

The Practice and Challenges of Capital Cities in a Federal System: The Case of Addis Ababa

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Abstract

Apart from its role as a local government for its residents, Addis Ababa is the seat of the federal government and the Oromia regional state. From an international perspective, it has also established itself as the seat of major organisations such as the African Union. Addis Ababa is the largest city in the country and the main centre of business and political activity. It has the status of a chartered city within the Ethiopian federation. The capital city model is a contested issue in academic and political fields, however. The choice of an old capital city as a federal capital and its status in the federation are among the controversies surrounding the governance of Addis Ababa. What also makes the status of Addis Ababa contentious is its regional standing as the capital city of one of the constituent members of the federation. Recently, the choice of Addis Ababa as the regional capital, and the special interests of Oromia in the capital, became contested matters, leading to rivalry between the federal government, Oromia and other federated states. Furthermore, there is the question of whether the Ethiopian capital city model and secession are compatible. This article examines the debate over capital cities in federations. It explores the way in which federal capitals are organised and the nature of their relationship with the federal government. The article critically reassesses the viability of the Ethiopian capital city model, particularly in view of recent discussion of capital cities in multicultural federations. To this end, it also examines the foundations of and challenges to Ethiopia's arrangements regarding its capital city.

Keywords: *Capital city, federation, chartered city*

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1. Introduction

Established as a city in 1886 by Emperor Menelik II, Addis Ababa has been called a triple capital – of the Ethiopian federation, of the Oromia Regional State, and of the African Union. As far as the national perspective is concerned, under the Ethiopian federation two distinguished cities have the status of “city of federal significance” – Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa, both of which are considered equal territorial subjects of the federation. The 1995 federal constitution does not, however, give the two cities a status equal to that of the regional governments. It may also be noted that they do not fall under one of the regional governments, as do other urban centres in the country.

Addis Ababa is governed as a component part of the federal government, with explicit constitutional protection for “full measure[s] of self-government”. Accordingly, it is a chartered city with a local government the functions, powers, duties and responsibilities of which are set out in legislation adopted by the national government. Dire Dawa is another city established by law as a “city administration”, but unlike Addis Ababa, it has no direct constitutional mandate of self-government. Dire Dawa is also similar to Addis Ababa in that it too is a chartered city under the control of the federal government. Addis Ababa City differs from Dire Dawa, though, in that it is the capital city of a federal government; the political and diplomatic centre of both the country and continent; a city with a high concentration of socio-economic infrastructure and services; and the seat of the Oromia regional government. Addis Ababa does not form part of a regional government. Regional states enjoy greater autonomy than it, including the unconditional right to secede.

The Ethiopian federal arrangement seemed peculiar from the outset. Not only did it follow the model of a capital city in a member state, but it also allows states the right to self-determination, including secession. In fact, until recently, few federations anywhere have included in their constitutions the recognition of a unilateral right of secession or explicit provision for a formal process for secession. In any event, this constitutional marrying of the right of secession and the city-in-a-member-state model makes Ethiopia’s multi-ethnic federalism unique. This study

considers the viability of hosting the right to secession in a federal system which has located its capital in one of the constituent units of the federation.

Despite constitutional symmetry across the regions, Addis Ababa remains a strong political and economic leader and the uncontested centre among all the regions of Ethiopia. This study looks at the nature of Ethiopian federalism, focusing on the status of the capital, Addis Ababa, and providing insight into the capital city's place within the framework of the federal dispensation and constitutional laws of a federal state. Indeed, the comparison of federal capitals itself remains under-researched (Nagel, 2011). In many federations, capitals are treated asymmetrically and do not enjoy the status of a state, with their rights to have a share in federal government sometimes being curtailed (Nagel, 2011). In many cases their rights to self-government are also restricted. However, other federations grant their capitals the status of a member state; there are even some countries where the federal capital is just another city within the boundaries of one of the member states (Nagel, 2011). This study provides an analysis of the political basis for choosing Addis Ababa as the capital and the challenges and implications of this choice. In particular, it seeks to answer the following questions:

- *How are other federal capitals organised?*
- *What are the principal historical, social or political reasons for the place that Addis Ababa occupies in the Ethiopian federation?*
- *What has the impact been on the functioning of the federal system?*

This study is relevant not only for the theoretical implications it brings to light regarding federalism and capital city models, but also for its engagement with growing concerns and uncertainty about the future status of Addis Ababa within the Ethiopian federation. The article examines the historical political and legal basis of the recognition of Addis Ababa in Ethiopia in the light of contemporary theoretical discussions of the subject, and assesses Ethiopia's capital city model within a federal theoretical framework. Methodologically, the study employs a qualitative research approach, relying chiefly on surveys of literature and analysis of laws and policy documents; information has been

gathered mainly from books, laws, cases, articles and periodicals. Data sources include secondary sources such as political statements, programmes, and the publications of political parties.

The article is structured as follows. First, it briefly discusses the nature and importance of capital cities, particularly those in federations, after which it delves into the history of capital cities in Ethiopia and the reasons for choosing them for this role. All of this is a prelude to a survey of debates on the status of Addis Ababa and an examination of challenges to Addis Ababa's position in the Ethiopian federation and of the implications of these challenges.

2. Literature review

This rapid literature review looks at the importance of capital cities and the various ways of organising a capital city in federal system.

2.1. The importance of capital cities

In the scholarly literature, it is often argued that each capital city has a certain symbolic meaning to its own state. According to De Vries & Sobis (2018: 213), the capital city generally differs from the rest of the local governments of the state:

This symbolic function of capital cities is, first of all, seen in their history, often with still existing remnants of the country's ancient glorious times. Such remnants can refer to palaces: a cathedral or temple as a symbol of the location of the dominant religion in the country ... Another historical vestige might be a large square or plaza, often named after the nation or a famous historical national hero ... It is also seen in the location of cultural institutions such as (national) universities, national theatres, and national museums embodying ... national cultural heritage. Thirdly, capital cities are typically the location for political institutes. The government as the executive power often resides in the capital city, as do national assemblies, parliaments, senates and other legislative powers.

As the authors note, the capital city is, therefore, a symbol of national unity, political power, and the level of development

of a country. The capital is by definition a seat of power and a place where decisions are made that affect the lives and future of the people ruled and even influence trends and events beyond the nation's borders. Capitals differ from other cities in that the capital function secures strong and lasting centrality. This calls for a special hosting environment to provide what is required for the safe and efficient performance of the functions of government and the decision-making characteristics of the place.

