Centering the Periphery?
The Praxis of Federalism at the Margins of the Ethiopian State DEREJE

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Reversing the age-old drive towards political centralization and cultural ho-mogenization in the pursuit of the nation-state project, there has been, in recent years, a growing sensibility world- wide towards recognizing diversity within a federal political order. As part of this global flow, and yet responding to its own historical specificity, Ethiopia has, since 1991, also shifted away from a histori- cally entrenched unitarian state to a federal political order. Ethiopia's new fed- eral political order has generated a heated scholarly and public debate regard- ing its desirability as a model for managing the country's high level diversity or its feasibility in reconstructing the Ethiopian polity on more inclusive bases. Circumventing the largely normative debate in the existing literature, this article seeks to contribute to a critical appraisal of the new political order through a case study of the Ethiopian federal experience in the peripheral regions. It is argued that while the federal political order has gone a long way in 'centering the periphery' - expressed in various forms of empowerment and reversed flow of resources from the centre - a lot remains to be desired to deepen the political reform and foster economic empowerment. Failure to do so in good time is likely to undermine the political and moral legitimacy of the federal order in regions which can be considered as its 'organic' constituency.

Introduction[1]

Reversing the age-old drive towards political centralization and cultural homog-enization in the pursuit of the nation-state project, there has been a growing sensibility towards recognizing diversity world-wide in recent years. An expres- sion of this is the waning of the idea of the nation-state and the emergence of federalism as a model of political order. As Watts (2008: xiii) noted, 'during the past decade there has been increasing interest throughout the world in adopt- ing federal political institutions. Indeed, there are at present some two dozen countries encompassing over 40 percent of the world's population that exhibit the fundamental characteristics of a federation'. As part of this global flow, and

yet responding to its own historical specificity, Ethiopia has, since 1991, also shifted from a historically entrenched unitarian state into one that strives to build a state into a federal political order, constitutionally recognizing cultural pluralism. This has indeed charted out a 'new frontier in Ethiopian politics', as Andreas notes in this issue. What has happened in 991 is more than a regime change but rather a fundamental restructuring of the Ethiopian state.

The process of state formation in Ethiopia had occurred within a centre- periphery mould. As Markakis (2011:7) noted, 'what distinguishes the centre from the periphery is not simply geography, though this is often a salient feature […] the locus of power is the most significant indicator'. As such, 'what defines the centre is the monopoly of power and the hegemonic position it occupies in the state'. Similarly, Abbink (2002:157) contends that 'ultimately the notion of centre-periphery relations should not be based on geographical or cultural criteria, but primarily on a model of the structure and distribution of political power'. While defining the periphery, Markakis further noted that 'what de- fines the periphery is its marginal position in the power structure of the state, or more precisely, its exclusion from power translates into lack of access to state resources, as well as the loss of native resources appropriated by the state and transferred to the centre'. There is also a cultural corollary to the peripheral po- sition: 'Equally important is the denigration of social and cultural accomplish- ments of societies in the periphery, and the expectation in the name of national integration that they should give place to the superior cultural accomplishments of the centre'. Overall, 'powerlessness, economic exploitation and cultural dis- crimination add up to a severe form of marginalization, the defining feature of the periphery' (ibid).

In the Ethiopian context, particularly in modern Ethiopia, the center re- fers to the northern highlands; the core of the Ethiopian state. Ethnically, it con- sists largely of the Amhara-Tigray culture area which has supplied most of the national symbols of the Ethiopian state.[2] The periphery refers to peoples who were incorporated into the Ethiopian state at the end of the 19th century, most of whom were dispossessed and marginalized by the process of state formation. Two types of peripheries can be identified: the highland and the lowland periph- eries (Almagore 1986; Donham 2002; Markakis 2011). The highland periphery, also called the southern highlands, is more integrated into the Ethiopian state in economic and political terms, largely because of its position as the major producer of the country's cash crops. The lowland periphery, on the other hand,

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2, The nature of the state and national identity of the medieval Christian kingdom is different from the modern Ethiopian state which came into existence at the end of the 19th century. In the medieval Christian kingdom it was cultural identity, not ethnicity, which was the defining feature of the state. As such it was more inclusive, with an expanding center.

which largely consists of the pastoralist belt in the east, west and south-western part of the country, is least integrated within the Ethiopian polity (Markakis 2011). Subjected to periodic extraction of natural products but largely neglected, the lowland periphery represents the most marginalized part of the country in terms of access to basic social services. In post 1991 Ethiopia the lowland pe- riphery is represented by the four regional states of Gambella and Benishangul- Gumuz in the west and Afar and Somali in the east as well as the peripheries of SNNPRS (Southern Ethiopia Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State) such as South Omo and Bench-Maji Zones, and Oromia (Borena Zone and Fen- tale Wereda).

