by EPRDF, OLF boycotted the election and withdrew itself from the Transitional Government. According to observers the election of 1992 was short of election standards and non-competitive. The election result was not surprising as, EPRDF won 96.6 % of votes (Joireman 1997, 399; HRW 2010, 11; ICG 2009, 7; Carter Center 2009 , 10). Joireman adds that it was not only OLF which pulled itself from unfair election competition in 1992:

Several other opposition parties also pulled out of the contest, including the All-Amhara People's Organisation, the Ethiopian Democratic Action Group, the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia, and the Gedeo People's Democratic Organisation, which together represented a significant percentage of the potential Ethiopian electorate. As the OLF was the foremost political organisation campaigning on behalf of the Oromo, who represent at least half [some others say 30-40 %] of the Ethiopian population, its withdrawal from the elections was a severe blow to the democratic process. It is difficult to predict what might have been the result had these groups remained within the electoral process. With their elimination the EPRDF won a resounding victory (1997, 399).

Stremalau underlines that there was a sign of opening up of political space for opposition parties at the initial period of transitional government. But this liberalization and positive measures did not emanate from a deep concern of introducing democratic reform to the people. It was a reaction to get international legitimacy from the international actors, to show the western powers that the new regime (EPRDF) was different from the old Soviet-backed “socialist” regime (2011, 716).

3.2.2 The Constituent Assembly Elections of 1994.

The second important phenomenon in the transitional period was the election of Constituent Assembly in June 1994. However, the process was dominated by widespread intimidation and harassment against opposition political parties. Thus, many political parties boycotted it like the previous elections (1992). In the result EPRDF won 484 out of 547-seats in the Constituent Assembly. Finally “The new assembly met in October and the draft constitution was ratified in December 1994. The first elections for Federal and Regional Assemblies under the new constitution took place in May 1995, with subsequent national elections held in 2000, and both processes were dominated by EPRDF.”(Carter Center 2009, 10; ICG 2009, 7).

However, Joireman criticizes opposition parties for their weakness of challenging the bureaucratic hindrance and some other administrative problems of the Transitional Government, to fully participate in 1994's Constituent Assembly Elections. He argues while some of their complaints like: "restrictions on press freedom were substantiated, their accusations about the jailing of their supporters and prevention of public exposure are more difficult to verify" he criticizes opposition parties that they were easily discouraged by problems they face from Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) (1997, 401-402).

The 1994 constitution declares Ethiopia as a federal state, in contrary to the long existing unitary state. Accordingly the "Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE)" comprises the Federal Government and Regional States. Federal Government is mandated to run general affairs of the Federation: monetary function, national defense, foreign policy etc., and the Regional States are entitled to run their own affairs in their respective territorial jurisdiction. All mandates which are not explicitly given to the Federal Government are considered as mandate given to the Regional States. (1994 FDRE Constitution Article 50/1, 51, 52/1)

The 1994 constitution reorganized Ethiopia into nine Regional States and two federally administered cities (Addis Ababa and Dire-Dawa). Each Regional State has its own constitution, which should not be in contradiction with the basic essence of the federal constitution. Each region has also its own separate regional government with its own executive, legislature and judicial organs. Regional elections take place every five years. The regional councils are the highest decision making organ in the states and are responsible to the regional population, not to the Federal Government (ibid, Article; 46, 54, 50/1, 50/2, 50/3). Each Regional State has its own flag, anthem and Regional States can also use their own local languages as official languages of their region.

Member States of the Ethiopian Federation (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia) are the following:

- 1) The State of Tigray
- 2) The State of Afar

- 3) The State of Amhara
- 4) The State of Oromia
- 5) The State of Somalia
- 6) The State of Benshangul/Gumuz
- 7) The State of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples
- 8) The State of the Gambela Peoples
- 9) The State of the Harari People (ibid, Article 47).

The 1994 Ethiopian constitution also announces, the Ethiopian government as a bicameral parliamentary system; the House of Peoples Representatives (the lower house), entitled with legislative power, and the House of Federation (the upper house), mandated with less legislative role, It is empowered to interpret the constitution and issues related to the Ethiopian federation. Members of House of Peoples Representatives are directly elected by the people for five years term, whereas members of the House of Federation are elected by regional councils and are representatives of each nationalities. Each nationality has at least one representative in House of Federation and it would be given one more seat for every million additional population. (ibid, Article 45, 54, 61). The new Ethiopian constitution is generally considered as democratic and it includes internationally recognized human rights. Even 1/3 of the constitution is devoted for human rights.

3.3. The 1995 National and Regional Elections.

The 7 May 1995 National and Regional elections was the first elections after the ratification of new constitution in December 1994. In all regions except three, where there had been boundary disputes, elections had taken place. But there was no difference in election outcomes: EPRDF won 96.6 % of seats in the new parliament (House of People's Representatives) and in the regional assemblies. The political environment was not favorable for “fair” competition, as it had not been in the previous elections. The All-Amhara People's Organization, the Southern Coalition, and the Coalition of Alternative Forces for Peace and Democracy in Ethiopia, “all refused to participate in the electoral process from an early date. In addition, the Oromo Liberation Front and the Coalition of Ethiopian Democratic Forces were no longer formally operating as political parties within the

country.”(Joireman 1997, 402-403). Thus, we can conclude EPRDF dominated the parliamentary seats without competition from strong opposition parties.

Therefore, the landslide victory of EPRDF in 7th of May 1995 elections did not reflect its popularity and acceptance by the public. Rather it was a combination of many factors. First; the weakness and nonexistence of strong opposition parties, secondly the EPRDF itself had put several obstacles against potential contenders in the elections. Thus the elections result could not be seen as a surprise (ibid).

In addition to the above stated reasons, because of the absence of a strong participative political culture, most voters were apathetic to elections and related activities. Rural residents believed that showing antigovernment stance and inclination towards the opposition parties had high repercussions. Thus they felt forced to cast their vote for the EPRDF. Intimidation of opposition party candidates were common through the country. In addition, EPRDF used a tactic of nominating its own supporters to run for elections as “independent candidates to avoid the impression of non-competitive election” (ICG 2009, 7-8).

As part of its strategy to earn international legitimacy and to enhance its image, EPRDF allowed a number of newspaper and magazines to flourish in the post 1991 period. But in reality, they were under serious pressures. The EPRDF government adopted various strategies to cool down these media outlets by using legal and legislative measures to intimidate and arrest journalists. The state media; Ethiopia Radio and Television, was used to disseminate EPRDF’s propaganda against claims of opposition parties. The restrictive measures against media outlets that are critical of the EPRDF, reached its climax in the post 2005 election period (Stremlau 2011, 716,724). Now the media is one of the sectors which are highly dominated by EPRDF. There is no room for those independent and critical voices against the ruling party policies.

3.4. The 2000 National and Regional Elections.

Even if, the number of political parties participated in the 2000 elections increased, most opposition parties boycotted it, as they did in the previous elections, because of its unfair

competition ground (HRW 2010, 11). Those who competed for it had not been able to gain significant number of seats in the EPRDF dominated parliament (ICG 2009, 8). Opposition parties could only get 12 out of 547 seats in the House of Peoples Representatives (Federal Parliament). There was no real improvement of democratic system and multi-party competition (HRW 2010, 11; Smith 2007, 3).

McMahon, Beale and Menelik-Swanson in their assessment of the Ethiopian 2000 elections summarize the views that argued for the existence of democratic transition in the country and put it in the following manner:

The ruling EPRDF is undertaking a far-reaching effort to introduce pluralism into the country's political culture. This view holds that democracy takes time to develop, especially in Ethiopia, where there has been no prior experience with democracy, only autocratic imperial rule and the horrific experience of the Marxist *Derg* dictatorship that ruled Ethiopia from 1974 until 1991. The country's low level of per capita income, lack of a significant middle class, fractious ethnic make-up, weak civil society and frail political opposition—which lacks a democratic political culture—are all factors that complicate the challenge of democratic development. The ruling party is moving ahead with all due speed to promote political pluralism. People who hold this perspective argue that there is more pluralism than ever in the history of the country. They also emphasize the existence of political parties, a growing civil society, an independent press and even the promised imminent advent of independent FM radio stations [as sign of democratic development]. (2004, 5-6).

Nega and Milofsky also share the above claims and confirm that, 1990s had shown a positive development with regard to democratic institutions (2011, 35).

But we can understand from the above arguments that this approach is simplistic like that of the minimalist understanding of democracy. They try to show the mere existence of some democratic institutions like press, civil society, and political parties as a manifestation of democratic governance. The question is how much these institutions are free to run their affairs, and how much they are strong and independent from government's pressures?

McMahon, Beale and Menelik-Swanson also put their observation that, there had been many election “irregularities”, cheating of ballot box, biased election officials, lack of transparent procedures, a flawed election law and a partisan National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), dominance of public media by EPRDF, intimidations and killing, especially outside the capital city, Addis Ababa. Thus, it is clear that Opposition parties were not in equal position to challenge EPRDF (2004, 6).

To summarize, Ethiopia’s democratic transition since 1991 has shown some kind of positive development with regard to democratic institutions. Ethiopia has a democratic constitution which guarantees basic civil and political rights. There are also democratic institutions like a bi- cameral parliament, Election Board, “independent judiciary”, Public Ombudsman Office, Human Rights Commission, civil society, media, political parties etc. However, none of these democratic institutions were able to contribute their expected role to country’s democracy and could not be able to minimize the hegemonic domination of EPRDF in all sectors of the public life.

In 2005 Ethiopia has experienced a historic incident. In the 2005 national and regional elections EPRDF showed some kind of political openness and there had been relatively broader space for political parties, civil society and media. They all played a considerable role for that historic event. Opposition parties were allowed to use public media; civil society had contributed in mobilizing the public, giving civic education, participating in election observation; the local print media served as a means of criticizing the major policies of the ruling party, and as a means of transmitting the policy alternatives of the opposition parties, thus helped the public to decide rationally based on enough information (Aalen and Tronvoll 2008, 112; Lyons 2006, 1). But the post-election period has showed a significant shift from the pre-election democratic environment. EPRDF once again began to narrow the “opened space”, it had shown in the pre-election period. Serious measures have been taken against protesters, opposition political parties, civil society, NGOs, and media. Now Ethiopia’s democratic situation rates among the worst in the world and EPRDF controls all sectors of the public life.

CHAPTER FOUR.

4. The 2005 Ethiopian “Historic” Elections.

The 2005 elections were the third in post 1991 period. As we have discussed in the previous chapter, the earlier elections did not qualify the “free and fair” election criteria. But the 2005 election has its own unique features from the previous ones. Most observers agree that the 2005 elections have showed some positive development specially, in the pre-election period there was broader political space than ever before.

4.1. What Makes The 2005 Election Unique From The Preceding Elections?

The 2005 Federal and regional elections were the first ever elections that were; most competitive, controversial, and preceded by relatively peaceful debate and campaign but ended up with violence (Abbink 2006, 176; Lefort 2007, 261; ICG 2009, 8). The 2005 elections were also unique that most electorate did not boycott it, as they did in the earlier elections (Lyons 2011, 5; Lefort 2007, 261). “People felt that change was possible, and they were prepared to stand in line for many hours. This in itself was a big gain for democracy in the country” (Abbink 2006, 183). “The Ethiopian people recognized this opportunity and turned out in overwhelming numbers to vote, forcing some polling stations in Addis Ababa to stay open 24 hours to accommodate those in line.” (Lyons 2005, 2). The 2005 election was a historic opening of “democratic space” for political parties, media, civil society and political parties, despite the fact that there had been some limitations in some areas (HRW 2010, 12; Lyons 2011, 1; EU 2005, 1). There were some who argue that EPRDF’s willingness to open the political space was not genuine and did not emanate from its concern of introducing democratic reforms but it was a simple gesture to lesser the pressures coming from western donor states (Abbink,2006,181; Milkias 2011,94; Lunn 2009,4). There was also a wrong assumption that farmers [85% of the total population] would vote for EPRDF because according to EPRDF, farmers had benefited most from the regime than other segments of the society (ICG 2009, 8).