The few scholars to have analysed life in capital cities all emphasise the additional functions and challenges such localities have due to their triple role in maintaining liveability for residents, being the principal locus of national economic success and acting as the window of the country to the outside world to attract foreign investment (De Vries & Sobis, 2018). These multiple priorities result in a variety of concrete policy areas that need to be addressed. Capital cities invariably acquire higher per-capita shares of the national public purse than other cities. This, as de Vries & Sobis (2018) argue, would seem to give advantage to the residents of these cities. However, how these resources are allocated, whether they are sufficient in the face of stressors on these cities, and who actually benefits, are essential questions requiring answers before such a sanguine conclusion can be reached. As De Vries & Sobis (2018) claim, proximity to national government in itself could also result in conflict. The federal government wants to control and develop the national capital in the interests of the nation as a whole, while the people of the capital wish to govern themselves. The proximity to national government might also influence the opinions of local officials regarding core issues, such as centralisation, decentralisation and intergovernmental relations in general.

Furthermore, one may ask who governs the capital city: "Are the locally elected or appointed politicians in charge, or is it national government that makes the decisions, and what does that imply for policy-making, public participation, and the residents?" (De Vries & Sobis, 2018: 216). The proximity of national government to the capital city is thus expected to diminish the institutional trust of the residents of such cities in their local administration. As De Vries & Sobis (2018) argue, those residents are right in questioning the extent to which it is the local administration or

national government that runs. As such, residents of the capital city have cause to be concerned about the interests that are served in decisions made by their local administration.

Capital cities play an important role in virtually all states. As Gilliland (2013) notes, they act as administrative centres and often develop into hubs of economic, social and cultural activity, as well as acting as national symbols that embody the shared values of a state (such as democracy, equality or development). The word “capital” itself derives from the Latin word *caput*, meaning “head”, and denotes the primacy of status associated with the very idea of a capital. But in federations the idea of federalism is often deemed to play an important role in the capital city, to the extent that, as Elazar (2013) argues, “true federal systems do not have capitals, they have seats of government. ‘Capital’ implies a place at the top of the governmental pyramid, whereas ‘seat’ appropriately suggests a place of assembly.” This is because federations are composed of distinct member states that are united in a governance partnership. Federations are varied and their origins differ. However, as Elazar (2013) notes, the idea of a “seat” of government as opposed to “capital” city is especially relevant for federations coming together. The choice of the terms “capital” or “seat of government” is hence an issue embedded in the founding of the federation.

2.2. Different ways of organising capital cities in federal systems

The position of national capitals is always peculiar, but it is especially complex in federations. Federal capitals often have special statutes; compared with member states, they usually enjoy a lower degree of self-government and, sometimes, a lesser share in the governing of the federation. As Kincaid & Chattopadhyay (2008) note, national governments have a strong interest in national capitals. Perhaps the first preoccupation is security, for both domestic politicians and state visitors. Capitals also have concentrations of cultural facilities and institutions: federal governments are interested in these cities as embodiments of the nation that project an image of the country on the international stage and reflect it to the citizenry at large – hence the common refusal of the view that capitals should be developed and

maintained as their inhabitants alone desire; federal governments exert substantial control over capitals, imposing prescriptions and proscriptions under which local politicians and citizens sometimes chafe (Kincaid & Chattopadhyay, 2008: 112).

Capital cities are different from other cities because they host the national government and principal national institutions, play unique cultural and symbolic roles, promote national pride through ceremonies and commemorations, and experience more public protest than other locales. But Slack & Chattopadhyay (2011) argue that capital cities in federal countries are also different from those in unitary countries. Due to the fact that federal countries are large and diverse, capital cities have to reflect diversity as well as be neutral with respect to states or provinces and the likelihood of conflict between the national and local role of the capital.

Table 1: Typology of federal capitals

Federal district	Member state	Cities in member states
Abuja, Addis Ababa, Brasilia, Buenos Aires, Canberra, Caracas, Islamabad, Kuala Lumpur, Mexico City, New Delhi, Washington DC.	Berlin, Brussels, Moscow, Vienna (in some respects, we may include Madrid, the capital of strongly a decentralised state)	Bern, Ottawa, Pretoria and Cape Town. Formerly, also Bonn, Belgrade (Yugoslavia) and Moscow (USSR)
These capitals have a legal status that differs from that of the states that surround them. They may lack constitutional sovereignty and representation in federal institutions, and depend on federal legislation and nominations and/or control. Even if self-administrating, the city government does not take on the overall tasks of a member state.	These capitals are both city and state. In some cases, the capital does not enjoy full parity with other states of the federation. Brussels is also the capital of Flanders and the French Community (and Europe). The Autonomous Community of Madrid and the Brussels Region include other municipalities. Often, the capital state has some asymmetric arrangement.	The capital is a simple municipality within a member state and falls under its jurisdiction. In some cases, the capital may benefit from special funding arrangements. Capitals that are, at the same time, capitals of a member state may be considered a sub-group different from the rest (Bern, formerly Belgrade and Moscow under the USSR). In South Africa, Pretoria would belong to the second sub-group and Cape Town to the second.

2.2.1. The district model

Small capitals are usually to be found within the district model. However, not all capitals organised as districts are small. Artificial, planned, newly built capitals are to be found in the district type. No European capital is found in this group. Nearly all capitals here are American, while some are located in the Far East. According to Klaus-Jürgen Nagel (2013), cities in this group may have local government (but policing, courts and finance are often excluded) or not. They all have no administration equal to that of a member state, and all are administered by federal and, eventually, under more or less intensive supervision, by a local government of their own. Separation of powers, a federal principle, is often neglected in their territory, where the respective federal government usually exercises competencies that it does not possess in other places.

Nagel (2013) identifies variety inside this group: the degree of local self-government and fiscal autonomy may be higher, and closer to that enjoyed by a state, or lower, and closer to a mere local administration. There may be more or fewer tiers of administration, and the district may strictly include one city or even part of it, or include more than one municipality. However, compared to a member state, all districts have less self-government. For district inhabitants, the division of powers between the levels does not exist or is incomplete, and in some places, even their representation at the federal level is curtailed.

2.2.2. Member states

As Nagel (2013) observes, some capitals are member states in their own right. They have a dual status as both municipalities and states. The few capitals in this category are all in Europe.