Upon seizing state power in 1991, the ruling Ethiopian People's Revo- lutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) has reconfigured the unitary and rigidly centralized Ethiopian state, with ethnicity as the official state ideology; focus of social identification, and legitimate form of political organization. This has 'remapped' the country as an ethnic federation composed of nine member states designed according to ethnic criteria (Donham 2002). As such, the Ethiopian Federation is radically different from the conventional federation which is largely (ideologically) based on geographical regions. The 1995 Constitution has introduced many novel arrangements; from ethno-cultural justice, to self- determination of ethnic groups up to and including secession from the federal Ethiopian State if they so wished. Dubbed an 'ethnic federation' or 'a multi- nation federation', Ethiopia's new federal political order has generated a heated scholarly and public debate on its desirability as a mode of managing the coun- try's high level of diversity or its feasibility in reconstructing the Ethiopian pol- ity on more inclusive bases. Circumventing the largely normative debate in the existing literature, the paper seeks to contribute to a critical appraisal of the new political order through a case study of the federal experience of the peripheral regions with a special focus on peoples of Gambella and Afar[3].

The paper is structured in four sections. In the first section the peripheral existence of the people of these regions is outlined. Against the background of the center-periphery dimension of state formation in Ethiopia, section two ex- amines the changes that have occurred in the periphery since the establishment of the federal political order. Section three analyzes the setbacks and outlines the major challenges of the federal experience of the peoples of the periphery. The last section looks into the future, making policy recommendations to further entrench and build the legitimacy of the federal order in the peripheral regions.

3, The author has done research in the Gambella region at various times since 2000 and in the Afar region since 2010, supplemented by brief research visits to the Somali and Benishangul- Gumuz regions at various times.

I. **The Nation State Project and its Discontents in Ethiopia**

Ethiopia is one of the few African countries where the idea of the nation-state was pursued in the European sense of the term that involved political central- ization combined with cultural homogenization[4]. The present-day Ethiopian state came into existence in the late 19th century through conquest. Historically, Ethiopia is an extension of the ancient Christian kingdom (also referred to by foreigners as Abyssinia) geographically centered in the northern highlands; with a core culture based first on the Geez, and later on the Amharic language and the values of the Orthodox Church (see Clapham in this volume). Imperial Ethiopia vigorously pursued a policy of political centralization with the help of military coercion and cultural homogenization (Markakis 2003). The Ethiopian Empire was a mosaic of ethnic groups and cultures. Nonetheless, reference to ethnic diversity, let alone its political expression, was a taboo subject in imperial Ethiopia. As Markakis (2003: 8) noted 'the distribution of power was based on an ethnic calculus that gave a near monopoly to the Amhara ruling class. The defining features of that system were the exclusion of the mass of the population from the process of government, and the economic exploitation of the producers by an ethnically defined ruling class. Furthermore, the imperial regime practiced a crude form of cultural suppression that sought to deny, if not erase, the identity of all subordinate ethnic groups in its domain'.

Unlike the southern highland periphery which was subjected to a large- scale land dispossession, the western and eastern lowland periphery was im- mune from it largely because they were considered by the highland-based state not suitable for settlement. Nor did imperial Ethiopia have the technology and the administrative resources to exploit effectively the natural resources of the lowland periphery until the emergence of new transnational corporations and the commencement of commercial agriculture since the 1960s. Rather unique to the peripheral experience of the imperial state, particularly in the western periphery, is the experience of slavery and the stigma associated with it. Apart from the cultural differences used to justify slavery (non-Christiansas 'legitimate' target of the slave raids), some physiognomic features were taken as markers of being a slave, such as having a dark skin and curly hair. This relates to the discourse of the skin color - actual or perceived -that is deeply engrained in mainstream Ethiopian society. The distinction between people with darker skin and fair- skinned ("red" in the Ethiopian parlance) was much emphasized, and this is

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4,Sudan comes close to the Ethiopian experience. It had also sought to build a nation state through the imposition of Islam and the Arabic language in a country characterized by a high lev- el of ethnic and religious diversity (See, for instance Douglas Johnson. 2003. The Root Causes of the Sudanese Civil War. James Curry.

still the case among members of the dominant society, in relation to peoples of the western periphery who belong to the wider Nilotic society that straddles the Ethio-Sudanese borderlands. On the basis of oral history, Birhanu Dibaba docu- mented the gruesome and inhuman practices of slavery and the slave trade in western Ethiopiaas follows:

After their capture, slaves were beaten and roped together, and gags put in their mouth to prevent them from making loud noises. Their legs were also tied tightly so that they wouldn't escape, or run away. [In the markets] they sat in rows on stones called *dagagarba* and [the slave quarter]. Their faces were painted with butter and a type of grass called *soso* was put around their necks [...] to make them look healthy. If their skins were not dark enough, they would be warmed beside a fire for long time in order to change the pigment of

their skin before taking them to the market (Birhanu 1973: 14).