Due to EPRDF's intention to show the international community that Ethiopia is to make the 2005 elections "more fair", the Ethiopian government invited some International Election Observation Teams. Carter Center was one of the groups invited by the Ethiopian government. The Carter Center describes the pre-election period as such: EPRDF for the first time was willing to negotiate with opposition parties and positively responded to some of their demands such as, inviting international observers, freeing access to state-run media. However EPRDF rejected opposition parties' demand to change the electoral system from a single-member plurality formula (simple majority) to proportional representation, and their demand of reforming the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) (Lyons 2006, 2; Carter Center 2005, 2; Woldeyohannes 2011, 60). The minimum 500 signature requirement for party candidates had been cancelled; the five years residence requirement for candidates was also reduced to two years. These reforms helped opposition parties and independent candidates to run for election more easily than before. Consequently they helped citizens to choose among alternatives (Carter Center 2005, 2-3; Milkias 2011, 94).

There had been 37 political parties registered to run in the 2005 elections. Ethiopian political parties are three types. The ruling coalition party (EPRDF), regional parties affiliated to EPRDF, and the third category is the other opposition parties of different kind (Carter Center 2009, 16). Some of the opposition parties totally disagree with the ideology and policies of EPRDF, while some others have a minor ideological differences. They oppose EPRDF mainly because of its weakness in implementing policy and related administrative problems. However the powerful opposition coalition party, CUD had major ideological and policy differences with the EPRDF. Firstly, CUD did not support Article 39 of Ethiopian constitution which grants regional states the right to "self-determination up to secession." Secondly, CUD was against the ethno-linguistic federal system rather it propagated geographical federalism. Thirdly, CUD was more "liberal" in terms of economic policies. It encouraged minimal government interference in the economy contrary to the EPRDF.

Till 2005 opposition parties had not had much significance in Ethiopian politics. However, in the 2005 elections, there were two main opposition parties, the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD, a coalition of 4 political parties) and the United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF

composed of 12 political parties) that had much public support, and challenged the EPRDF in the election campaigning period (HRW 2010, 12; Carter Center 2009, 16). These political parties were also able to win 1/3 of the federal parliament seats, which was a major breakthrough in the history of Ethiopian political parties.

4.1.1. The Role of Local Media in 2005 Elections.

The media had played substantial role in making the 2005 elections more competitive by providing relevant information about the alternative policies of the opposition parties (Abbay 2009, 178; Human Right Watch 2010, 12). The live televised debates between EPRDF and major opposition parties on their major policies helped citizens to change their perception that, the incumbent government can never be challenged by peaceful means. “In the context of Ethiopia, it is difficult to overstate just how unprecedented and remarkable all of this was; the country had never before witnessed a comparable opening up of political space and public debate.”(Human Right Watch 2010, 12).

In the last days of elections campaigning some racist discourse and hate speeches had been observed from both directions. While the main opposition party, CUD, called for “cast-away” the Tigray ethnic group, the people where EPRDF’s main coalition party, TPLF comes from, EPRDF tried to associate the CUD with Amhara ethnic group and blame them as if CUD planned to bring back the old type of political system that had been dominated by the Amhara ethnic group. EPRDF also tried to relate opposition parties with the Interahamwe [the group criticized for igniting the Rwandan Genocide in 1994]. With the exception of such incidents, the pre-election campaign was generally peaceful and add positive contribution to Ethiopia’s democracy (Abbink 2006, 182; HRW 2010, 12-13).

It was also noticed that, some media was biased either to opposition or to EPRDF and lacked objectivity and professionalism. With the exception of such minor constraints, the media had been serving as a vital instrument of transmitting relevant information in the election period (Abbink, 2006, 182; Human Right Watch 2010, 12-13).

4.1.2. The Role of Civil Society in 2005 Elections.

For the first time in Ethiopian history, civil society massively participated in the 2005 elections by giving voters education, one of the factors that instigated the increase in voters turnout to 90 % (HRW 2010,12; Carter Center 2005 ,2 Teshome 2009, 80) According to Kassahun, 87% of the NGO's operating in Ethiopia since 1991 primarily focused on relief programs. Till 2005 their contribution to democratization in Ethiopia was insignificant (2002, 125,129 cited in Teshome 2009, 84). Some of their contribution in 2005 elections has been noted by Teshome as follows:

The two most important civil society organizations that played a very significant role in the elections were CRDA (Christian Relief and Development Association) and the EHRCO (Ethiopian Human Rights Council). “*Fafen*” Development, a local NGO gave election-related training to the public in the Somali State election. Another NGO called VECOD deployed 200 election observers. Moreover, in the pre-election period, VECOD had offered voters a civic education to over 630,000 Ethiopians in East and West Gojam, Awi, North Shoa and Oromo zones of the Amhara State, and in Kirkos sub city in Addis Ababa (Teshome 2009, 84).

Because of government's limited capacity to fulfill all the activities related to democracy, the Ethiopian NGO's and civic organizations had shared the burden of the government by giving civic education to different sectors of the societies. The Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association and the Ethiopian Media Women's Association had been working on empowering women. In the 2005 pre-election period Ethiopian women were relatively weak in political participation. But because of many interrelated factors women participation was not much less than men's as it had been in the previous periods (Abbay 2009, 181).

Regardless of the positive developments in pre-elections period, the pre-election process itself was not free from difficulties. The Carter Center points out some of the critical problems and/or limitations observed in the pre-election campaign period as follows:

- Carter Center observers heard and investigated many allegations of violence and intimidation during the campaign and pre-election period, some of which proved to be credible while others were exaggerated. In the instances where claims of violence or

intimidation were credible, our observers noted a climate in which candidates felt constrained to campaign and voters to choose without fear of repercussions.

- The campaign started out at a high level, focusing on issues rather than personalities, but degenerated in its final weeks into charges and countercharges of engaging in ethnic “hate speech.”
- Allegations of opposition plots to undermine the election even as it participated were disturbing, as were continued threats of opposition withdrawal throughout the campaign, the complaints process, and the re-elections.
- The NEBE imposed severe restrictions on domestic election observation. On the eve of the election the Supreme Court overturned the NEBE’s regulations on the types of domestic organizations it was prepared to grant credentials for election monitoring, but by then it was too late for domestic observers to deploy widely. Observer reports by these groups might have helped to reduce the complaints and confusion that emerged during the election.
- Due to logistical constraints, Carter Center observer teams were deployed to largely urban areas. Coverage of the more rural areas of the country was limited (Carter Center 2005, 4).

The Carter Center has also observed that opposition political parties suffered from lack of resources to finance their campaigning and related costs. It was only CUD and UEDF, which were able to get financial assistance from Ethiopian Diasporas that were relatively in a better position to cover up their campaigning costs (Carter Center 2009, 17).

4.2. The Official Elections Results and International Elections Observation Team’s Positions On 2005’s Elections.

The unprecedented and historic elections of 2005 ended up with full of disagreements. Both the EPRDF and the major opposition parties, CUD and UEDF, claimed victory before the official results were announced by NEBE. Later in September 5/2005 NEBE released the official elections report. Accordingly, EPRDF and its allies won 367 seats (67%), while the main opposition parties, CUD 109 seats, EUDF 52 seats, Oromo Federal Democratic Movement (OFDM) 11 seats. The three opposition parties all together won 172 (31 %) seats in the Federal Parliament. However,

CUD and UEDF won a landslide victory in major cities including the capital, Addis Ababa. But EPRDF got majority of seats in the Federal Parliament and other regional governments (Aalen, and Tronvoll 2008, 112; Lyons 2006, 2-3).

Despite the fact that opposition parties increased their seats from 12 in 2000 elections to 172 in 2005, they refused to accept the election results and demanded re-voting in most of the constituencies, where alleged irregularities had been observed (Abbink 2006, 184).

Following the complaints raised by both the opposition and the ruling party, NEBE decided to conduct reelections in some constituencies. But the Carter Center observed that in such cases there had been security officers and police forces in the polling station which had an intimidating impact on voters (Carter Center 2005, 9). The mere presence of security officers by itself may not had a negative effect on voter's preferences, but when we consider Ethiopian political culture and the attitude towards to police and security officers, we can understand its real impacts. In Ethiopian history, police and security officers are always protectors of the existing regime, not the state or the public interest. Thus, it was true that the existence of security and police officers had terrorizing impacts on voters' preferences. The international elections observation mission from Carter Center also identified that there had been serious problems with counting and tabulation. But the observing team did not dare to accept the victory claim by opposition parties (Lyons 2006, 2; Lunn 2009, 4).

The Carter Center released its overall assessment report of the 2005 Ethiopian elections in which it acknowledged the positive developments in the pre-election period. However, the Center concluded that the election cannot be considered as "free and fair". In explaining for such conclusion it states:

The May elections marked an historic event in the country, as Ethiopia witnessed its first genuinely competitive campaign period with multiple parties fielding strong candidates. Unfortunately, what began with a comparatively open period of campaigning and an orderly voting process on election day was followed by flawed counting and tabulation processes in many areas; repeated incidents of serious post-election violence, including the killing of many dozens of people during electoral protests; a significant delay in finalizing election results; and an ineffective complaints review and investigation

processes (Carter Center 2009, 3). In several constituencies at the polling station level we found evidence that ballot boxes had been improperly moved, were improperly secured, or that party agents had been barred from polling stations or not allowed to watch the entire count (ibid,5). In spite of the positive pre-election developments, therefore, The Carter Center concludes that the 2005 electoral process did not fulfill Ethiopia's obligations to ensure the exercise of political rights and freedoms necessary for genuinely democratic elections (ibid, 3).

The other international observation team, the European Union Elections Observation Mission also released its Final Report on 2005 Ethiopian Election as:

The 2005 parliamentary elections were the most competitive elections Ethiopia has experienced, with an unprecedented high voter turnout. However, while the pre-election period saw a number of positive developments and voting on 15 May was conducted in a peaceful and largely orderly manner, the counting and aggregation processes were marred by irregular practices, confusion and a lack of transparency. Subsequent complaints and appeals mechanisms did not provide an effective remedy. The human rights situation rapidly deteriorated in the post-election day period when dozens of citizens were killed by the police and thousands were arrested. Overall, therefore, the elections fell short of international principles for genuine democratic elections (EU 2005, 1).

Abbay argues against claims of post-election irregularities and delays of counting as a manifestation of "unfair" election. He argues that, there were only some technical problems which caused delays of vote counting. Ethiopia's infrastructure is among the lowest in the world, tabulated ballots cannot reach to the center soon as it can be in developed world. Secondly, the international observers were not able to visit most of rural election centers thus, it is not fair to conclude based on their limited observation in major cities and few other areas. Abbay also argues that Ethiopian peasants who live in rural areas [85%] did not want to take the risk of electing a new regime which they did not know; rather they "prefer continuity to change", therefore it was farmer's preference that made the incumbent to win the elections (Abbay 2009,182).

4.3. Post-Elections Protests and Government's Repressive Reaction.

On the night of May 15th, 2005 Prime Minister Mese Zenawi declared a ban on any protest in Addis Ababa for a month. (Carter Center 2005, 5). But, on June 6th, 2005 rejecting the prime minister's warning Addis Ababa University students began to protest the unofficial elections report that claimed EPRDF's victory. On June 8th, 2005 taxi drivers went on strike in Addis Ababa. All these protest movements had been crushed by military forces, hundreds have lost their lives and thousands had been detained for a certain period of time (Carter Center 2005, 5).