2.2.3. Cities in member states

Capitals as cities in member states form the third group of federal capitals. Citizens of these capitals are “nothing special”; they are just double citizens of the federation and of the member state where their city is located. This is a state they cannot control, though there may be a difference between those cities that are at the same time capitals of the federation and of the particular

member state they belong to and those that are not. In this (small) group, there is only one North American case, Ottawa. This type is said to be found in federations that are quite centralised, such as Moscow in relation to the USSR, Belgrade in relation to Yugoslavia, and Islamabad in relation to Pakistan. However, there is always the case of Bern (Nagel, 2013: 14).

No systematic study of the motives that have driven actors to choose the type of capital city has yet been presented. The literature permits us to distinguish between military reasons (a capital far from the frontier), geographical reasons (in the middle of the country, or at least equidistant from the most powerful member states), development strategies (to help underdeveloped zones), and national reasons (to foster cohesion, or to represent the diversity of the federation). Federal arguments, it seems, can go in different ways.

As Nagel (2013: 13) states, the district model is regarded as having a better chance than others of reflecting the diversity of a federation, and seems particularly appropriate in decentralised federations: “It may avoid conflict between competing powerful member states: it may ‘neutralize’ the capital, making its choice acceptable for all member-states. However, it might be the population of the capital city who pays the price for this.” The member-state model is the main alternative to the asymmetrical district model. It avoids the problems of de jure asymmetrical treatment of citizens, establishing, however, a new and relevant asymmetry between the states (particularly where the capital is the one and only city-state).

The city-in-a-member-state model conceives of the capital as a simple municipality, but it might give an unfair advantage to the state where the capital is situated, submitting the latter to particular state laws, policing, and financing. In addition, on the one hand, the member state may act as a barrier between the federation and the municipal government of the capital; on the other, the city government itself may seek direct contact with the federal administration and hence overstep the member state. The model may thus suffer from problems of “divided jurisdiction, financial insufficiency, and cultural domination by the governing state, inadequate metropolitan government, and the inability of the

central government to control the capital city or its development in the interests of the nation” (Rowat, quoted in Nagel, 2013: 15).

3. Explaining the initial set-up of the federal capital

Part of the explanation for capital cities in any state, whether federal or non-federal, can be found in the historical specificities that characterise the processes of state-building and national integration evident in the country. Accordingly, the section below examines the history of the Ethiopian state’s formation and evolution.

There were important political centres that predated Addis Ababa. The period from the Aksumite Kingdom, B. C. – 12th cent. A. D. – 1867 – 1890, was an era of mobile capitals, with Axum, Lasta, Tegulet Gondar, Mekdella, and Mekele all taking turns at being the capital. These cities had different resources – economic, demographic, cultural, linguistic, spatial and political – that could be put forward to support their cause.

During the two centuries preceding the foundation of Gondar in 1636, the capitals of Ethiopia were, with few exceptions, in a continual state of motion, as Horvath (1969) notes: rarely did a capital remain in one place for many years. Capitals in historical Ethiopia appear to have been quasi-cities: on one hand, these settlements had many of the characteristics that are normally thought to be urban, such as size and density of population, the predominance of non-agricultural functions, and the presence of the literati; on the other hand, these capitals were not permanent (Horvath, 1969: 206).

Below is a summary of capitals in historical Ethiopia, though it leaves out important details. It is difficult to determine what constituted the legitimate capital at any particular time. The concept of alternative residences was developed later to clarify the problem. Thus, to suggest that Makdella was the only capital of Tewdros is to ignore the other places, such as Debra Tabor, where he resided in during the earlier part of his reign. The dating, of course, is only approximate in most cases.

Table 2: Capitals in Ethiopian history (from earliest times to the present)

Capital	Period
Axum and neighbourhood	? B. C. – 12th cent. A. D.
Lasta capitals	12th cent. – 1268
Tegulet (transition to roving capitals)	1268 – ca. 1412
Roving capitals	1412 – 1636
Gondar	1636 – ca 1755
Regional capitals	1755 – 1855*
Makdella	1855 – 1868
Mekele	1886 – 1889
Addis Ababa	1890 – present

* *Debre Berhan was founded during this period (1454).*

Source: Horvath, 1969: 207

After the establishment of Gondar in 1636, there was a pause for about a century during which the capital remained in one place, but as time passed, the power of the emperors declined and the unity of the state waned in the face of strong centrifugal forces originating in the provinces (Horvath, 1969). Although Gondar apparently remained the nominal capital from 1755 to 1855, each province was an independent entity, with a series of provincial capital cities forming the focus of each separate kingdom (Horvath, 1969). After a century without a strong emperor, the latent centripetal forces once again reasserted themselves and Tewdros re-united the country. His residence at Makdella then became the closest thing to a capital that the country had. Consequently, there was a series of capital city relocations in Ethiopia associated with the succession of emperors: first Gondar, then Mekele, and finally, Addis Ababa (Horvath, 1969).

Horvath (1969) contends that capitals in Ethiopia moved about prior to the foundation of Gondar primarily in response to military considerations. He argues that the very existence of this Christian civilisation had been threatened by a series of invaders since the classical period. Horvath suggests that the change from a fixed to a mobile capital was a slow but conscious military measure on the part of the emperors in historical Ethiopia. Horvath uses two types of evidence to support the military hypothesis: “first, direct evidence based on statements of Ethiopians actually living during

the period of the roving capitals, and secondly inferential evidence relating to certain characteristics of the move itself” (1969: 209). Finally, he argues that this thesis is compatible with subsequent military experience.

The purpose of the direct evidence is to determine the reasons the Ethiopian elite gave for the existence of wandering capitals. According to Horvath, several authorities have suggested the importance of military considerations behind the roving capital. In addition to the direct evidence, he adduces three lines of inferential evidence to support the military thesis. The first two lines of evidence relate to the nature of the move (1969: 209):

Capitals moved in an extraordinary zigzag fashion. This pattern of movement is in itself suggestive of the importance of military motives, but when a second feature of the move is added, namely that both the starting-time and destination were kept strictly secret, we have a very strong implication of the importance military considerations played in the move.

According to Horvath (1969), the third line of inferential evidence relates to the coincidence of the stabilisation of capitals in Ethiopian history with periods of comparative security from without. The founding of both Gondar and Addis Ababa occurred during periods when invasion from without seemed unlikely. Almost a century elapsed between the defeat of Gran and the foundation of Gondar.