Birhanu's gruesome depiction of slavery in western Ethiopia was also noted by Bahru (1991:93), who likened the slave raids to game hunting at the wake of the violent territorial expansion of the Ethiopian empire at the end of the nineteenth century: 'South-western Ethiopia became a hunting-ground for humans as well as animals'. Slavery and the stigma associated with it continued even in the later part of the imperial ruledespite its claim of being 'modern' in the eyes of the in- ternational community. Northern highlanders called peoples of the southwestern periphery *shanqila*(with a slavery connotation) while the peoples of Gambella were slurred as*lemma*;a pejorative word associated with General Lemma, the imperial governor of Gambella in the 1960s(Dereje 2012: 52). This is an act of de-historicizing; for it suggests as if the people of Gambella did not exist before the arrival of the general. The appointment of General Lemma as the governor of Gambella was in fact characteristic of the way the Ethiopian state related to its periphery. Most imperial governors of the peripheral regions were sent there as a form of 'exile'.[5]

Exhibiting the typical features of the centre-periphery relational mode, the cultures of the people of the periphery were also denigrated and their cultural achievements were subjected to 'reform' or 'eradication'. The expansion of the Ethiopian state in the Gambella Region, for instance, had also been expressed in the so-called campaigns against 'backward' or 'harmful' cultural practices. Cultural practices such as the use of beads (*dimui*) for socio-economic transactions

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5,General Lemma came to Gambella because of his participation in the failed 1960 coup against Emperor Haile Selasssie. On a symbolic level, the general was subjected to a slight. Though he was an ethnic Amhara, he fell on the black side of the color spectrum. In the Ethiopia of the day, when the discourse about 'purity of race' played a prominent role in national identification, as- sociating him with the 'black' Anywaa and Nuer was intended as symbolic violence against him.

among the Anywaa or male initiation rites among the Nuer (*gar*) were condemned in the strongest possible terms, followed by a call for assimilation into a 'national' culture as the remedy. The following letter (in fact a plea) written by a governor of Gambella in the 1960s to his imperial superiors is a case in point:

> The only way of improving this embarrassing culture [in Amharic *asafari bahil*] such as the use of *dimui*, *naak* [dental revulsion] and *gar* is through education. Unfortunately, even the new generation would still revert to the old culture as long as their parents continue to practice it. I repeatedly told the Anywaa and the Nuer in public places such as in the markets how embarrassing their culture is for us Ethiopians and for the foreigners. If it is difficult to force them directly to abandon their culture, it should still be part of the law, the violation of which should entail punishment, primarily of their leaders who failed to change their respective people.

The means to abolish the 'backward' culture was indicated in the same letter to be through modern education as well as the adoption of the Orthodox Christian (Highlanders') culture:

> In order to bring the people of Gambella into civilization [*siltane*] we need to establish modern schools and bring religious teachers from the Orthodox Church[6].

The discourse of "harmful" or "backward" cultural practices is indeed modernist with the assumption of a staged cultural evolution. In the Ethiopian context, as is the case elsewhere, the discourse was applied selectively by the dominant highland society to 'primitivise' peoples of the periphery and disparage their cultural achievements. As such it was invoked to justify particular relations of dominance. While initiation rites of the peoples of the periphery were condemned, what might appear equally 'backward' cultural practices in modernist terms such as early marriage or circumcision of women, widely practiced among highland societies, was greeted with silence. Peoples of Gambella, on the other hand, who strongly reject female circumcision, were not presented as more 'modern' than highland societies. Instead, their complex cultural practices were dismissed as though being Nuer or Anywaa meant no more than their initiation rites which were selectively used to justify the label 'backward people' with an 'embarrassing' culture.