The post-election coercive measures by the government showed that EPRDF was shocked with the elections result. It had overestimated its popular support while ignoring the opposition's potential to get public support. In a number of demonstrations and protest movements since 16th of May the government forces reacted brutally. According to an official report only on June 6-8, 37 persons were put to death by the government forces. Some other reports increased the number of death as high as [200]. These ruthless measures taken by the government forces against protesters were seen as EPRDF commitment to stay in power by any means. That is why many observers commented their deep concern that Ethiopia's "infant democracy" is in a process of reversal since post 2005 elections period (Lyons 2006, 1-2; Lunn 2009, 5; Carter Center 2005, 5).

The EPRDF government has taken consecutive measures in the post-elections period against peaceful demonstrators, opposition party members, the media and civil society. Following the massive public protest in November 2005; 131 CUD party leaders, civil society leaders and journalist were arrested and charged with variety of offences including genocide and 'treason and outrages against the constitutional order'. During the November protest in Addis Ababa 30,000 people had been detained and jailed for two weeks without any charges. Finally, when they were released, they were warned not to involve in politics anymore (HRW 2010, 15-16; ICG 2009, 10; Abbink, 2006, 192; Lyons 2006, 1).

Furthermore, EPRDF began to "punish" those citizens who were perceived as supporters of the opposition parties and for being disloyal to the EPRDF in the 2005 poll. Especially, in rural areas, farmers had been denied of fertilizers and food aid because they cast their vote for the opposition (Abbink, 2006, 185). Generally, it can be concluded that the opened political space in 2005

elections ended up with arrest of most opposition party leaders, civil society members and critical voices have been silenced (Lyons 2006 ,1,6; Smith 2007,6; Human Right Watch 2005,2 ; Abbink 2009,16; Amnesty Int.l 2013,1). All these oppressive measures by the EPRDF shows that it had reverted back to pre-2005 periods' 'business as usual' (Abbink 2006, 191-192; Smith 2007, 6).

EPRDF's post electoral repressive behavior was also criticized by its major allies, USA and the EU. The US State Department in its annual report of countries' human rights situation, condemned the post-elections human rights handling of the EPRDF regime. "In the period following the elections, [Ethiopian] authorities arbitrarily detained, beat, and killed opposition members", the right to speak and assembly was highly restricted. NGOs and the media were also among the few targets of the regime's repressive measures (U.S. State Dep.2006, 1; Lyons 2006, 7-8). The EU also released similar report about the serious human rights violations in the post-elections period. "In the post-elections day period, the human rights situation deteriorated, starting with a blanket ban, issued immediately after the end of voting, on freedom of assembly in the capital." Harsh measures had been taken on those who broke the ban. The state media also announced EPRDF's victory before counting ended. Once again EPRDF began to monopolize the state media and opposition parties had no more opportunity to broadcast their voices to the public through the state media (EU 2005, 1). This tactic helped the EPRDF to interrupt the main communication tool between the opposition and their supporters in rural areas. Because most of the print media are concentrated in Addis Ababa and few other cities, the only means of accessing information for most of rural citizens were radio and television.

The post-elections condition once again drag back the public opinion that politics is not a concern of the majority, rather it is an issue of political elites. This public feeling has a longer psychological impact on the attitude towards elections and politics in general. Since then the culture of fear, malaise, and cynicism has begun to develop (Abbink 2006, 192-193)

Since 2005 many observers argue that the post- 2005 political development in Ethiopia has showed a backward move and the minor political space opened in 2005 elections has been closed. In short a reversal to authoritarianism has been observed in Ethiopia. The regime has introduced many restrictive laws to legalize its authoritarian rule. In 2005 elections the roles of private media and civil society organizations were significant. To restrict such influential role of media and civil

society and to discourage any critical voices, the regime has introduced a number of new laws: the Charities and Societies Proclamation (CSO law), Anti-Terrorism Proclamation and media and information law are the important ones. These new laws have many ambiguous articles and give wider mandate for the government to suppress opposition voices. The impact of these laws can be seen in the 2008 local elections and 2010 federal and regional elections in which, EPRDF won more than 96 % of the seats in the parliament. Due to these facts, the EPRDF government can be categorized as “electoral authoritarian regime.” Elections have no relevance except legitimizing the authoritarian rule of the EPRDF government.

CHAPTER FIVE.

5. Post- 2005 Political Developments: the Ratification of Restrictive Laws and the Elections of 2008 and 2010.

5.1. Post- 2005 Political Developments.

After the tragic elections of 2005 Ethiopia's political development has begun to reverse backward. Although the pre-elections period had shown a limited political openness, the post-elections political measures showed that the old style authoritarianism was coming back. Even in some instances it was worse than the pre-2005 period. What makes the post-elections period more serious is the EPRDF regime has drafted and ratified restrictive declarations to justify its autocratic measures.

5.2. The Ratification of Restrictive Laws.

The first legal measure the EPRDF government had taken in immediate post- 2005 period was to change the procedural rule in the parliament (House of Peoples' Representatives, HPR). According to the new rule, in order to decide an issue to be discussed in the parliament, it has to get 51% vote of the members of the parliament (MPs). Previously it was only 20 %. Since EPRDF had more than 50% of the seats, this rule made sure that unless EPRDF MPs agree on, no bill can be discussed in the parliament. Furthermore, a new rule also introduced to dismiss MPs out of the parliament's hole, when they use 'insulting and defamatory language' against the parliament or government officials and state institutions. These few cases clearly show how EPRDF was determined to narrow any political space for opposition parties even in the parliament (ICG 2009, 11; Abbink 2006, 185; Lyons 2006, 4).

More serious legislation has been introduced since 2008. The Ethiopian House of People's Representatives (HPR) ratified three controversial legislations, as part of legal measures to further narrow the democratic space in the country: the 2009 Charities and Societies Proclamation (Civil Society Organizations law) and the 2009 Anti-Terrorism Proclamation and the media law of 2008. All these laws are criticized for their restrictiveness and giving legal coverage for the government to threaten and intimidate its political opponents. These laws also give broader mandate for the

government to control the activities of civil society organizations and other democratic institutions (HRW 2010,19 ; Lyons 2011, 6) Tronvoll also describes the post 2005 period and the subsequent ratification of restrictive laws as a sign of authoritarian reversal. Tronvoll further elaborates his views as:

As numerous studies have shown, the post-2005 crackdown in Ethiopia had widespread consequences on governmental policies and how they restricted liberal values and democratic principles, in contradiction to the Ethiopian constitution and international instruments ratified by the country. By ratifying new restrictive legislation and adopting new policies aimed at curbing dissent, the government consciously developed a complex and multi-layered strategy to prevent the political opposition from consolidating and making further political and electoral advances. (Tronvoll 2010, 123)

Although a quarter of Ethiopian constitution is devoted to civil and political rights, they have not been executed yet and remain on paper. But in the pre-2005 elections period some political openness and little democratic space had been showed, though it soon disappeared in the immediate post-elections period. Now it can be said, there is little if any, democratic space left for opposition parties, civil society, and media.

5.2.1. Anti-Terrorism Proclamation (2009)

Anti-terrorism proclamation is one of the most controversial laws declared in the post- 2005 period that has serious repercussions on citizens' democratic rights. According to Amnesty International and Freedom House, the law puts constraints on the right to speech, the right to association and the right to free trial. In the Proclamation, the "acts of terrorism" are defined vaguely and broadly for interpretations, in which any activities of journalism, activism and criticism against the government can be considered as an act of terrorism (Amnesty International 2010, 3-4; Freedom House 2012, 1; HRW 2010, 50). Anyone convicted of terrorism charges can be sentenced from 15 years to life imprisonment; sometime it can also extend to death penalty (Anti-Terrorism Declaration 2009, 4830). It can be indispensable for a country to endorse legal instruments to deal with such a new phenomenon of terrorism, the real motives of Ethiopia's government to endorse such a law does not seem to deal with a potential threat of terrorism against the state and the people, rather this law has been serving as a terrorizing tool of the regime against its opponents. If the

government wants to charge a terrorism case against someone or an organization, the proclamation gives fitting legal explanation for any activity and action of opposition movements.

Right after the ratification of the Anti-Terrorism law, in November 2009 a major newspaper, *Addis Neger*, was forced to be closed when its producers and reporters fled the country after they received a threat of arrest using this new legislation. (Amnesty International 2010, 3; HRW 2010, 51). Only in 2011 more than 100 individuals including political activists and journalists had been detained for several months before charges (Freedom House 2012, 1; State Dep.2011, 1). Anti-terrorism proclamation is simply a political tool of the EPRDF to threaten opposition forces to keep them silent (Freedom House 2012, 1).

Many other journalists and activists have been arrested for alleged crime of terrorism. However, Amnesty International claims many of them have nothing to do with act of terrorism. Their main reasons of detention are: writing articles critical of the ruling party and government, requesting reforms and initiating peaceful demonstration to protest the violation of human rights in the country (Amnesty Int.l 2012, 2). Only from June 2011 to January 2012, the well-known journalists, Eskendir Nega, Reyot Alemu, Woubshet Taye and Elias Kifle; opposition party leaders, Bekele Gerba , Olbana Lelisa , Andualem Arage and Zerihun Gebre-Egziabher (members of the opposition Ethiopian National Democratic Party) were convicted of terrorism offences and were sentenced for ranging from three years to life sentences (Amnesty Int.l 2013,23). Most of the suspected criminals of terrorism cases and “convinced” ones for this act are political actors: political party members, journalists, activists. How could this happen unless there is a deliberate calculation of the regime against its opponents?

On May 2012, referring to the mandate given in the Anti-Terrorism Declaration the Ethiopian authorities further issued a directive which authorizes for printing enterprises to “edit” or remove any “illegal” content of any publications (Amnesty Int.l 2013, 3). Anti-Terrorism Declaration also states that any article or piece of publication can be considered as an act of terrorism if that piece of publication inspires the public to protest or is to be misunderstood by the public in a wrong way other than the writer’s intention and lead to some kind of reactions. This kind of act can be punishable ranging from 10 to 20 years of sentence (2009 Article 6).

According to article 23/2 of this law, hearsay or indirect evidences are applicable for the case of terrorism suspects. The declaration also gives permission to the public prosecutor not to disclose the identity of its witnesses if the life of the witnesses are “endangered” (Article 32). As it can be understood from the above articles the law is open for abuse. It gives the regime to detain any person and can use any person as witness without openly stating the identity of the witness. Practically there are many “terrorism suspects” who do not know exactly who are the witnesses against their charge.

The National Intelligence and Security Service of Ethiopia is also mandated by this declaration to intercept individual telephone lines and other communication means, enter into homes of suspected individuals and put secret recording instruments (Anti-Terrorism Declaration 2009 Article 14). Although all these kind of security related undertakings are common even in those developed democratic countries, what makes the Ethiopian case unique is that the main intention of these interceptions and related activities are used to spy opponents of the regime and to justify the coercive measures of the EPRDF regime and silent opposition. How can journalists, political party leaders and activists be the most suspected criminals by this law? Now an environment of fear has widespread. Everyone fears not only to criticize the ruling party and the government, but also to comment on any political issues.