Horvath (1969) maintains that the castle-building tradition which apparently began immediately after Ahmed Grag’s defeat is evidence of the desire of the emperor to settle. Prior to founding Addis Ababa, according to Horvath, Menelik II lived in a series of temporary capitals. The defeat of the Italians at Adwa in 1896 placed Menelik in a secure position and his then capital, Addis Ababa, became the permanent capital of Ethiopia. Accordingly, once military needs ceased to be a major consideration, attempts were made to stabilise capital cities.

In addition to direct and inferential evidence, it may be argued that a military interpretation of the roving capitals is compatible with subsequent military experience (Horvath, 1969: 214). A mobile strategy allows a group to survive in the face of a technologically

superior foe. In the Horn of Africa, from the 15th century onwards, Islamic military forces had a technological advantage over Christian Ethiopia because they possessed greater quantities of firearms. Islamic leaders could thus muster a large force and deliver a devastating blow. However, according to Horvath (1969: 214), Abyssinian mobile capitals proved to be a difficult target to bludgeon. From this point of view, the roving capitals of Ethiopia were guerrilla cities.

Horvath argues, then, that military considerations initially motivated the institution of a cultural pattern – a wandering capital. Furthermore, once this was established, the initial motivation continued to be the major factor responsible for the maintenance of the pattern during the period of the wandering capitals. Nevertheless, Horvath looks speculatively and deductively into the process. Three secondary factors are considered: (1) the reversal of normal city-country relations, (2) the exploitative relationship that capitals had with tributary areas, and (3) political factors.

Associated with nomadic capitals was a reverse in the normal urban-rural relationships. With the advent of mobile capitals in historical Ethiopia, the city moved to the “food” rather than the usual practice where “food” is transported to the city: this reversal had the effect of suppressing any institutional means that existed for the transfer of rural surpluses to cities. One of the curious features of urban-rural relations during the period is that Ethiopian capitals had a decidedly exploitative relationship with their hinterlands. One example of the exploitative nature of the wandering capital is the way in which forest resources were consumed. The wasteful procedure used to obtain wood in the vicinity of a capital has led some to argue that the depletion of firewood and building timber by residents of wandering capitals caused capitals to wander about. One suspects that many individual moves were motivated by the exhaustion of wood resources. Horvath suggests that military considerations brought into being the wandering capital which, in turn, allowed or influenced the practice of imprudent forest exploitation.

According to Horvath (1969: 214), the need for wood was only one aspect of the economic relations capital cities had with their hinterlands; the need for food was another:

The presence of the capital caused a drain on the food resources of an area equal to the immense drain on wood. Tradition required that peasants should provide food and shelter to soldiers in the service of the emperor ... The emperor's needs were provided for from his own lands, which were widely spread throughout the empire, and in part through the taxation of local peasants. The cumulative result was rapid impoverishment.

Horvath points out that many obstacles stood in the path of political integration in historical Ethiopia. Nature seemed to conspire with the centrifugal elements of Ethiopian political life. Most of the Christian kingdom lay on top of an extensive plateau. This plateau is broken up by deep, incised canyons through which torrents rage for many months of the year. When combined with a poor communications system (virtually no bridge-building technology, for example), it was fairly easy for political integration to dissolve on an annual basis if various regional powers so desired. The consequence was that, periodically, there existed a series of independent, plateau-top provinces.

Political integration was maintained because the emperor moved from region to region in full force. His physical presence in a region seemed necessary in order to renew loyalties, collect taxes, punish rebels, and dispense judicial decisions, especially during the early years of his reign. The argument presented here is that nomadic capitals, which were instituted for military reasons, served to weaken or suppress those political institutions that could have accompanied a permanent centre of polity.

In brief, the secondary factors are viewed as less important than military motivations over the long run of Ethiopian cultural history, while the secondary factors came into being as a consequence of the wandering capital. The latter tended to perpetuate the nomadic pattern, which in turn made a sudden stabilisation of the capital difficult. On a short-term basis, the rapid impoverishment of the current hinterland impeded permanency. Over a longer view, a stable capital would require the formation of institutional means for moving provisions to permanent centres. On the political side, there would need to be widespread commitment to the idea of the state, such that the emperor could cease his periodic visits to each region in full force to collect taxes and renew loyalties (Horvath, 1969).

In general, as Horvath (1969: 214) argues, Ethiopia's wandering capitals possessed many of the characteristics that are used to distinguish cities from other forms of settlement:

Roving capitals were large and densely populated enough to qualify for city status, they performed an essentially urban role of administration, the capitals were heterogeneous socially, and representatives of the Ethiopian literati were present. The population of these capitals was for the most part only seasonally urban and seasonally rural. And yet, these capitals were not permanent.

The explanation offered may be summarised as follows:

Initially, military motives prompted the Ethiopian elite to change their capitals from fixed to mobile settlements. These guerrilla cities were adapted to in several ways. First, capitals moved to food supplies rather than supplies being moved to the capital. Secondly, capitals impoverished their current hinterlands. And thirdly, political integration of Ethiopia came eventually to depend on a mobile center of polity (Horvath, 1969: 214).

According to Horvath (1969), these three factors not only represent adaptations to nomadic capitals, but they in turn made stabilisation of capitals difficult.

4. The status and challenges of Addis Ababa in the Ethiopian federation

4.1. Current set-up

4.1.1. Explaining the choice: Why was Addis Ababa chosen as capital city?

The decision on the place of Addis Ababa in the Ethiopian federation can be properly understood only by paying attention to historical context. As indicated earlier, the Ethiopian state has had a tradition of government from ancient times. However, the general outlines of modern Ethiopia's political system date back to the reign of Menelik (1889–1913), which was to lay the foundation of the current Ethiopian state at the turn of 19th

century.²² Ethiopia, most historians concur, is a loosely knit state in which different nationalities were brought under imperial rule, with the country assuming its current territorial definition only at the end of the 19th century. According to many writers, Ethiopia's history for most of the 19th century was a story of repeated, usually successful, efforts to centralise power and resources in the national state.²³

Following the military success of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), the new constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) came into force in 1995. Ethiopian federalism, it has been claimed, is the result of efforts to address the century-old "nationality question" that preoccupied the country's different ethnically based political organisations and liberation movements. It was argued, on the part of the architects, that the reconfiguration of Ethiopia as a federal state joining together "free communities" was adopted "as a response to outstanding demands for self-determination" (Leta, 1999: 209). The preamble of the Constitution stipulates, among other things, commitments to the right of self-determination and the building of a political community founded on the rule of law, democracy, and economic and social progress (FDRE Constitution, 1995, preamble). Accordingly, Ethiopian federalism, as a system that devolves the decision-making process, is seen as an antidote to the unitary, assimilationist policies that were at the root of Ethiopia's political malaise.