Cultural repression, coupled with imperial neglect in economic develop

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6, General Lemma Gebrekidan, Governor of Gambella, letter written to *Dejazmach* Girmachew Teklehawariyat, Illubabor Province *Enderase*, Gore Archive, dated 1587/47, 1964, Author's translation from Amharic.

ment, had severely weakened the sense of national belonging among peoples of the periphery. The marginality factor is expressed in local perception of the Ethiopian state as basically predatory. Among the Nuer in the Gambella Region, for instance, the Ethiopian state used to be referred to as *turuk mi thilkade* ('mo- dernity without salt') or *buny cie turuk* ('the Ethiopians are not modern'); a met- onym reprimanding Ethiopia as a 'failed state, principally conceived in terms of failure to deliver social services and public goods.*Turuk* is a generic term for state power and modernity, originally used to refer to the Ottoman Turks, the first 'modern' people the Nilotes encountered in the Sudan early in the nineteenth century. In the eyes of the Nuer, the Ethiopian state failed to deliver as much as the Ottoman Turks did, however coercive Ottoman rule might have been. On the other hand, the Nuer bemoaned the lack of any trickle-down effect from Ethiopian rule, and the failure to deliver social services.In competition with the Sudanese colonial states imperial Ethiopia thus lost moral legitimacy in the eyes of its border peoples. It is no wonder that, among the peoples of the lowland periphery, cross border social and political orientation was often the rule rather than the exception.

The situation was different in the eastern lowland periphery. Largely neglected, as such enjoying *de facto* autonomy, the pastoralists in the eastern periphery had nevertheless lately been subjected to intense government en- croachment into their grazing lands. The imperial government had realized the agricultural potential of the eastern lowland periphery since the 1960s when commercial agriculture was at its height (Getachew 2009). Since the end of the Second World War, the Ethiopian government has granted a number of conces- sions to transnational companies to develop enterprises throughout the middle and lower Awash Valley. The largest of these is the Tendaho Plantation, managed until the Revolution by the Britain-based firm of Mitchell Cotts. The Tendaho cotton plantation in the Lower Awash Valley had appropriated large tracts of Afar prime grazing lands. According to Bondetam (1974: 490), 'nearly 52,000 hectares were developed by Ethiopian and foreign, public and private interests between 1950 and 1970'. Had it not been for their enterprising leader, Sultan Alimirah, the Afar would have lost even greater territories to the transnational companies, further endangering their livelihood. Sultan Alimirah preemptively acquired lands bordering on the cotton plantation as a means of preventing its possible expansion (ibid, 481). Members of the imperial family were also major investors in the cotton plantation in the Awash Valley[7]. Bondetam further noted

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7,For instance Princess Tenagnework, the Emperor's eldest daughter, had a large cotton estate in the lower Awash valley. As such, she interfered with plans made to develop its grazing potential (Bondetam 1974: 481).

the role of Sultan Alimira in buffering Afar from aggressive economic encroachments by powerful economic players in the following manner: 'From a strictly economic perspective, Ali Mira earned the designation 'self-interested capitalist', but he was also a religious and political leader of his people and defender of their interests against the intrusions of greater Ethiopia by means of the concessions as well as by the Ethiopian government itself'. The issue was not whether the Ethiopian state had the legitimate right to make use of the resources of the periphery such as riverine lands for the national good *per se*, but rather, the means and the end of economic ventures in the name of the 'national good': 'the Afar resented not only the 'illegal' intrusion of the concessions on their traditional grazing domain but also the absence of measures to provide for their inclusion in the work and the rewards of the economically modernizing conces- sionaires in their midst' (ibid).

The explosive mix between class and ethnic inequalities had contributed to the downfall of the imperial order through a popular revolution in 1974. The "Nationalities Question" that underpinned the revolution was to some extent fuelled by the prevalence of peripheral cultural domination and economic exploitation. The military regime that had replaced the imperial government, widely known as the Derg, undertook a series of measures to reform the Ethiopian state. The land reform dismantled the economic foundations of the imperial system in the highland periphery (Markakis 2003; James et al. 2002). Moreover, the Derg repeatedly proclaimed the equality of all 'nationalities' and cultures in Ethiopia, and promised them regional autonomy and self-government. As a military dictatorship, however, it had sought to confine ethnicity in the cultural domain and repressed any form of its political expression (Tronvoll 2000: 47). As Clapham (2002:14) further noted, the Derg 'sought to intensify the longstanding trajectory of centralized state formation by removing the perceived sources of peripheral discontent and espousing an ideal of nation-statehood in which citizens would equally be associated with, and subjected to an omnipotent state'. In Derg's perspective, the unity of the Ethiopian State was sacrosanct, evident in its prime slogan, 'Ethiopia First'.