5.2.2. The 2009 Charities and Societies Proclamation /CSO or NGO’s Law/

The other legislation enacted in the post -2005 period which further narrows the political space is the Charities and Societies Proclamation (Civil Society Organizations /NGOs law). Most of NGOs and civil society had substantial role in facilitating a democratic competition in the 2005 elections period. Thus, the government endorsement of this law is considered as a reaction to minimize the potential role of the civil society in Ethiopia’s democratization to the lowest level. As the result of this law CSOs are made out of service concerning democracy and good governance issues. These issues are now exclusively left to government. Due to this situation it can be said CSOs had no role at all in the 2010 elections and the country’s democratization process in general.

Civil society has a short history in Ethiopia. Thus, it can be said they have little contribution to Ethiopian democratization process. However, the partial space opened in the pre-2005 elections period had given a golden opportunity to show how much CSOs can contribute to competitive election environment and Ethiopia's democratic development. Unfortunately EPRDF like other dictatorial regimes is not happy to see any potential threat to its power, it began to further weaken CSOs in post-elections period. In view of EPRDF, CSOs are supporters of opposition parties thus, should be made handicapped with legal and administrative barriers. Consequently, the House of Peoples' Representative (the parliament), ratified the Charities and Societies Proclamation in January 2009. This law purposely put limits on CSOs to engage in activities of human right and democratization (HRW 2010, 39, 44; State Dep.2011, 1).

Nega and Milofsky argue that in post-1991 period the new EPRDF government initially offered constitutional recognition for civil society and NGOs. Such kinds of reform measures in earlier period helped the regime to enhance its legitimacy in the international community. But after the ERPFD consolidated its power it began to reverse its nominal support, and rather began to chase them to be dysfunctional. Thus, the 2009 CSO law is the latest effort of the EPRDF to minimize influence of NGOs in the country's democratic process (Nega and Milofsky 2011, 35). Nega and Milofsky after exploring the CSO law they conclude:

Ethiopians working in the field are unanimous in their view that the main target of the law is local-level civil society and advocacy organizations. Others contend that the law has a much broader objective to create an environment of fear in the CSO community and ensure some sort of self-censorship in their activities by using the law as a scarecrow that can be selectively applied to ensure compliance. What is clear is that this law is part of a larger campaign by the government to ensure that there will be no independent organizations of any type that can potentially challenge the firm totalitarian grip it has established on the Ethiopian society since the 2005 electoral debacle, which the opposition claimed had been stolen from them by government electoral fraud. (Nega and Milofsky 2011, 44-45).

The Charity and Society Declaration classified CSOs in to three groups: domestic CSOs (NGOs) are those established under Ethiopian law and all members must be Ethiopians. The second type is Ethiopian resident NGOs which are also established under Ethiopian law but both Ethiopians and non-Ethiopian can be members and get more than 10 % of their budget from outside sources.

The third category is foreign NGOs that are established based on foreign law and their fund comes from outside sources. (Charities and Societies Proclamation 2009 , Article 2/2,2/3,2/4) The law strictly prohibits any foreign and “Ethiopian resident” NGOs to engage in activities related to human rights, good governance, conflict resolution and related activities. The law also puts limit on the amount of funds that Ethiopian NGOs can receive from external sources. Any Ethiopian NGOs that are engaged in activities related to human rights and democracy cannot receive more than 10 % of their total budget from outside sources including Ethiopian diaspora groups and they cannot receive any fund form anonymous sources either. As it is tough to collect such huge money domestically, 90% of the local NGOs in Ethiopia receive their budget from outside sources like Ethiopian diasporas and other western donors thus, the law puts serious existential threat on many of the Ethiopian NGOs. As a result many of the NGOs have either changed their areas of focus form democracy related activities to other areas or, they are totally shut down. (CSOs Law article 2/2, 2/15; Mulat, Hopkins, and Noble 2009, 4-5; Nega and Milofsky 2011, 45; EU Mission 2010, 8; .Teshome 2009, 89; Abbink 2009, 16-17). Some other leading NGOs like the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) and the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association decided to scale back their operations, EHRCO curtailed 9 out of 12 offices and 75% of its labor forces. But in its previous capacity EHRCO had been giving civic education, conducting human rights monitoring and investigating human rights violations from its 12 offices throughout Ethiopia (Amnesty International 2012, 2).

The CSO law claims that the main purpose of its enactment is to realize the constitutionally guaranteed citizens’ rights to assembly. But in reality the law has a negative impact on citizens’ right to form association and engage in activities citizens are interested in. It endangers the activities of human rights and democracy in the country (Mulat, Hopkins, and Noble 2009,4).The main reasons behind the new CSO law is firstly, the greedy interest of the EPRDF government to monopolize all activities related to democracy and related matters without substantial interference from others. Secondly, due to the punitive measures taken by the EPRDF government in the post-2005 period made donors to shift their channels of transferring economic aids from government structures to NGOs/CSOs. Thus in retaliation to donor action the EPRDF adopted the new law to show that donors have no other alternative but only the governmental channels to distribute economic aid (Teshome 2009, 91 Freedom House 2010,4-5).

According to government of Ethiopia the main reason of banning foreign NGOs to engage in democracy related activities is that they are not accountable to Ethiopian people or government but rather to their donors out of Ethiopia. Secondly, most foreign NGOs have hidden agendas of collecting information and send them to their sending states. Thus they should not be allowed to influence domestic politics by their money that is coming from abroad (Mulat, Hopkins, and Noble 2009, 5; HRW 2010, 45).

However, Mulat, Hopkins, and Noble, strongly argue against the government claim for the ban on the maximum amount of money Ethiopian NGOs could get from abroad. As long as the source is legal it should not be banned to receive funds from outside sources to realize constitutionally guaranteed democratic rights (Mulat, Hopkins, and Noble 2009, 8).

Nega and Milofsky criticized the CSO law not only because it is restrictive but also for its being contradictory to the basic human rights guaranteed in country's constitution and other international obligations that Ethiopia is signatory to (Nega and Milofsky 2011, 44). The EPRDF government does not trust any civil society organizations that are not under its control and hunting of CSOs has not started only in post-2005 period. Ever since EPRDF came to power it has never treated CSOs as democratic allies (Mulat, Hopkins, and Noble 2009, 4; Nega and Milofsky 2011, 45; Teshome 2009, 84-85; HRW 2010, 40). They have been considered as supporters of the opposition parties and spies to foreign actors. For example, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) established in 1991, had been engaged in: civic education, and human rights advocacy and monitoring, but it had been denied to get its license for seven years. The Ethiopian Free Press Journalists Association, which was established in 1993 was also able to get its license only in 2001. (Mulat, Hopkins, and Noble 2009, 4; Teshome 2009, 86). EPRDF's extensive effort to weaken strong civil society is successful in post 2005 period. It was able to replace the independent Teachers Association with its own artificial ones. *HUNDEE* and *Mecha Tulema*, welfare associations actively engaged in Oromia region were silenced in 2008. Most of its leaders were charged with "orchestrating violence against the government", and now the organization is nonexistent (HRW 2010, 40; McMahon, Beale and Menelik-Swanson 2004, 7).

Similarly the Ethiopian Women Lawyers' Association(EWLA) one of the eminent local NGOs, which used to give free legal aid to victims of violence and advocates for the elimination of discrimination against women, had been victim of the government measures. In 2001 the government accused EWLA for its acting "beyond" its mandate when the EWLA questioned the independence of judicial system and criticize the government for its failure to take corrective action on those charged with crime against women's rights. Following such incidents EWLA had been closed by the government (Mulat, Hopkins, and Noble 2009 ,4-5) .Thus the enactment of the CSO law is simply a legal means to support the systematic action of the government to calm down the louder voices of CSOs (Mulat, Hopkins, and Noble 2009 ,4;Teshome 2009, 86).

The charity and society law puts many local NGOs into dilemmas, Mulat, Hopkins, and Noble point out how this law puts many of these NGOs into crises. To illustrate the situation they discuss the case of EHRCO as follows:

The CSO law's distinctions between "Ethiopian", "Ethiopian Resident" and "Foreign" NGOs have far-reaching consequences. Article 2(2)-(3) of the CSO law, when read in conjunction with article 14(2) (j)-(n), effectively muzzles the activities of independent civil society organizations and human rights defenders. For instance, EHRCO has several members and support committees in the major cities of Europe, the United States and Canada. Under the CSO law, it cannot continue operating under its current structure and will be forced to choose between two alternatives, both of which would effectively require EHRCO to disengage from human rights monitoring and investigation. If EHRCO wants to retain its current members and receive their financial support, it will be required to register under the new law as a Foreign Charity/Society and abandon its work in the fields of human rights promotion and the rule of law. In the alternative, EHRCO could revoke its foreign memberships, stop accepting membership fees from those individuals and attempt to continue its core activities, i.e. monitoring and investigating human rights abuses in the country, after losing the source of up to 99 % of its funds. Under either scenario, the CSO law would effectively force EHRCO to cease its human rights activities (Mulat, Hopkins, and Noble 2009, 5-6).

The other vague restriction on the CSO law is that Ethiopian NGOs are not allowed to spend more than 30% of their budget for administrative purposes (Article 88/1). This provision does not have a problem rather it may help to increase the amount of money that reaches on the ground. But the problem is what these "administrative costs?" Are the costs related to human rights monitoring,

legal counseling to the poor, investigation of human rights violations and other advocacy activities regarded as administrative costs? If so almost all expenses of some NGOs who works on human right areas, may be regarded as administrative cost, which is not allowed by the law (Amnesty International 2012, 1).

The Charity and Civil Society Agency has a mandate to investigate any CSOs and can order to suspend any officer in the CSO, if it believes that, there is a mismanagement or misconduct of behavior in that institution (Article 90). Article 98 of the law also puts limitations on civil society organization not to conduct a fund raising program unless they obtain a permission from the concerned authorities. This is how the CSO law made the activities of NGOs very difficult.

The broader mandate given for the Charities and Societies Agency, the responsible governmental organ, to follow up implementation of the declaration includes government surveillance and direct involvement in the running of organizations.(CSO Law 2009 Article,84,85) In addition what makes the power of the Agency more hazardous is that, NGOs have to give any details of their human rights investigation reports including “testimonies of victims of violations, contravening the essential principle of confidentiality and potentially further endangering victims of human rights violations.” (Amnesty International 2012, 1; CSO Law 2009 Article, 84, 85).However, the government claims the main reason for the adoption of CSO law is the need to separate politics and NGO activities. The law aims to prohibit the external power (foreign funding) from influencing domestic politics. Of course, even in most developed democracies NGOs are not allowed to involve in direct politics. There are also similar administrative procedures of registration and reporting to concerned authorities. But in no way CSOs are restricted to engage in areas of democracy and good governance as in Ethiopia (HRW 2010, 53).

Although the CSO law has been criticized by local and foreign NGOs, opposition political parties, donors and international human rights institutions, the Ethiopian government insists that the CSO law has much benefit than what others claim it to be. It argues that the new law would help to increase the transparency and accountability of NGOs to the stakeholders. It further argues that the proclamation would “help the institutions [CSOs] to become efficient, and avoid their shortcomings and ethical problems in the area” (Teshome 2009, 89).

Former prime minister of Ethiopia , Melse Zenawi said to Human Rights Watch that, most NGOs are not member-based, are accountable to their foreign donors, and they even write their report in English. They are primarily agents of their foreign masters. According to Melse, these kind of NGOs cannot help Ethiopia's democratization. On the other hand, Human Rights Watch claims, though some of the above criticism against some NGOs could be factual, there are many others domestic based CSOs like the Ethiopian Teachers' Association (a membership-based association of more than 80,000 teachers at its peak), the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association, and the Ethiopian Human Rights Council, which are member based and staffed by Ethiopians but have become victims of the new CSO law (HRW 2010, 53).