Meanwhile, what has been a pressing issue is whether ethnic groups, aside from an elite pro-EPRDF political class, were consulted before the introduction of the new system (Tronvoll, 2000). According to some commentators, the federal arrangement in Ethiopia was not negotiated in a democratic and participatory way; rather, it was an imposition (Tronvoll, 2000). Party leaders, not governments, the electorate, or societal actors, were the architects of all major reforms. At best, the arrangements were inter-elite bargains. In brief, it is argued that the EPRDF's unique

22 By 1900, Menelik had succeeded in establishing control over much of present-day Ethiopia. Hence, Ethiopia took its present shape with existing boundaries in the last quarter of the 19th century in the process of the expansion of the Ethiopian state. For a better understanding of the process of the creation of a modern Ethiopian state, see, among others, Tibebe (1995); Zewde (1991); Gudina (2003).

23 See among others, Zewde (1991).

approach is not the result of bargaining in the post-Derg period. It is first a forthright, if controversial, response to the legacy of ethnic domination and marginalisation in the Ethiopian state, and secondly a product of the course the EPRDF followed in its struggle. In brief, the impetus for Ethiopian federation focused on the ideals of a new nation and the economic and political advantages likely to follow from a decentralised system of government. In fact, the status of Addis Ababa was not intensively debated within the constitutional assembly. At the end of the debate, the reference to a capital city was adopted unanimously.²⁴ However, it can be suggested that several types of arguments may have been used to justify choosing the type of federal capital.

Many scholars have distinguished pragmatic, historical, democratic, national(ist) and federal reasons and justifications. The main reason for choosing Addis Ababa was the need to preserve national unity following the fall of the Derg regime 1991. The fact that Addis Ababa had been the capital for such a long period before, arguably, made it easier to re-establish it in 1991. Therefore, the organic aspect was underlined when the old seat of the federal government was again chosen as the new seat, with the only addition being the city within a member state. This can be interpreted as a symbol of continuity between the old and the new capital. This incident was influential in making the newly founded capital an asymmetric element in the new federation. Overall, it seems that the Ethiopian case is modelled on its own historical context. In this sense, the decision was made in line with the country's history and tradition and relied on past precedents and historical development. Since then, no major effort has been made to dispute the choice of Addis Ababa and bring other places into the discussion of Ethiopia's capital.

It is also clear that Addis Ababa owes its origin to the centrality of its location for administrative reasons. According to Garreston (1974: 33), although the original reason for the foundation of a town may have been military, its continued existence in times of peace or increased stability was due first to political and then to economic factors. Despite the historical arguments, however, the choice of this site was also based on its strategic position.

24 See Minutes of Constitutional Assembly, November 1994, 1987 E. C.

In general, there are two hypothetical reasons for the decision to re-establish Addis Ababa as capital: one is historical, and the other pragmatic. Historically, Addis Ababa was strongly associated with the long-established imperial Ethiopia; pragmatically; it is territorially more central and much closer to the regions of Ethiopia. Having the capital closer to the geographical centre of the state was thus much better for strategic and geopolitical purposes. Despite certain advantages (for example Addis Ababa's closeness to all regional borders), Addis Ababa was kept as the capital as it has become attractive not only for its controversial status but also for the fact that, with its many businesses, it as a centre for financial transactions and political negotiations. In a broader sense, the arguments used to justify the choice of Addis Ababa are generally related to safeguarding the historical records of government, to reducing political and economic costs, and to geographic centrality.

In fact, the current governance of the Ethiopian capital is rather different from the initial set-up. Addis Ababa as a capital exemplifies the model of the simple city within a member state. However, at the time of choosing Addis Ababa as a capital there was no discussion of a model for a capital city. Addis Ababa was chosen very much for its historical position. As the political battles were about which city was to be the capital, the discussion was only about which city would be the capital, not what the capital might be. The result was a capital city that is a city within the region of Oromia. Certainly, the initial period did not use federal arguments.

A point can therefore be made that the arguments that were used in past decisions about the Ethiopia capital were a mixture of pragmatic and national – there were buildings almost ready in Addis Ababa, but there were also arguments about political balancing. Addis Ababa would vex fewer people than any other choice, and it made sense in regard to one of the fundamental tensions in Ethiopian politics, the balance between national and regional concerns. In addition to balancing or managing tension, the choice has been complicated by the increasing ethno-cultural diversity of the country and the need to re-envisage a place composed of an increasingly multilingual population.

In short, it can be noted that, to be able to discuss the current nature of Ethiopian federalism in general and of Addis Ababa as a territorial unit in particular, its historical legacies have to be taken into account. The highly centralised pre-1991 regimes are a more than century-long experience. This historical legacy significantly influenced post-1991 development. In brief, the place where the new capital city is situated is a matter of prestige and honour. The federal capital had previously been the capital city and it was chosen on the proven merits of the place. It is obvious that Addis Ababa is the largest, wealthiest and most developed city in Ethiopia. This decision did not provide the opportunity to form a new centre.

4.1.2. The constitutional provisions on the seat of government

Addis Ababa assumed a multiple identity: it is the capital city of the federal government of Ethiopia; it is the seat of the state of Oromia's government; and it has the status of self-government with an elected council and a city governor accountable to residents (Geleta, 2014). This section examines the constitutional and legal status of Addis Ababa City based on the FDRE Constitution and the Addis Ababa City charter.