Modelled on the Chinese Revolution, the Derg went further than the im- perial government in uprooting local institutions through the so-called Cultural Revolution. Local cultural practices were not only condemned but violently uprooted under the pretext of being 'feudal'. In Gambella, for instance, *naak* (the ritual of dental revulsion among the Anywaa) and *gar* (male initiation rites among the Nuer) were outlawed. The traditional nobles (*niya*) and the village headmen (*kwaro*) were deposed and replaced by government appointed leaders. This is a misrepresentation at best. Anywaa political culture had an in-built sys

tem of social accountability. As Lienhardt (1957: 348) succinctly put it, a leader among the Anywaa needs to follow his followers in order to be able to lead'. Abuse of power and neglect of public duty often resulted in an *agem*, a village rebellion against a *kwaro* or *nyiya*. Besides, Anywaa local economy, based on special beads (*dimui*) used in social and economic transactions was forcefully and abruptly monetized, throwing traditional Anywaa society out of balance and disrupting its mechanism of social order (Dereje 2011).

Fiddled with ethnicity but undermining its political potency, the Derg re- gime was finally brought to an end by armed ethno-nationalist liberation move- ments in 1991 under the leadership of the EPRDF. The creation of the federal political order epitomizes the failure of the age-old nation building project in Ethiopia. The uniqueness of the Ethiopian experience has been mentioned by several scholars. Turton (2006: 1) noted that 'Ethiopia has gone further than any other African state, and further than almost any state worldwide in using ethnic- ity as its fundamental organizing principle'. Abbink (1995: 150) concurs: 'the changes occurring there are of fundamental importance not only in the context of the country itself, but also in that of the larger region of the Horn of Africa'. Noting the radical departure from the nation-building policies of the previous regimes, Adhana (1998) described the federal political order as a 'brave new world'. Notwithstanding the consensus on the uniqueness of Ethiopia's federal political order, its praxis has generated a heated debate among the public, schol- ars and politicians alike who occupy different positions on its desirability and ef- fectiveness, or as a model of inter-societal conflict prevention. Its admirers have hailed it as an aspect of the democratization of state and society (Kinfe 2001) and even a model for other multi-ethnic African countries (Chabal and Daloz 1999). According to Turton (2006: 1), 'there is no alternative to some form of federal system for Ethiopia, if it is to have a future as a multiethnic, or 'multi- nation', state with democratic institutions'. Assefa (2006: 131-132) also makes a positive note while comparing the Ethiopian experience with other African countries: 'The pursuit of political unity and territorial integrity at the expense of ethno-linguistic and religious diversity has been a leading objective of African statecraft. This had its costs […] The post-1991 Ethiopian experiment in ethnic federalism, then, stands as an exception, or perhaps even a breakthrough, buck- ing the prevailing trend on the continent'.

The detractors see behind the federal political order a 'Machiavellian' design, i.e., a strategy of 'divide and rule' allowing an ethnic minority – the Tigreans and Tigrean Liberation Front (TPLF) that claims to represent them – to dominate the majority, in as much as the TPLF is the dominant within the EPRDF coalition despite having a much smaller constituency than the other members of

the coalition (Vestal 2000; Merara 2003). Still others characterize ethnic federalism as political regression, an aspect of what Ali Mazrui(1994) called 'retribalisation of the country'. Yet other scholars highlight the role of ethnic federalism in escalating ethnic conflict (Ottaway 1997; Keller 1998). Some scholars even relegate it as a recipe for 'disaster' or label it as a political 'suicide' (Hunting- ton 1993; Brietzke 1995; Chane 1998; Poluha 1998). Circumventing the largely normative debate in the existing literature this paper seeks to contribute to an empirical assessment of the new political order, simultaneously engaging with the achievements; setbacks and challenges through a case study of the federal experience of the peripheral regions.

II. Federalism and Nation-building – "Becoming" Ethiopian at the Periphery

The 1995 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is imbued with a spirit of justice and solidarity seeking to redress historical injustices and the associated grievances. It has in fact special provisions to do so particularly in the peripheral regions of the country. According to article 89/4 of the Constitu- tion, 'Government shall provide special assistance to Nations, Nationalities and Peoples least advantaged in economic and social development'. Based on these constitutional principles and as part of restructuring the foundation of the Ethiopian state on more inclusive basis, much has changed in the peripheral areas of the country. In the following pages we examine the positive changes that have occurred in the lowland periphery since the establishment of the federal political order.