5.2.3. Media and Their Bounded Role in the Post 2005 Period/ Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation.

As we have discussed in the chapter two of this thesis, media is one of the essential institutions that help to realize democratic transition and consolidation. The role of Ethiopian media to Ethiopia's democracy is insignificant except their substantial contribution in pre-2005 elections period. However in the post-elections period these media had lost their power and are still under the strict control of the ruling party. Since then it is difficult to find an independent media which dare to criticize the government. Now independent media which are critical of the government are either out of market or those which still exist censor themselves and do not dare to talk/write about the serious human rights violations committed by the EPRDF government.

In post-elections period, not only the print media but also many of websites which were critical of the government have been blocked. There are only few private media which have continued their publications; *Fortune* and *The Reporter* are the major one but even these newspaper are not critical of the government as other private newspaper had been. In the post-elections period several editors and publishers had been charged and imprisoned for publishing "provocative" articles. Thus the Committee to Protect Journalist (CPJ) had categorized Ethiopia among "the world's worst backslider on press freedom and second only to Eritrea as the leading jailer of reporters in 2007" (Smith 2007,6-7 ; Abbink 2009,16 ;Freedom House 2009,4; Stremlau 2011,717). [But still Ethiopia's status on press freedom is among the worst].

Ethiopia introduced a new media law in 2008. This law has replaced the 1992's law. Although there are some positive developments in the new law, there are also several more restrictive articles than its predecessor. While the new law [article 43/1] guaranteed access to any government information and abandoned the article which allows the government to imprison journalists before charge, [Article 42/2] gives broader mandate to public prosecutor to order to stop any publication when it assumes that the publication has a content, against the "national security"; [Article 43(7)] of the new law also gives broader mandate to prosecutor to charge "defamation" cases against private publications. Thus, "Defamation of government officials is criminalized, even without the alleged victim being required to file a complaint. In addition, the associated fines have been increased from about \$60 to nearly \$6,000." (Freedom House 2011, 4, 9). Freedom House further explains how the new law impacts the private media:

The fear of prosecution provoked by such cases has led journalists to exercise greater self-censorship; combined with state control of most media, Ethiopians have few alternative sources of information. The government began jamming radio signals for Voice of America and Deutsche Welle prior to the 2010 national elections. Although a relatively small percentage of the urban population has access to the internet, the Ethiopian Telecommunications Corporation, the state monopoly that is the country's sole internet provider, uses web-filtering technology to block websites critical of the regime, many of which are run by Ethiopians in the diaspora. Reporters Without Borders has identified Ethiopia as one of 15 global "internet enemies." (Freedom House 2011, 10).

On the opposite side Abbay argues for the new press law. He claims that there has to be some limit on publications and anyone should not be allowed to write whatever he/she wants. In order to support his argument he reminds how the private press used to contribute in the 2005 elections period [some media were used to propagate hate propagandas of one ethnic group over another]. According to Abbay except the well respected and balanced newspaper like, *Addis Admas*, *Capital*, *Addis Fortune*, *Monitor*, and *Reporter*, most of private press had a destabilizing role of the state security. Thus he argues that, Ethiopia is not different from other countries in the world. In every country including developed democracies, there is a legal limitation of publication. For example in USA a press outlet cannot write something like 'let us kick the blacks, the African Americans, the Negros out'; such kind of message cannot be printed. In Europe too one cannot publish a

message which promotes the establishment of a Nazi party; ‘We need a killer again. Let us create the Nazi. The Jews are back.’. There is in the German law that forbids this kind of publication.”(Abbay 2009, 178). Of course, if there are such kinds of newspaper which provoke clashes and conflicts they should be investigated and be responsible for their acts. But the case in Ethiopian press is not as such simplistic. Most of the press outlets which have been made out of market are not because of their being guilty of such acts, rather it is their critical stance against the basic ideology and policies of the EPRDF.

In replaying to the regular criticism of jailing journalists, the government argues that journalist are not jailed because they are simply journalist. But when they violate laws they should be questioned like any individual. Journalists are not different by any means from other citizens. The former minister of information, Berkeket Simon, says “The country has no law that makes journalists immune to prosecution if and when they violate the law. Like any citizen they are accountable for their offences”; as they have freedom to thought they are also accountable to their deed (Abbay 2009, 179). Any rational mind never claims journalists should be free from prosecution if they commit illegal acts. The problem in post-2005 Ethiopia is any criticism of journalists against the regime can be interpreted as crime. That is how the law has been used as a legal coverage to dismantle any opposition and silence it.

The EPRDF’s pressure and intimidation is not limited against local journalists. It also extends to international media and their correspondents. Foreign correspondents are regularly threatened to be deported when they are found reporting something against the regime. In January 2010 one of the correspondents for Bloomberg was detained because he had interviewed some individuals in Tigray region that had been denied food aid for their support for the opposition parties. In addition, the Ethiopian government stopped its diplomatic relation with Qatar, claiming that the Qatar based Aljazeera television’s report on series of human rights violations in Ethiopian Ogaden region in 2008. But the government accused the station of supporting terrorists (HRW 2010, 51; ICG 2009, 21-22).

Now the media sector is highly dominated by the government. There is no privately owned television station [although there are only two radio stations that focus on entertainment rather

than political issues]. Most people that live in rural areas do not have alternative sources of information other than the state controlled broad cast media (Freedom House 2011, 8-9; HRW 2010, 52). The Voice of America and Deutsche Welle serve as an alternative source of information for many Ethiopians. Both stations broadcast in Amharic (the working language of the federal government), and in other local languages that have significant number of audiences. But whenever there are sensitive issues like elections, they are usually jammed by the EPRDF regime (Freedom House 2011, 8-9; HRW 2010, 52; ICG 2009, 21-22). On June 7, 2005 elections the Ethiopian ministry of information “revoked the accreditation of five Ethiopian journalists reporting for Voice of America and Deutsche Welle” (Sub Saharan Informer 9 September 2005 cited in Teshome 2009, 98).

Notwithstanding the increasing pressure from the government against the independent media, the internal and structural problems of the independent media and other related factors also take the share for the weakness of today’s private media sector:

the number of the independent newspapers in Ethiopia shrank in the post-election due to the general reduction of the quality of the independent media; the gradual slide of the media from independent or “neutral” position to party-mouth status reflecting the view of only the opposition parties; the failure of government or other public officials to give adequate information to the independent media; the ever-increasing publishing cost; and the absence of professional ethics among the journalists of the independent media.[contributed for their failure to be critical role player in the country’s democratic process.] (*Reporter, 7 Yekatit* 1999 EC cited in Teshome 2009, 100).

In addition, Ethiopian “independent” private media is also complicated with many ethical and professional problems:

The Ethiopia independent media has been libelous, uninvestigative, gullible, irresponsible and highly sensational. For some papers, the boundary between news reporting and news making is, in fact, blurred (Shimelis 2002: 201 quoted in Teshome 2009, 101). Although there are about 200 newspapers and magazines, few are independent or trustworthy news outlets. Before 2004, private papers like *Menelik*, *Addis Zena* and *Ethiop* advocated opposition viewpoints close to those of the CUD (ICG 2009, 21). Some of the private media tend to be partial and are unable to offer balanced views; spread rumors not facts; tend to exaggerate; sometimes fabricate; considerably fail to relate the headline and the rest of the story; lack journalistic knowledge, and hence are

profit seekers. (Desalegn 2004: 6; Lidetu 1998 EC: 132-135; Shimelis 2002: 201 quoted in Teshome 2009, 101).

Though the repressive measures taken by the government takes the lion's share, the private media itself has contributed to Ethiopia's weak private media sector. All in all, Ethiopian media is not in comfortable situation to contribute to the country's democratization process. Even those "independent" media that exist today are under pressure. They are afraid to deal with those issues that possibly anger the regime. Nowadays, the main concern of the media is not how to find an evidence for their reports, rather how to escape the terrorism charges by evading articles and reports that criticize the incumbent regime.

5.3. The 2008's Local Elections.

Local elections of 2008 attracted less attention of the public and the media than the previous elections of 2005 (ICG 2009, 12). Local administrative units give favorable condition to control the public at the grass root level. EPRDF had prepared itself to control the local elections since 2005. At its move to win the general elections in 2010, EPRDF had planned to control the local council in 2008. As a strategy it had been working to increase its party members. Surprisingly it was able to increase its party members to 4 million in 2008 from 760,000 in 2005 (HRW 2010, 16-18; Aalen, and Tronvoll 2008, 115). This high increase of party members was not registered because of the EPRDF was able to convince and mobilize towards its party program and policies. Rather it used a "carrot and stick" policy; in post- 2005 most citizens especially civil servants were obliged to choose either to be member of the EPRDF or to leave their job. Civil servants may not be directly forced to leave their job but when they refuse to be party member, they would never get any benefit of being an employee of that specific organization. Promotion, getting further education and training and other benefits were all based on membership and loyalty to the party. In addition, EPRDF nominates university student by promising them that they would be assured a job opportunity after graduation. Even access to microcredits service, a system that provides small capital to begin a small business is highly politicized. This was how EPRDF was able to increase its party members.

The April 2008's local elections had been dominated by intimidation and harassment against opposition party members as it had been in the previous elections. Referring back to the data of

the 2005 elections, EPRDF threatened those voted for the opposition parties. This kind of harassment and intimidation forced the main opposition parties to boycott and withdraw from elections and consequently made the EPRDF and its affiliated regional parties to win 99.9 % of *wereda* (county) and *kebele*⁴ (neighborhood) elections. This result clearly shows how EPRDF has returned back to its previous form of authoritarianism (HRW 2010, 3, 18, 19; Aalen, and Tronvoll 2008, 111-113; ICG 2009, 12; Lunn 2009, 5). However, the ruling party tried to explain the situation of the absence of competition in 2008 elections attributing it to internal problems of opposition parties and argued that opposition boycotting was simply a political tactic to “escape from defeat” (Aalen, and Tronvoll 2008, 113). It was true that after the CUP party leaders sent to jail in November 2005 there had been internal division and split in the party. But it was true that the EPRDF used that opportunity to further weaken major opposition parties (Aalen, and Tronvoll 2008, 111).

EPRDF also used the high turnout of 2008’s elections as a manifestation of its being democratic. According to the official figure even it is higher than the 2005 elections (93%). Under normal circumstances high turnout can be sign of public interest in politics and to some extent it may show the level of competitiveness of election. But the case in Ethiopia’s 2008 elections does not reflect this fact. Some scholars suspect the official figure for voter turnouts. While others also argue that the high turnout cannot indicate the level of its competitiveness. The public was pressured to register and cast their vote in various ways. In many areas it was considered as a pre-condition to get basic public service (Aalen, and Tronvoll 2008, 116). The public was fed up with politics and lost its hope of changing the government through ballot box. Thus participating in election had no more value than merely ritual exercise (ICG 2009, 12).

The intimidation and pressure against the opposition parties was worse in 2008’s local elections considering that these administrative units are more acquainted with the locals and they know the details of the dwellers. In addition, “For members of the local councils, re-election is a matter of keeping their daily bread; and for new candidates, membership in one of the councils is viewed as

⁴ The current Ethiopian government administrative divisions consists of five levels: Federal government- Regional States- Zones- Weredas- Kebeles. Kebeles are the lowest administrative units with is equivalent to “*Belde*” in Turkey.

a way of getting access to scarce state resources” (Aalen, and Tronvoll 2008, 116-117). It is a kind of patron-client relationship as the former UEDF leader Merera Gudina stated: “EPRDF decided that they [senior officials] allowed the local cadres to defend their daily bread. If they were allowed to do this now [2008], they [local cadres] will also defend the top cadres in 2010 (Aalen, and Tronvoll 2008, 117). This is how patron client relationships helps to sustain authoritarian regime in power in most African countries.