Regarding the capital city, Article 49 of the FDRE Constitution stipulates as follows:

- 1. Addis Ababa shall be the capital city of the Federal State.*
- 2. The residents of Addis Ababa shall have a full measure of self-government. Particulars shall be determined by law.*
- 3. The Administration of Addis Ababa shall be responsible to the Federal Government.*
- 4. Residents of Addis Ababa shall in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution be represented in the House of Peoples' Representatives.*
- 5. The special interest of the State of Oromia in Addis Ababa, regarding the provision of social services or the utilization of natural resources and other similar matters, as well as joint administrative matters arising from the location of Addis Ababa within the State of Oromia, shall be respected. Particulars shall be determined by law.*

Article 49(2) of the Constitution explicitly gives the residents of Addis Ababa a “full measure of self-government”. In parallel with the provisions of the Constitution, it was through Proclamation No. 87/1997 that Addis Ababa was designated as a chartered city government with a considerable degree of self-rule. New legislation was issued in 2003 to revise the charter. Accordingly, the Ethiopian federal parliament enacted the Revised Charter Proclamation No. 361/2003. The Charter made some amendments to the previous law. The City has been also reorganised into three tiers of administration, namely, the city government, 10 sub-cities, and 99 kebeles.

Through the Constitution of the FDRE Proclamation No. 1/1995, the issue of self-rule and self-government has been addressed explicitly. Article 88(1) of the Constitution lays down the principal objective of the government: “guided by democratic principles, government shall promote and support the peoples’ self-rule at all levels”. The FDRE Constitution left the creation of local governments within the powers of each region. Consequently, one essential decision in local matters, the creation of local government, has been reserved for the nine regions and the two city administrations. Accordingly, the sphere of the local governments is left to the mercy of the regional government, though the last item of Article 50(4) calls for autonomy to satisfy the needs of the inhabitants.

Concerning the constitutional status of Addis Ababa, Article 49(2) of the Constitution explicitly secures the residents of the city a “full measure of self-government”, though the same article in section 2 makes the city government accountable to the federal government. The phrase “full measures of self-government” would include the right of residents to vote and participate in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of development programmes. Presumably, this power would include the power to raise and manage revenues and administer its staff. It is therefore possible to argue that the FDRE Constitution provides protection for the residents’ right to govern themselves.

The FDRE Constitution states in Article 42(5) that particulars of the rights of Addis Ababa residents will be determined by law. In parallel with the provisions of the Constitution, it was

in 1997 that Addis Ababa was designated as a chartered city government with a considerable degree of self-rule. But, by taking into account experience gained in its application, and by looking into the organisation and management of the city from the perspective of democratic principles and good governance, as well as contemporary trends of growth and development, the federal government revised Proclamation No. 87/1997 with the new Charter Proclamation No. 361/2003. This Revised Charter of the city government is the current comprehensive statutory framework of the city.

In line with the stipulation of the Constitution that the residents of Addis Ababa have full power of self-government, the Revised Charter aims at creating conditions which enable the city to maximise the achievements of its development objectives by giving due account to the wishes of its residents and by relying on its development potential. Furthermore, the Charter provides the city with legal personality, which is thought one of the most favourable conditions for the better fiscal autonomy of municipalities. It also requires the city government to create favourable conditions for living and working, as well as to facilitate conditions in which residents can determine the overall operations of the city and become beneficiaries of its development. Accordingly, the Revised Charter gives the city legislative, judiciary and executive powers and organs.

The FDRE Constitution and Proclamation No. 361/2003 provide the city's residents the right to be governed within the framework of "self-rule" or "self-administration". In part three, Article 12(1) of the Revised Charter declares that members of the City Council need to be elected by residents of the city. Accordingly, the City Council becomes the highest legislative organ of the city. The Council has power to promulgate proclamations, policies, and plans under its jurisdiction (Article 14). The city also has a locally appointed executive organ formed by the political party or parties occupying the majority of seats of the City Council (Article 13). The mayor is the chief executive officer of the city, while the city manager is the executive of municipal services. Furthermore, the City Council has the power to appoint the mayor, manager and president and judge of city courts, as well as the chief auditor. The City Cabinet acts as a committee model of the executive branch

of the city. The city also has judicial organs (Article 10). The provisions of the Revised Charter, therefore, affirm the presence of a locally elected City Council and the executive organ of the city.

The political and administrative authority of the City is not, however, parallel to that of the regional government. Regions' powers and functions emanate from the Constitution, as in any federal country. Regions address their respective regional affairs through their own constitutions. The federal government does not have the power to amend any of the provisions in the Constitution without the consent of regions. Therefore, they have a strong constitutional mandate to exercise their autonomy. Addis Ababa City Government is the result of government's legislation, although the Constitution lays down the general principles within which the city can have "full measures" of self-government. Thus, the federal government can change the Charter. The degree of the powers and functions of the city government can be altered depending on the political view of the federal government. Furthermore, the federal government can dissolve the City Council, and the City Council and the mayor are also accountable to the federal government as well as to the electorate.

The city government has been given the mandate to reorganise the city's structure within the broad framework of the Charter. The city has three layers of government. The federal government, through the Revised Charter, determines the city's structural framework consisting of the city government, the sub-city and the kebele. But the city government is given the power to organise sub-cities and kebeles. Article 31(2) of the Revised Charter empowers the city government to organise new sub-cities or kebeles, or to reorganise existing ones, taking into account the opinions of the respective residents, suitability of service delivery, urban development plans, and the size of population. In line with this power, the city government reorganised the structure and number of kebeles and changed the status of kebeles to woredas in 2010.

A mayor heads the entire city of Addis Ababa. Administratively, Addis Ababa is subdivided into 10 sub-cities (Kifle Ketema) and 116 districts (woredas). All administrative sub-cities and districts have their own administrative organs and individual heads of the

area. In a nutshell, Addis Ababa is the capital city of the FDRE, and it is a self-governing chartered city with its own council, elected every five years and accountable to both the city electorate and the federal government.

4.2. Alternatives, challenges and implications

Different concerns have been aired, and proposals made, on the status of Addis Ababa, by parties in different historical periods. The greatest concern is about relations with the national government, but there are also issues with the neighbouring Oromia regional state. Addis Ababa is surrounded by the state of Oromia, and there are major spill-over effects and coordination problems. In Addis Ababa City itself, there are 3.5 million inhabitants, but others live in the city-area municipalities in Oromia. It should be noted that there have been clashes between the federal government and Oromia regional government over the city.