The new regional political space in the periphery
State-society relations have significantly changed in the peripheral areas in post 1991 Ethiopia. Above all, a new regional political space has been created. Variously called 'emerging' or 'developing', four regional states have been established as constitutive parts of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia despite their smaller demographic size. These are Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz, Afar, and Somali regional states.[8]The ruling regional parties in the Developing Regional States (hereafter the DRS) are affiliated to, but are not members of the EPRDF coalition.[9] Accordingly, with a new regional political power the DRS

8,Gambella Regional State has the smallest population size (350,000), while Benishangul-Gu- muz Regional State has a population of circa half a million. Afar and Somali Regional States have, respectively, 1.2 million and 4.5 million people. The two larger regional states such as Oromia and Amhara Regional States have a population of over 20 million each.
9,The EPRDF coalition consists of three ethnic parties, representing the three major peoples of the northern and central highlands: The Tigrean People Liberation Front (TPLF), representing

could safeguard their autonomy and better negotiate their interest vis-à-vis the central government which has for long acted against their interests. At any rate, reversing the mode of political recruitment during the imperial period, and to some extent during the Derg, when most of the political élites of the peripheral regions came from the centre, the political leadership of the DRS is now fully occupied by local élites. This has created a greater space and field of politi- cal possibility for the articulation and representation of local interests, bringing about an important dividend for nation building. As it has already been men- tioned, during the previous governments, the political orientation of peoples of the periphery was largely across the international border, which their settlement pattern straddles. This was most evident among the Ethiopian Somali who, since the 1960s, were politically mobilised by Mogadishu in its project of 'Great- er Somalia'.A similar political orientation across the border was also evident among the Nuer in Gambella who actively participated in the wars of liberation in southern Sudan from the 1960s to the 1980s.

The federal political order, on the other hand, has put a new premium in 'becoming' Ethiopian at the periphery. The new regional pie has induced a politi- cal reorientation, evident in the terms of the regional political debate in the DRS. In the regional power politics among the Anywaa and the Nuer in the Gambella Regional State, for instance, the inclusion/exclusiondebate is framed in terms of 'who is more Ethiopian than the other'. As such, local interests – resource and power claims – are represented in national terms. By promoting Gambella into a Regional State, the new federal political order has suddenly turned a pe- ripheral region into a new political centre. The creation of the Regional State of Gambella and the basis of allocation of administrative power brought with it unprecedented leadership opportunities and new avenues of status mobility for the Anywaa and the Nuer elites. Reflecting the new positive tone in state-society relations, and in reference to the previous mode of representing the Ethiopian state as a mere 'raw power' without delivery, the Nuer now say *buny cie turuk* is no longer valid; for federal Ethiopia has delivered substantially in its his- toric periphery such as Gambella. Political reorientation is also observable in the Somali Region. While previous governments had only managed to temporarily 'rent' the Somalis to keep them as part of the Ethiopian State, the new federal political order and a semblance of regional autonomy has induced on a process of reorientation of the political identity of the Somalis. As Markakis (1996: 568) noted, 'persuading the Somali living in Ethiopia to shed their irredentist aspira

the Tigreans; The Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), representing the Amhara; the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) representing the Oromo, and the South- ern Peoples Democratic Organization (SPDO), representing over 50 ethnic groups from southern Ethiopia.

tions and the dream of Greater Somalia was a conspicuous initial success for the regime that came to power in that country in 1991. Undoubtedly, the disintegration of the Somali State itself had something to do with it. Be that as it may, the Somali apparently accepted the offer of self-government within a decentral- ized Ethiopian State and plunged enthusiastically into political competition for control of their regional government'. Competing with the political vision of 'Greater Somalia' and the secessionist idea of 'Ogadenia' as advanced by the Ogaden Liberation Front (ONLF), at least some sections of Somali society have found Ethiopian Somali political identity as the third way because of the 'trick- ling down' effect of decentralisation and the creation of the new regional politi- cal space. Among the Afar, on the other hand, federalism has met their perennial quest for territorial autonomy. Parcelled out in five administrative regions by the previous governments Afar voices had been undermined because of their political fragmentation. The establishment of the Afar Regional State has helped them create a new political space and a stronger regional centre.

Greater national representation and a new sense of belongingto the Ethiopian polity

One of the core pillars of minority rights is their representation and participa- tion at the national level decision-making process. The Ethiopian federal system provides the opportunity of representation of all minorities at the federal level in the two Houses of Parliament in different ways. The representation of ethnic communities- Nation, Nationality and Peoples in the Ethiopian parlance - in the House of Federation (the Upper House), which is the quintessential place of minority representation, is granted by article 61 of the FDRE Constitution: 'The House of the Federation is composed of representatives of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples; and each Nation, Nationality and Peoples shall be represented in the House of Federation by a least one member. Each Nation or Nationality shall be represented by one additional representative for each one million of its popu- lation'. Based on this article currently the House of Federation has 135 Members and they represent 75 of Ethiopia's ethnic communities. Although it has little power in policy formulation and legislation at the federal level (See Assefa in this volume), the House of Federation is responsible for the preparation of, and decisions on the federal-state budget transfer formula, and for the interpreta- tion of the Constitution[10].It is thus possible to contend that the ethnic groups of Ethiopia are present at least in critical decisions that influence their rights as a minority. Moreover, the House is also entrusted with the responsibility of solv- ing disputes that may arise between regional states, and of promoting and con- solidating the unity of ethnic groups, based on equality and their mutual consent.