Though the international community was highly engaged in the 2005 elections, it was silent on 2008 local elections. The ruling party did not allow the international community to closely follow the electoral process to avoid any criticism from international observers as they did in 2005. Even many of the local NGO’s were denied license to observe the elections (Aalen, and Tronvoll 2008, 117-118; ICG 2009, 12). Human Right Watch in its report shows: “The 2008 local elections were the nail in the coffin of any independent social and economic activities—now nearly all enterprises are party controlled at some level. The control is now total. The party and the state have become totally fused—they are one.”(HRW 2010, 19). This is among the many things that makes the 2008 elections meaningless.

Aalen, and Tronvoll analyze the specific situation in the 2008 elections and the general democratic development in the post -2005 period as dismal and the 2008 elections as “stark illustration of just how far Ethiopia’s political space has been closed off since the limited opening that preceded the 2005 polls”. Some believe that EPRDF can no longer leave office by ballot. Thus they adopt a comprehensive strategy that includes armed struggle to dislodge the regime out of power (Aalen, and Tronvoll 2008, 118-120). The Northern Patriotic Front and the *Ginbot 7* can be good examples for such case.

5.4. The 2010 Elections.

The 2010 elections had been conducted in a situation where opposition political parties were highly discriminated, citizen’s right to speak, associate, and to oppose were being deteriorated and the old culture of fear was highly widespread (HRW 2010 ,20,59 ; Amnesty Int.l 2011,1). EPRDF as incumbent government used its incumbency to use state’s resources for its elections

campaign, made the election arena to be in favor of the ruling party. Opposition party members and their supporters had been intimidated with denial of public services if, they vote for the opposition parties (EU Mission 2010, 1-2; Amnesty Int.l 2011, 1; Hagmann, Healy, and Kibazo 2010, 5; HRW 2010, 22).

The state media distributed air time among the ruling and opposition parties. Accordingly 50 % of the time allocated for election campaign was assigned for the EPRDF and the rest was distributed among other opposition parties (EU Mission 2010, 2). Those alternative source of information for Ethiopians from abroad, the Voice of America and Deutsche Welle Amharic sections had been jammed in the days near to the elections period (EU Mission 2010, 2). In addition the 2010 elections took place in the aftermath of the ratification of the two most restrictive laws; anti-terrorism law and CSO declaration. Thus, the election was dominated by fear and there had not been hot live debate and competitive atmosphere as was the case in its predecessor in 2005.

Serious concerns had been identified in 2010 elections: The absence of alternative source of information for the public, the restriction on political parties to freely organize and campaign in country sides, intimidation of opposition party candidates and absence of strong opposition made the elections noncompetitive (HRW 2010,20-21; Amnesty Int.l 2011,2-3).The two strong opposition coalition parties in earlier elections, CUD and UEDF because of their internal conflicts among themselves and external pressure from EPRDF forced them to terminate their coalition and finally to collapse. The only “strong” party in 2010 elections was Forum for Democratic Dialogue coalition (*Medrek*), and some others; All Ethiopian Unity Organization (AEUO) and the Ethiopian Democratic Party (EDP) both of which were part of the old CUD coalition (EU Mission 2010 ,3).

Even though there had been series of televised debate among political parties (Hagmann, Healy, and Kibazo.2010,3) they were not live as in 2005. Such situation enabled the government to edit sensitive issues raised in the debate before they broadcasted to public. Even opposition political parties were forced to stop speaking when there is perceived allegation or “unreal” criticism against the government. It was a major blow to free speech. Journalists were restricted to interview voters, observers and candidates during the voting day. They were even banned to predict on the outcome

of the elections before official results were announced by National Election Board of Ethiopia (Amnesty Int.l 2011, 3; HRW 2010, 50).

When most private media were forced to be out of market, the media has been dominated by state-owned ones. Even those “private” media that survived and continue their media outlets were forced to self-censorship. Generally journalism was exercised in a state of fear (Amnesty Int.l 2011, 2-3), especially the new media law (The Mass Media and Freedom of Information Proclamation) gives broad mandate for the government to crash its opponents (Amnesty Int.l 2011, 3).

Tronvoll also agrees with the above arguments that since the elections environment was overwhelmingly dominated by EPRDF, the elections had not any significance except for providing legitimacy for the EPRDF. And he further explains that:

The tactics used in the 2010 pre-electoral period targeted individual voters, human rights defenders (such as NGOs and journalists), and opposition parties and their members directly, in order to eliminate their capacity as voices of dissent and criticism. Citizens of constituencies that had voted for the opposition in 2005 were pressured – intimidated, harassed, and threatened – to withdraw the symbolic support they had voluntarily extended through the ballot to ‘anti-democratic’ forces. NGOs who had observed the elections and raised a critical voice against the postelection governmental crackdown were sanctioned, and later permanently curbed through the new legislation (Charities and Societies Proclamation – CSO law) effective from January 2010. Private media outlets were closed down and journalists reporting on the crackdown and voicing criticism of government policies were harassed and intimidated, forcing scores to flee the country. Opposition parties’ members and facilities were directly targeted through a variety of repressive mechanisms, such as personal threats and harassment, closure of party offices and breaking up of meetings, and denying individuals access to state resources, public goods, or official permits needed to carry out their work (Tronvoll 2010, 124-125). The general impression among Ethiopians was that the outcome was a foregone conclusion, so the electorate was rather passively, or perhaps reluctantly, following the campaign and election discourse. The only excitement was related to how overwhelmingly the incumbent Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) would win. (ibid: 121).

Generally, the legal and institutional measures taken by the government in post- 2005 elections period made the elections ground to be biased against the opposition (ibid: 125).

On the other hand EPRDF implemented a tactic to show the “competitiveness” of the 2010 elections. It worked hard to increase voter turn outs [as it planned the turnout was 93 %] but, it is observed by both local and international observers that EPRDF forced citizens to register and take voter cards. The voter card was considered as ID card and in many places it was asked as a compulsory requirement to get public services. Consequently, 31,926,520 million voters registered, out of 37 million eligible voters. Thus the turnout was high by African standards (ibid: 127-28).

Tronvoll examining the elections process, identifies several drawbacks to consider the 2010 elections as democratic. As reported by the EU he points out some of deficits as:

In 23 percent of observed polling stations the number of ballots received was not checked against the figure provided by the NEBE-issued document, making it impossible to reconcile this figure with the number of ballots at the closing. Furthermore, in 21 percent of the polling stations observed people were allowed to vote without their voter cards, in 34 percent of the polling stations the process of closing and counting was described as ‘poor’. In international election observer terms, these are extremely high numbers of significant breaches of the electoral protocol; which makes it more or less impossible to vouch for the credibility of the overall election result. Added to this is the fact that opposition party agents were only observing the balloting in about half of the polling stations, and *Medrek* [main opposition coalition party] reported that many of their party agents had been ‘hunted down’ and barred from observing the process (ibid:129).

Finally, the 2010 national and regional elections ended up with EPRDF’s landslide victory. In the House of Peoples Representative only 2 out of 547 seat were left; one seat taken by an independent candidate and the other one by the main opposition (*Medrek*) candidate. The rest (545) seats were occupied by, EPRDF (499) and its regional allies (46) which makes EPRDF’s victory 99.6 %. The elections result in regional councils showed the same “victory” for EPRDF, except a single seat won by the opposition party (All Ethiopian Unity Organization), candidate, the rest seats in the nine regional states were taken by EPRDF and its regional affiliates (Hagmann, Healy, and Kibazo 2010 ,2).

The opposition parties expressed their disagreement with the official result. They had provided “well-documented” complaints to the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE). However the board rejected their complaints as “not supported by evidence” (Tronvoll 2010, 131). Later they took the case to the court, but the court approved the decision of the NEBE, rejecting the opposition claims (Hagmann, Healy, and Kibazo.2010, 3).

Two international election observation missions were deployed in the 2010 elections. The African Union team considered the elections as “free and fair”. But the EU team was “more critical, deploring the lack of ‘level playing field’ in the run-up to the polls, but otherwise was broadly happy with the elections process.” (ibid).

But when we think of the diversity of Ethiopian population in terms of language, ethnicity, religion, and other criteria, it is difficult to accept outcome of this elections as a real reflection of peoples’ preferences (ibid:4). Even if we compare the 2010 election with its predecessors, it can show that the “victory” does not reflect the healthiness of the electoral democracy. In the first multiparty elections (1995) opposition parties won 0.2% of seats in the national parliament; in 2000 they won 1.5%, and in 2005 20%, the 2010 went back to 0.2%. Here the question of plurality and multiparty election is questioned. How the EPRDF’s parliament is different from its predecessors; the officially declared single party regime of the *Derg*? (ibid).

The 2010’s election outcomes illustrate the effectiveness of EPRDF strategy adopted in the post-2005 period. When the EPRDF realized the democratic space it had showed in the 2005 elections period would be a possible threat to its power, it had pursued restrictive rule to narrow all the democratic spaces. In the 2010 elections there was no significant strong actor other than EPRDF. Political parties had been highly harassed, although they had their own internal problems. Media and civil society role in democratization had to be limited. All these situations facilitated the EPRDF to dominate the outcome of the 2010 elections. Therefore, unless there is fair ground for competition; citizens are allowed to support and oppose political parties and exercise their civil and political rights; the media is allowed to exercise independently from fear of persecution; and other political actors are allowed to contribute their share, it is difficult to build a democratic system in which the interests of the public would be protected.

CHAPTER SIX.

6. Conclusion.

Although Ethiopia is one of the ancient states and has a long history of existence, its democratic development lacks behind most states. For many centuries (till 1974) Ethiopia had been under centralized monarchic socio-political system, where power was highly centralized by kings and their representatives at different level of administrative units. State power had been hereditary and only few had the “hereditary rights” to be a ruler. While the rulers exercised absolute power, the entire population was in a total obedience. Socio-economic and political discriminations were prevalent. The Amhara culture and its language was forcefully imposed on others, other different identities were discouraged in different ways. Christianity was the official religion of the state. Other religion followers were regarded as subjects and “second citizens” that could not enjoy equal rights with others.

In 1974 Ethiopia had its first revolution and toppled down the monarchical system and replaced by the committee of military officers, *Derg*. Despite a regime change had taken place, the social political condition of Ethiopians had not shown significant change, and it was simply change of rulers. The *Derg* officially announced socialism as a guideline of its political program and had taken some “socialistic” measures to curb the inequalities of the peoples that had prevailed in the previous regimes: a declaration of “land to the tiller” and confiscation of lands and redistribution to the landless farmer was announced. This is the single achievement that the *Derg* is credited for. Whereas, in terms of civil and political rights, the *Derg* regime had nothing special than its predecessor monarchical regime. Thousands had been arrested, tortured and killed for their political thoughts.

In 1991 the *Derg* was overthrown and the new “coalition” party, Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front, EPRDF took power. The end of the cold war and its politics has brought significant changes in many parts of the world. Former allies and client states of the Soviet Union were obliged to introduce some kind of liberal democratic transformation. Previously, some states used the cold war politics to keep up their authoritarian regimes by allying to either of the camp; the US or the USSR. But after 1991 such opportunity was over. The 1991’s regime change in

Ethiopia was partially attributed to the international realities. EPRDF, as required by the then international realities, took consecutive democratic measures to facilitate the “peaceful democratic transition” in the country. In 1991 transitional charter had been formulated and served as a transitional constitution for the period of three years. The new democratic constitution was ratified in 1994. According to the new constitution, Ethiopian government is organized in a parliamentary system. The state is organized in a federal system in which nine regional states are members of the federation. Since 1991 Ethiopia has conducted four consecutive election in every five years.