Legally speaking, the Constitution in Article 49(5) recognises the “administrative” links between Addis Ababa and the Oromia region, mainly because the city is an enclave within the latter. Over the past 20 years, the details that would have been expected to specify the interests of Oromia concerning Addis Ababa never became clear even though Parliament passed hundreds of legislative acts on other issues (Geleta, 2014). Under the current federal arrangement, Addis Ababa is the seat of both the federal government and the Oromia regional state. Recent political tensions have shown that the EPRDF’s ethnolinguistic federal system has not really provided a lasting solution concerning Addis Ababa. A historically rooted claim of ownership is being made, primarily by Oromo nationalists. There is also equally valid question of belonging to the city which rejects any claim of exclusive ownership by a single ethnolinguistic group.

Indeed, there are such severe political and economic problems, as well as problems of planning and coordination, that many proposals have been made, including moving the Oromia regional government out of the city to a new capital. The EPRDF sought to move some of the political institutions of the Oromia regional state to Adama, amid sustained waves of protests in Oromia, in order to make it a regional centre for high-level political meetings

and administration. However, after the 2007 elections, the capital was moved back to Addis Ababa, though opponents may have considered this a disadvantage too.²⁵ One would assume that the decision was an attempt to minimise the political cost of dissatisfaction from Oromia, one constituent unit of the federation.

There have been no successful plans for the territorial expansion of Addis Ababa. In 2013, for instance, the federal government created an Addis Ababa Integrated Regional Development Plan (also referred to as the Master Plan), a comprehensive scheme dealing with the future growth of the city of Addis Ababa and its environs. The “Addis Ababa expansion” project was taken up by the government in July 2013 but failed to be implemented. The Master Plan, based on a Chinese model of city planning and industrialisation, was intended to link infrastructural development to the expansion of Addis Ababa, whose population had quadrupled since the mid-1990s. Protests erupted in Oromia in April 2014 in response to the federal government’s plan which aimed to widen the capital city’s jurisdiction over parts of Oromia (Crisis Group, 2019). It was argued that, according to the Master Plan, the area covered by the Addis Ababa would greatly expand to cover seven municipalities in Oromia. There were no consultations with the regional government and local residents, as this was seen as an internal matter for the federal government and as a continuation of the former organisational structure of the capital. Recently tensions are becoming strong as many fear that the federal system faces the following dilemma:

Ever since Addis Ababa came under the government of one state of the federation, that state is in a position to dominate the federation’s capital, and the central government does not have control over its own seat of government.²⁶

There are always tensions between the federal government, with its national and international concerns, and the Oromia regional state and city administrations, which aim for particular patterns of development and have their own priorities in service delivery.

²⁵ These facts of history, as well as general information on related issues, are reported in a number of internet sources. See, for example, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethiopia>.

²⁶ See Eskindir Nega, president, Balderas for Justice and democracy. Retrieved December 30, 2022 from <http://Banderasforpeaceanddemocracy.org>

The other concern might be particularly pressing since the FDRE Constitution provides a right to secede for constituent members of the federation. The Constitution expressly provides for the right to secession under Article 39. Undoubtedly, the FDRE Constitution is virtually unique among federal constitutions in its provision of such a right. Only a few federal states have included in their constitutions the recognition of a unilateral secession right, or made explicit provisions for a formal process of secession.²⁷ The Ethiopian experiment, at least for the purpose of this discussion, can generate a great deal of concern from two sides. First, the FDRE constitution is near-unique in its enunciation of the right of secession within a federal constitution. Secondly, the federal capital is established as a city in a member state.

Secession and the Ethiopian federal capital are related in a complex fashion. The issue has emerged as a major fault line between political parties.²⁸ The Ethiopian federation is predicated on the assumption that this kind of state is essentially a contract between recognised partners that binds them together on a moral basis of equality, mutual respect, trust, tolerance and reciprocity. Secession, it follows, is justified on the basis that the federal bargain or contract has been either abandoned or undermined to such an extent that it neither satisfies the goals nor meets the basic needs of one or several parts of the federation.²⁹ However, whether secession is compatible or consistent with the Ethiopian model of the capital city is open to doubt. The implications of this claim are significant.

Since secession is legally recognised, the Ethiopian model of the capital city may weaken the federal system by giving a tool of political coercion to one of the federal units, that of greater bargaining power. Thus, every time the federal unit does not agree with the policy of the federal level, it may threaten secession.

27 The exceptions are the constitutions of Ethiopia, St. Kitts-Nevis, and (owing to judicial review) Canada. In the Canadian Constitution, there is no secession right allowed to the provinces overtly, but in 1998, the Canadian Supreme Court admitted that a non-unilateral secession is legal and conditional under the Constitution.

28 Many opponents of the ruling party's political programmes criticised it as a policy of "divide and rule" that would stimulate a surge of nationalism and lead to the disintegration of the state. Major opposition political parties have, in fact, made it clear that their priority is to scrap this provision from the Constitution if they succeed in coming to power. See, for instance, the programme of Banderas for Justice and Democracy and Ethiopian Citizens for Social Justice (ECSJ).

29 For a general idea of the objectives of the Ethiopian federation and the right of secession, see the preamble of the 1995 FDRE Constitution.

The federal system may be vulnerable to threats of secession by the Oromia regional state. The secession right could have negative consequences for fundamental federal principles such as cooperation and solidarity. The possibility of secession could be a source of uncertainty for federal economic development and the unity of the system as a whole. Although the decision to secede can be affected by changes to the circumstances in which the federal unit finds itself, the Ethiopian model of a capital city, maintained together with the secession clause, plays into the hands of the richer or stronger sub-unit within which the federal capital is located. This encourages the unacceptable risk of premature exit or strategic bargaining by the Oromia regional state.

The arguments above support the concern that the right to secede may be incompatible with the model of a capital city. In other words, the right to secede unilaterally is inconsistent with the federal system that locates the capital within one of the constituent units as matter of logic. The idea and availability of secession have not served as an incentive for the adoption of a fair arrangement for the capital city. Indeed, it can be argued that the explicit provision of a right to secession in a constitution may undermine open and sincere deliberation about fair terms of cooperation. It could increase the risks of factional struggle, reduce the prospects for compromise in government, introduce irrelevant and illegitimate considerations into day-to-day political decisions, create dangers of blackmail, and endanger the prospects for the long-term self-governance of local residents.