10,See article 62 of the FDRE Constitution

The second possibility for minority representation at the federal level under the Constitution is the representation of minority groups in the House of Peoples Representatives. Article54/3 of the FDRE Constitution explicitly defines the representation of minority Nationalities and Peoples: 'Members of the House, on the basis of population and special representation of minority Nationality and Peoples,shall not exceed 550; of these, minority Nationalities and Peoples shall have at least 20 seats'. National representation of peoples of the periphery is also expressed in the form of assuming federal portfolios such as ambassadorial and ministerial positions. It would not be far-fetched to call it a historic moment when one sees Ethiopia being represented internationally by people coming from the periphery. The people of Gambella are no longer reduced to 'people of Lemma' but instead now represent Ethiopia internation- ally as its ambassadors and as state ministers. The conversation that I had with a Berta elder from the remote town of Kurmuk in the Benishangul-Gumuz Region in 2009 further sheds light on the constructive dimension of the new federal po- litical order in nation building:

In olden times [during the imperial and the Derg periods] we were not consid- ered as Ethiopians. We were judged in a language which we could not speak. We were also not allowed to learn in our language. Now it is different. Our children learn in their own language, public meetings are held in the language we understand and our children are in government. For the first time we are recognized as Ethiopians and the leaders respect us. Some months ago the president of the region came to Kurmuk and talked to us asking us what our needs are. We told him that our priority is access to medicine. Because there are no local pharmacies in Kurmuk we cross the border to the Sudan and eas- ily buy the medicine there. We also told him that we need better communica- tion facilities. Why should we go to the Sudan to buy medicine and use their mobile phone service? Isn't it possible to get these services *here at home*? (Emphasis mine; Extract from interview with Sheikh Mohammed Ibrahim,

Kurmuk town, July 26, 2009).

Sheikh Mohamed's narrative touches upon the issue of ethno-cultural justice as one of the major deliverables of the Ethiopian federation. But it also underscores the centrality of service delivery as one of the primary bases of legitimacy of the state; a narrative that echoes the Nuer's critique of the pre-federal Ethiopian state. If the Ethiopian federation has gone a long way in meeting the first set of demands – recognition demands -, as is acknowledged by Sheikh Mohammed, a lot remains to be desired in the area of social service delivery and economic em- powerment, a topic to which the paper will return in the second part of the essay.

Cultural representation of peoples of the periphery at the national level is also evident in the field of art. Long tuned to music and dances of the northern highland societies it has now become more common to hear energizing music and joyful dances from the periphery. The cultural exchange is a two-way traf

fic: Musicians from the periphery making themselves heard in national public spaces, as well as musicians from the centre singing tunes adapted from the periphery. This is in fact a result of the cultural empowerment of the peoples of the periphery and the historic opening up of the 'centre' to cultural contributions by the periphery. Along the way, a more syncretic musical style is enriching the national artistic landscape.[11]

Regaining self-esteem and cultural assertion

The cultural suppression of peoples of the periphery during the imperial period was partially redressed by the Derg which at least condemned ethnic inequality. The cultural reform of the Derg was, however, insignificant as compared to its economic reform which is one of its major achievements. The land reform had put an end to landlordism particularly in the Southern periphery, though the rigid planned economy and state ownership of the land had later on threatened the revolutionary gains. In the area of cultural identity, despite its initial restructuring of the foundations of Ethiopian society, the Derg gradually slipped into the narrowly defined national fabric of the Ethiopian state. As Donham (2002: 20) described it, 'here was little iconoclastic destruction of old political symbols at the centre of Ethiopian politics. The revolutionary state drew on the cultural infrastructure of the ancient regime and the monarch served as a model for power'. Assimilation into the 'national' culture had meant to the people of the periphery re-defining their own culture as 'backward', which in effect meant submission to the 'high' culture of the Habesha, a generic term for the northern Highlanders historically identified with the Ethiopian state. In the Gambella Region, for instance, the imperial policy of denigrating local cultures, aka the discourse on 'backward' cultural practices, was continued. As a result, the first generation of educated Anywaa and Nuer lost confidence in their respective culture. Some educated Anywaa continued the campaign, particularly those which appear to have produced conspicuous 'evidence' for them being 'backward' such as initiation rites. They instead enthusiastically adopted Habesha (northern)culture, such as eating raw meat, and actively discouraged the eating of 'unclean' and 'inappropriate' food such as *adule* (cane rat), which the Highlanders equate as rat[12]. Likewise, educated Nuer re-evaluated what was hitherto considered as a

11,Sentayehu's Hibongo from Hadiya; Miso Negaya of Hamer; Diamond's Zumbara from Benishangul, Tokichew's Chembelala from Sidama are cases in point.