Though dominated by EPRDF, it was only in the post-1991 period that Ethiopians begin to experience the “essence of democracy”. Since then Ethiopians have been promised series of democratic reforms which are not yet realized (Abbink, 2006, 174,180; ICG 2009, i). In early 1990s government power had been decentralized to the lower level of administrative units, people were allowed to use their languages and develop their culture [Multiculturalism is no more discouraged, the new federal constitution gives full recognition to cultural pluralism] (Freedom House 2011,1-2 ;Smith 2007,2) But these reforms were soon accompanied by the EPRDF’s authoritarian political environment. “The promise of a democratic constitutional order that combines political representation for ethnic groups with civil liberties for individual citizens has yet to be realized” in fact EPRDF prefers to continue with its dual faces that “combines the institutions found in democracy with the practices typically associated with authoritarianism.” (Freedom House 2011, 1-2).

Therefore it can be concluded, democratic development since 1991 has not shown a significant progress except the establishment of some democratic institutions and limited socio- cultural rights that citizens gain compared to the previous regimes. Although the early “political transition” nominally invited other political actors, in fact the process was dominated by the EPRDF. Up until 2005 in all elections EPRDF and its affiliated regional parties won more than 95 % of seats.

In 2005 combined with many factors, EPRDF was partially willing to open the elections ground free for fair competitions. Consequently, it took some electoral measures to respond to the requests of the opposition parties. International election observers were invited, the state media allowed opposition parties to broadcast their political programs and election campaign. There had been live and hot debates among the ruling and opposition parties by which, the public interest to involve in

politics dramatically increased. Soon unpredictably the two main opposition parties, CUD and UEDF were able to gain much public support. Generally the pre-elections period was almost peaceful. However the post-elections period was dominated by violence. Finally, when the official election report was announced, it was declared that while EPRDF won 2/3 of the seats the main opposition parties won 1/3 of the parliamentary seats. By comparison with the previous elections it was a major victory for the opposition. But the opposition rejected the official report and claimed victory. Such a disagreement continued for six months. Finally, major opposition leader, journalist and civil society leaders were arrested and sentenced for many years, but they were finally freed on “state’s pardon” in 2007.

In post-2005 period the regime’s authoritarian measures takes another form. Opposition politicians, critical journalists, socio political activists, civil society leaders and other critics of the regime are all subjects of the regime’s pressure and harassments. The public is forced to be member of the EPRDF in one way or the other to get public services from the state. Currently EPRDF power reaches its uttermost and it faces rare challenges from other actors (Freedom House 2011, 1-2 ;Lyons 2011, 7) Freedom House further explains the post 2005 period as follows:

The aftermath of the 2005 elections cast a shadow over Ethiopia’s democratization. The EPRDF subsequently ensured that similar challenges to its authority would not be repeated. It has sought to insulate its hold on power by using legal and coercive measures to further restrict the scope of independent mobilization. Despite constitutional protections for basic civil liberties, since 2008 the EPRDF has enacted legislation—the Mass Media Law, the Charities and Societies Proclamation, and the Anti-Terrorism Law—designed to punish open dissent and discourage autonomous organization. At the same time, the EPRDF has sought to strengthen its own capacity by reinforcing the mechanisms of party control at the local level and recruiting millions of new party members nationwide (Freedom House 2011, 2).

EPRDFs strategy to dominate the state’s power has taken new form in the post- 2005 period. In pre-2005 period its brutal measures against the opposition were at least secret; there were secret intimidation and harassments but in post-2005 period it stopped to “feel ashamed” doing it in public. It gives its blind eyes to any criticism from local and international institutions. In post-2005

period it provides its repressive measures with legal backings. Although the EPRDF regime has never shown major democratic improvement ever since 1991, the post-2005 period can be described in terms of authoritarian reversal back to the older form.

Democracy cannot be built by the unilateral efforts of the government. There are also other political groups that have substantial roles in transforming and consolidating democratic systems. Media, civil society, political parties and others have irreplaceable roles in democratization process. Even if these institutions were legally allowed to emerge in the post-1991 period their contribution to the country's democratic development is insignificant. Though these institutions do not have a long history of existence in Ethiopia, they had shown their capacity in the country's first ever competitive elections of 2005. Generally speaking, the regime has never been friendly with these institutions. They are seen as opposition to the regime and supporters of the opposition parties. The regime has taken important lessons from 2005 elections to further narrow the political space for these institutions in the post-2005 period. Even though the regime had not been supportive even before 2005, the post-2005 period was a critical point to further limit the activities of these institutions.

Although the EPRDF regime is responsible for the current authoritarian nature of the political system of the country, there are also some other long existing structural factors that contributed to the current political situation: Mainly the long existing authoritarian political culture, the patrimonial nature of the state, the absence of strong civil society organizations and media, the absence of democratic governance in the East African region are the main ones.

According to Tronvoll, there are certain factors to realize democratic transition in a country. He describes the complex nature of democratic transitions as:

Political transitions of states are complex processes formed by an infinite number of factors anchored in unique past histories, influenced by peculiar current events, and motivated by ideology and future aspirations. One should thus be wary of slotting the Ethiopian democratic transition into a formula based on a fixed number of variables, as 'different states have different histories, cultures, sizes, and economic and demographic structures that at the very least have to be taken into account in the construction of democratic formulae'] (Clapham 2004, 71-82 cited in, Tronvoll 2010, 122).

According to Christopher Clapham, Ethiopia has unique features that hinders to consolidate its democratic transition. Firstly, it has “a political history in which no government has assumed power through elections – but always by force”:[hence, state power has never been transferred by ballot in Ethiopian history], Secondly, it rests on “a political ‘state culture’ that places enormous emphasis on hierarchy and obedience, the antithesis of democratic values of egalitarianism and liberty” (ibid). Still this complete obedience of the public towards to the government persists. Most Ethiopians do not consider themselves as citizens with equal and sovereign rights; rather they consider themselves as subjects and feel powerless to influence politics of their country.

The long existing authoritarian political culture has instigated rulers exercising absolute power and giving orders, the people receiving orders without questioning. In a country where absolute obedience for rulers have been prevalent, democratic tradition cannot be planted and grown in a couple of decades.

Ethiopian current democratic situation is a complex one. Ethiopia is neither categorized as absolute authoritarian or democratic one; it is rather a hybrid state “draped in democratic window-dressing” in which manipulated multiparty elections are a means to sustain power. (Aalen, Tronvoll 2008, 111-112; Bach 2011, 647; ICG 2009, 5). Many Western states and other external observers that do not know about the real identity of the EPRDF regime make a narrow judgment. They simply look at the existence of “liberal” state institutions, the regular and ceremonial elections and conclude that the regime is on the right track to democracy (Abbink 2006, 177-178; Bach 2011, 647). This is a simplistic and minimal understanding of democracy. If we consider the mere existence of the liberal democratic institutions as indication of democracy, with the exceptions of handful of states, the majority of world states can be considered as democracies.

The current hybrid (authoritarian with some democratic features) EPRDF regime is not showing any inclinations towards democratic development, rather it goes backward leading to absolute authoritarianism (Teshome 2013, 1022-1023). The regime’s determination to keep its power by any means is a clear indication that the regime does not have any intention of introducing fundamental democratic transition. The government crackdown measures against protesters in

post-2005 period proved this claim. (Rakner and Menocal 2007:19; cited in Teshome 2013, 1022-1023).

Although, Abbay categorizes EPRDF as a hybrid regime, “which is not entirely antidemocratic, if not fully democratic” (Abbay 2009,196), he simplistically argues that “Winning of elections by the incumbent party does not necessarily make a system less democratic, just as winning by the opposition will not necessarily make a system more democratic” (Abbay 2009,184). But EPRDF’s problem is not about its victory of the past four successive elections. The fundamental question is: in what circumstances the EPRDF was able to “win” those elections; was there really fair competition; are voters free from pressure? The answer for all those questions is NO. Although there are other factors for EPRDF dominance in those elections, its pressure and use of force against anyone who stood against it, takes the lion’s share.

As part of EPRDF plan to control the whole sectors of the economy and public life, entrepreneurs and businessmen are classified as friendly to regime and “anti-democracy”. The non-party affiliated businessmen regularly complain about the unfair competition in the market. The government in its effort to assist its affiliated businesses gives much incentives for them (Abbink 2006, 174,180). In response to the assistance they received from the EPRDF regime the “EPRDF affiliated” businessmen finance the EPRDF’s campaign during elections. The patron- client relationship has been widespread in the post-2005 period in an intensified manner. Individuals who want to get access to credit facilities from micro financial institutions are not allowed to get the service unless they are members or supporters of the ruling regime. Almost all public services are tied with party membership. All these actions of the EPRDF is the consequence of the unexpected election results opposition parties got in 2005 elections. EPRDF, in its attempt to avoid a similar mistake, is trying to put everything under its control.

John Abbink also relates the rejection of democratic transition by the EPRDF regime with its neo-patrimonial behavior and the history of the ruling party. It is hard to accept for the EPRDF to transfer its power by ballot. They always remind how much they sacrificed to topple down the *Derg* regime. They claim that they lost thousands of lives, time and money to control the state power. So, it is unacceptable to give up their power by simple elections. (ibid: 177-178,196-197).

All the governmental structures from the prime minister office to the lowest *kebele* offices, individuals are assigned according to their party loyalty. In a country where there is high unemployment, they are secured with jobs, income, and other privileges. Thus their position is a matter of survival. In order to secure their survival they pay any sacrifice that is needed. The political transition is highly tied with deep economic interest. “Resource competition, although not explaining all, goes a long way in accounting for Ethiopia’s exclusivist and conflictual political dynamics” That is why many argue that it is unlikely to see democratic transition in the EPRDF regime. This behavior makes Ethiopia similar with most post-colonial African countries (ibid).

The patrimonial nature of the state renders powerful patrons and loyal clients who have strong relations bounded by mutual benefits to keep their relationship. In countries where there is limited state resources, government position is considered as a matter of survival. Those clients strive to keep the system to maintain their survival. That is the reason, it is commonly argued, why it is difficult to build democracy in a patrimonial state.

Abbay argues that it is the Ethiopian culture that forbids democracy to take a root in Ethiopia. He further explains that:

Democracy is not easy to internalize for a people like ours [Ethiopians] with ancient culture and customs. Our culture is different from that of the Westerners. It [Ethiopian political culture] does not go along with that of the Americans, West Europeans, and not even the East Europeans . . . We have a strong culture that goes back to 3000 years . . . The Ethiopian culture is authoritarian; some give and others receive orders. A king gives orders and people comply without questioning; a priest orders and no one questions; a parent commands and children follow . . . During the long feudal era, [till 1974] what tied the governors and the governed was a master -subject, not a state-citizen, relationship. As such, the state was not in the service of the people; instead, it was an entity to which people owed allegiance and obedience . . . That is the kind of culture we have had. Democracy, however, is quite different from this kind of culture . . . It is a new culture which needs time to mature [the last 23 years] are not enough to help this culture flourish. (Abbay 2009, 195-196).

Abbay further argues that both EPRDF and opposition are the product of the same intolerant, hierarchical, and obedient “pre-modern” political culture. Hence, it is not logical to claim that

opposition parties are more democratic than the EPRDF. Sometimes “opposition forces do not have any appetite for journalistic neutrality and objectivity. And Ethiopians in general, he contends, suffer from the ‘If you are not with us, you are against us’ syndrome” (Abbay 2009, 179).