There is also the overwhelming initiative related to broader issues of democratic governance. It is argued that “demands and grievances assault all municipal administrations”. This is also reflected in their trust in the city administration. Residents of capital cities have limited trust in their local administration:

In Addis Ababa, the nuisances as well as available facilities are more extreme than in other regional states. The reasons refer to the function of the capital for Oromia Regional State and the country as a whole, its proximity to national government and the relative multitude of functions it, therefore, has to take care of. The capital city acts less on the behalf of its own residents and more on behalf of its

national government. Therefore, its residents have less trust in their local administration, as such trust is based on perceived encapsulated interests, that is the idea that the local administration will take its residents' interests into account and is capable of meeting the high and low expectations of its residents.³⁰

Officials can bridge these gaps to some degree, but accords at the political level are essential. Intergovernmental relations require trust, and partisan differences can make this hard to develop (Nega). In fact, these tensions may be worse when governments are of different partisan complexions; there is no doubt that relations are smoother when partisanship is common. Considerable friction may arise when one party controls the federal government and the city politicians are led by different party. This partisan conflict can lead at least to a lack of agreement over city administration.

A related argument concerns democratic participation. Strong arguments have been made to back the claim for representation of Addis Ababa's citizens. The main argument is always the principle of the consent of the governed. As noted above, the status of Addis Ababa City within the institutional framework of the country differs from that of the regional governments, as the city is not organised as a component part of the federation. Currently, Addis Ababa may be considered a self-governing territory. However, its degree of autonomy is lower than that enjoyed by a state, which enjoys greater autonomy than the capital, including the unconditioned right to secede. Apparently, there is a limitation to the voting rights of the citizens of Addis Ababa. They are not fully represented in the federal parliament. Currently, Addis Ababa's residents elect the mayor and the City Council, yet an Addis Ababa non-voting member is always allowed to serve on this council.

The capital city is the epicentre of opposition political mobilisation. Initiatives for representation via virtual statehood and self-rule proposals have also resurfaced. These are supported by a number of party officials but opposed by the Oromo nationalists. Recently, a considerable movement for a new Addis Ababa state

30 See Eskindir Nega, president, Banderas for Justice and democracy. Retrieved December 30, 2022 from <http://Banderas for peace and democracy.org>

grew within some opposition political parties.³¹ Indeed, as some prominent opposition leaders argue, constitutional amendment is necessary in any such case. Some newly established parties, claiming to be delegates of the city residents, lean more and more to separate statehood. Eskindir Nega, one of the staunchest defenders of self-administration and statehood, claims that his party has experienced intermittent repression and legal and political restrictions designed by the incumbent regime: “The government has regularly abused its power to harass and assault our members. There are moves by the state to limit the exercise of some political rights, such as bans on individuals from holding meeting and purging members.” However, this proposal is widely considered too radical, and some of the proponents of statehood changed to support a softer version of self-administration, getting criticised for subversion by Oromo nationalists.

Indeed, from the FDRE Constitution it is clear that nations, nationalities and peoples are the bearers or beneficiaries of self-determination. Article 39(5) defines a nation, nationality or people as follows:

A group of people who have or share large measure of a common culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identity, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit an identifiable, pre-dominantly contiguous territory.

Article 47(2) of the FDRE Constitution allows nations, nationalities and peoples found within any of the nine member states to have the right to establish, at any time, their own state. Those nations, nationalities and peoples that have not yet attained the status of statehood may enjoy the status pursuant to the procedures expressed under Article 47 of FDRE Constitution.³²

31 See, for instance, the programme of Banderas for Justice and Democracy and Ethiopian Citizens for Social Justice (ECSJ).

32 As per Article 47(3) of FDRE Constitution, the right of any nation, nationality or a person to form its own state is exercisable under the following procedures: When the demand for statehood has been approved by a two-thirds majority of the members of the council of the nation, nationality or people concerned and the demand is presented in writing to the state council:

- a) When the council that received the demand has organized a referendum within one year to be held in the nation, nationality or people that made the demand.
- b) When the demand for statehood is supported by majority vote-in the referendum:
- c) When the new state created by the referendum without any need of application directly becomes a member of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Defenders of the current system of mere self-rule under federal supervision often disguise highly parochial interests with constitutional or federalist arguments. One of the main arguments used by those who prefer to maintain the status quo is always the text of the Constitution. Only states are entitled to federal representation; on the other hand, the existence of a capital and the location of Addis Ababa within the state of Oromia are also constitutional necessities. These provisions condition the debate. Any solution that is attempted via an act that either provides representation or federal district territory may fail the test of constitutionality. In addition, the federal parliament has no right to extend, on its own, the representation in the legislature to a territory that is not a state, without previously amending the clause of the Constitution that reserves these rights to the nation, nationalities and people.

To increase self-rule by statute law seems much less of a problem, but giving the city the status of statehood would have an effect on the whole nation and directly affect the structure of the federal system, diluting the value of the interest of the Oromia regional state. However, a constitutional amendment may be the only proper way for a change that will hold before the House of Federation. Such an amendment is difficult to achieve when the majority of the states that have to ratify it hold the monopoly of representation – why should they share? Political motives are also to be considered, as the representation of Addis Ababa will always be “too urban, too progressive, too democratic, and too Amhara”. The majority of the member states are rural and many of them will have governing-party majorities at any given moment, making ratification of an amendment improbable.

5. Conclusion

Federal capitals often have special statutes when compared to other member states of the federation. They often enjoy a lower degree of autonomy and a lesser share in federal shared rule. Any constitution, as a political and legal institution, has to reflect the political history and principal social structure of the society it serves. The rules about a capital city should be agreed to under reasonably fair conditions at the point of a federal state’s founding or refounding.

Addis Ababa City, as a federal capital, has been established based on the federal district model. Although Addis Ababa was the old capital city, it was not until later that the issues of governance of the capital city arose. The unequal treatment of residents in the federal district, and the tensions between regional and federal government in Addis Ababa, are now politically salient issues and ongoing sources of debate. The issue of ownership of the federal capital, somewhat neglected at the founding of the federation, remains unresolved. The choice made was largely conditioned by the political context and dynamics at the time. With changing circumstances, the compromise reached at the creation of the federation has been found inadequate. Indeed, there have been many proposals to enhance the self-rule possibilities of Addis Ababa. Perhaps self-administration may be enhanced (or restricted) without changing the status of Addis Ababa. At the same time, while a modicum of representation could be introduced and improved by an act, full representation and statehood can be achieved only through an amendment to the Constitution. The problem lies in convincing Oromia and other member states of the federation. Notwithstanding this, whether the tensions concerning the capital city in the Ethiopian federation can ever be resolved remains an open debate.

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