Ethiopian weak democratic transformation is also related with the long standing political culture. EPRDF has never done anything new. It has just continued the usual political culture that Ethiopians have been familiar with for many years. Rule of law, respect for human rights, free and fair elections, multiparty elections, participation of civil society, have never been part of Ethiopian political culture. Authoritarianism, submissiveness to leaders are the typical aspects of Ethiopian political culture. Therefore, the more authoritarian nature of the EPRDF we observed in the post-2005 is not a unique thing. It is continuation of the old political culture (Milkias 2011, 93; Hagmann, Healy, and Kibazo.2010, 6; Abbink 2009, 8; Smith 2007, 6-7).

The weakness of opposition parties have also contributed to Ethiopia’s failure to develop stable democracy. Even the better gain of opposition parties scored in the 2005 elections did not only emanate from their strength, rather it was a reaction and anger of the public against the EPRDF that benefited the opposition to gain such a massive victory. Sometimes opposition’s popularity and support was based on their anti-government sentiments than their party programs. That is why we observed a split and internal conflict within the main opposition parties in the post-2005 election period (ICG 2009, 10).

The other important feature that describes Ethiopia’s weak performance of democracy is the absence of strong middle class and civil society. As discussed in the chapter two this thesis, civil society has an irreplaceable role in democratization process. Although the EPRDF regime legally allowed for the existence of civil society organizations in post 1991 period, they are not considered as collaborators of democratization process (Abbink 2006, 178-179) rather, they are seen as supporters of the opposition parties and sometimes spies to foreign countries. Except the limited role in the pre-2005 election period, civil society rarely contributed to the country’s democratization process.

The specific geographical location of Ethiopia can also be the explaining factor for its weak democracy. Had it been democratic regimes in Eastern Africa region, it would have possibly contributed positively to Ethiopian democratic situation. Since democratic values have a diffusion behavior it would be possible to see some kind of democratic reforms and regime change in the region. Therefore it can be argued that the absence of a single democratic regime in the Eastern Africa region has contributed to the continued authoritarian nature of the EPRDF regime. For example, Museveni of Uganda and his party are in power since 1986. The same is true for Omar al-Bashir of Sudan (since 1993), Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti (since 1999), and Paul Kagame of Ruanda (since 2000). The Eritrean regime has officially declared that it is a single party state, hence regime change has not taken place and President Isaias Afwerki and his single party are in power since 1993. Somalia is weak and fragile. The only East Africa state that has showed regime change via ballot is Kenya in 2013.

Sometimes powerful “donor” states have a positive contribution in assisting democratic process in Africa. They put pressures on governments to respect human rights and to take democratic reforms. But when they come to Ethiopia they have showed their blind eyes to the regular human rights violations regularly reported by many local and international human rights organizations. They rather praise the EPRDF regime for its capacity to prevent the country from violence and keep the country relatively peaceful in the volatile region of Horn of Africa (Milkias 2011, 94; Abbink 2009, 18). In addition Ethiopia being the important ally of the West on its “war on terror” in the Horn of Africa, they do not dare to condemn the regime as they do for others (Smith 2007,1-2). Even if they condemn, it is for formality, they do not go further to put tangible pressure against the regime. This is one of the occasions we observe the double standards of the West. When their strategic interest comes in conflict with their “principle” of democracy the former precedes. That is why we do not see practical pressures of the West against the EPRDF regime to improve its bad human rights records.

In the US State Department annual report on world countries’ human rights situation, always the EPRDF regime is condemned for its poor human rights handlings. For instance, in its 2010 annual report it describes the Ethiopian human rights situation as:

unlawful killings, torture, beating, and abuse and mistreatment of detainees and opposition supporters by security forces...; poor prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention, particularly of suspected sympathizers or members of opposition or insurgent groups; detention without charge and lengthy pretrial detention; infringement on citizens' privacy rights, including illegal searches; use of excessive force by security services in counterinsurgency operations; restrictions on freedom of speech and of the press; arrest, detention, and harassment of journalists; politically motivated trials; restrictions on print media; restrictions on freedom of assembly and association; restrictions on freedom of movement; intimidation, threats, and violence during elections;... harassment of those who worked for human rights organizations (U.S State Dep.2010,1-2).

The post-2005 Ethiopia's deteriorating democratic situation has not yet shown any improvement. All major local and international human rights organizations, e.g. The Ethiopian Human Rights Council, Amnesty International, Africa Watch, the European Union and other organizations always criticize the Ethiopian government for its violation of human rights. But nothing has changed for Ethiopians. Still the extra-judicial arrest and killing, abduction and torture in detention centers continue (Milkias 2009 678).

Hagmann, forwards his personal remarks on Ethiopia's democratic situation in post-2005 period as follows:

In recent years observers have often described the Ethiopian government's recourse to repressive political and legal means as a 'closing of public space. 'What I notice is that this 'closing of public space' in practice primarily means that people are afraid to publicly talk about or air their opinions about Ethiopian politics, or to take a position in regard to a local or national political matter. Many Ethiopians are afraid that they will be punished if they do so. This silencing of critical voices, or rather: of any voice that is not 100 percent compatible with the government's viewpoints, are considered as [viewpoints of the opposition and has serious consequences.] (Hagmann, Healy, and Kibazo.2010,9).

Human Rights Watch also describes the post-2005 period as a period where EPRDF worked out to put everything under its control. Different restrictive laws have been endorsed (HRW 2010, 22; Bach 2011, 646). Opposition parties have been discriminated, and different strategies have been used to weaken them until they have become no more threats to EPRDF dominance. Civil society, civil service, and civil life have been highly politicized [tied with one's political support and

inclination] to the extent that only few of “economic activities, community meetings, or civic associations occur outside the purview of the EPRDF.” (HRW 2010, 22).

Interestingly, EPRDF has adopted different kinds of rhetoric since 1991. It tries to relate its rhetoric with the timely necessities. From 1991-2005 its discourse was focused on “No development without democracy”. The regime’s attempt to get its legitimacy both from inside and outside compelled it to adopt such a beautiful rhetoric. When things were dramatically worse in post-2005 period it reversed its previous rhetoric to “No democracy without development.” It was mainly to cover up its undemocratic measures it took in post-electoral atmosphere of violence and was an attempt to divert public attention from democracy to development. Since 2010 it adds “No development without security” maintaining state’s security is a priority; Ethiopia cannot achieve its aim of development without maintaining the security of the state, and thus security should be given higher priority. But all this rhetoric is simply discursive tactic to secure its power and legitimacy and to avoid criticism for its failure of democratic practices (Hagmann, Healy, and Kibazo.2010, 6-7).

Now Ethiopia has reached a situation where an absolute domination of EPRDF is flourished. In post-2005 period two elections had taken place. In both, the 2008’s local elections and, 2010s national elections, EPRDF won more than 99 % of the seats. This is a clear indication of how much EPRDF’s effort to close-up all political spaces and dominate country’s politics unilaterally has been successful. Now it seems beyond argument that Ethiopia has receded back to the old style of authoritarianism (Lyons 2011, 6; Abbink, 2006, 174).

The result of 2008 local elections and 2010 national and regional elections demonstrate how EPRDF is able to regain its “diminished” power in 2005. But these “gains” were not achieved by EPRDF’s strong commitment and convincing of the voters toward its political program, rather, it was the result of coercive measures taken in post- 2005 period. Most people have been forced to take voter cards and vote for the EPRDF to get public services. The public is also forced to be member of the ruling party to get jobs, and other governmental services.

Now it is only the EPRDF that defines what democracy means, what kind of democracy Ethiopians need and how democracy should be developed. Whoever opposes this “commitment” of EPRDF is regarded to be anti-democracy, anti-development and would be exposed to painful punishment. (Hagmann, Healy, and Kibazo.2010, 6). “Freedom of expression and association has been severely undercut. Journalists, academicians, human rights advocates and intellectuals do not dare to publicly criticize the government. Even though self-censorship existed even before the 2005 elections, it has now become widespread.”(ICG 2009, 20).

The death of the long served [and master mind of the regime] Prime Minister Melse Zenawi in August 2012 has not brought any change in the regime behavior. He was replaced by his deputy, Hailemariam Desalegn, but things continued as usual. Political opponents, journalists, critical citizens are being harassed. Recently the regime’s interest to control the whole aspects of public life lead it to interfere in religious institutions, but unexpectedly it has faced strong opposition from the Muslim community. The regime reacts in the same manner as it did in post-2005 elections protest movements. Many of the Muslim leaders and youth are beaten and tortured in prison centers and are charged with acts of terrorism (Freedom House 2013, 1; Amnesty Int.l 2013, 3).

Nowadays many believe that EPRDF cannot be out of office via ballot box. Elections are conducted in a manner that cannot shake EPRDF’s dominance (Abbink 2006, 195; ICG 2009, 7). EPRDF dominates the executive branch, the army, security and the economy. All these realities make EPRDF to be the single dominant force to decide the direction of the country’s future. According to Abbink, unless there is EPRDF self-initiated change or internal conflicts within EPRDF, or domestic instability and outside pressure from donor countries combined together, it is unlikely to see any significant democratic changes in the country (Abbink 2006, 195).

Many observers and academicians are also expressing their concern on the future of democracy in Ethiopia. Some political parties may prefer to continue to struggle against the regime through peaceful means via elections, despite election environments are not “free and fair” so far. Some other opposition movements may choose for armed struggle to dislodge the regime out of state power (Tronvoll 2010, 136; ICG 2009, 29). The case of “*Ginbot 7*” political party can be mentioned. Berhanu Nega, one of the well-known economists and former leader of the strong

opposition party (CUD) in 2005 elections, after being released from prison in 2007, has started a comprehensive struggle strategy to topple down the EPRDF regime by any means, including violence. There are also others like, the Northern Patriotic Front which already declared war against the regime in the north western Ethiopia. Such kinds of political decisions are inevitable when all peaceful means of political struggle are closed. However, as we can understand from recent historical experiences, armed struggle movement may take decades and cost thousands of lives and county's limited resources. Unless real political negotiation starts between the ruling and opposition parties, and other powerful states put real pressure on the EPRDF regime, the future Ethiopia's democratic direction does not seem promising.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the current EPRDF regime is an electoral authoritarian, by which elections have no relevance other than legitimizing the dictatorial regime. Although some scholars argue that, it was only in the post-2005 elections period that authoritarian reversal took place, the long historical record of the EPRDF regime does not show any significant democratic development ever since it took state power in 1991. Thus, the situation in post-2005 period shows only the deterioration of the limited democratic space. Therefore the post-2005 period is simply the continuation of dictatorial rule in different form.

All in all democracy is not something declared today and produces its output tomorrow. As it is seen in other democracies, it needs relatively longer time to adopt with the local situation. It is unrealistic to deny the fact that Ethiopia has shown some positive democratic developments in post- 1991 era. Since the country had been under the monarchial rule till 1974 and followed by military rule until 1991, Ethiopia has made dramatic shift from its past at least in terms of certain democratic institutions. In addition different ethno linguistic and cultural identities have been recognized by the EPRDF's regime. But in terms of broader civil and political rights, Ethiopia under EPRDF regime has not showed a significant development. Apart from the existence of democratic constitution, democratic institutions, the government behavior is not different from previous regimes. The previous regimes did not allow the existence of opposition parties and multiparty competition, existence of civil society, independent press etc. EPRDF permits the existence of these institutions as long as they are not a threat to its power and dominance. Practically the country is a single party state where everything is centralized. EPRDF in its effort

to dominate political power stretches its arms in all sector of the public life. The social, economic and religious affairs are not free from government interference. Therefore, it can be concluded that EPRDF has never been “democrat” except the limited political space it has allowed in early elections period of 2005. Practically the regime has taken series of measures to establish “one party state” in post 2005 elections period and now it seems EPRDF is successful in doing so.

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