12,Cane rats are widely distributed and valued as a source of "bush meat" in West and Central Africa. The meat is of a higher protein but lower fat content than domesticated farm meat. It is also appreciated for its tenderness and taste. Van der Merwe (1999: 69-73).

13, In 1978 the Nuer leadership in Jikaw district even passed a resolution that no freshly initiated Nuer could enter the district's capital.

14,Cultural Policy, Introduction (http://www.ethioembassy.org.uk/fact %20file/a-z/culture.htm)

source of pride as an evidence of backwardness, and criminalised *gar*, the male initiation rite[13].

Upon seizure of state power in the year 1991, EPRDF has restructured the Ethiopian state along pluralist line. According to Article 39, 'Every nation, nationality and people in Ethiopia has the right to speak, to write and to develop its own language; to express, to develop and to promote its culture; and to preserve its history'. In line with Art 39, the Ethiopian government designed a cultural policy which was endorsed in 1997. Accordingly, the equality of the cultural practices of all ethnic groups is pronounced: 'the modes of life, beliefs, traditions and the whole set of the material and spiritual wealth which characterise a certain society as distinct from others should be considered equal'. The thrust of cultural equality is enshrined in one of the objectives of the cultural policy, which is 'to enable the languages, heritage history, handicraft, fine arts, oral literature, traditional lore, beliefs and other cultural features of the various nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia to receive equal recognition and respect, to preserve and conserve these and pass them over to future generations'[14].

The cultural policy of the new federal political order has the effect of strengthening (or re-awakening) confidence in local (aka non-Highlander) culture among peoples of the periphery. One of the first political measures taken by the ruling Gambella People's Liberation Movement - the GPLM- in the 1990s was, for instance, to re-validate local cultural practices. Some officials of the GPLM themselves went through traditional initiation rites. Besides, they encouraged the reinstatement of nobles and headmen in some Anywaa villages who were forcefully deposed during the so-called Cultural Revolution. Regaining cultural confidence is also reflected in contesting what has hitherto passed as hegemonic culture, as the following narrative by an Anywaa youth in Gambella town suggests:

My dream is one day to open a restaurant in Gambella where Anywaa could freely eat their traditional food, including *adule*. This is not a problem in Kenya. The Luo are like us and eat the same food we eat[15]. But they do not feel ashamed as we are in Gambella. I also heard that the Chinese eat everything and yet they are modern and powerful people. I used to think that *enjera* is the only proper food and regrettably many Anywaa stopped cooking traditional Anywaa food.

15, The Anywaa are closely related to the Luo of Kenya and the Acholi of Uganda. They belong to the wider Lwoo category within the western Nilotes of East Africa.

The pomp and ceremony that surrounded the coronation of the new Sultan of the Afar in November 2011 is yet another example that people of the periphery are regaining confidence in things of their own, rather than subjecting themselves into assimilation into other 'progressive' cultures. Given the cultural repression and acts of dehumanisation that peoples of the periphery were long subjected to, the new cultural policy will further boost the process of cultural rehabilitation and regaining of self-esteem.

Enhanced access to basic social services and capacity

One of the most visible markers of imbalance in social development indicators between the centre and the periphery in Ethiopia is much lower access to basic social services in the latter. This imbalance, particularly in the education sector, has created not only fewer avenues of social mobility but also a weaker political voice in regional and national politics. Throughout the imperial period missionaries and refugee camps were more active in delivering social services in the peripheries than the Ethiopian state. In fact, one of the pull factors for the cross-border social and political orientation was the better social services delivered by the colonial states than the Ethiopian state.[16] The situation had improved during the time of the Derg regime, though the imbalance was still stark. Special attention has been given by the Federal Government to a greater delivery of social services in the peripheral regions, evident in the rapid expansion of schools and health facilities. The education sector has also shown remarkable growth. Its coverage has now reached to 94 per cent. Primary schools were built in all woredas of the regional state. Moreover, the safe drinking water coverage has now reached to 86 per cent from 5 per cent two decades ago. The regional state has also registered remarkable achievements in the road construction, electric power provision and telecommunication development sectors.

The federal government has also sought to build the capacity of the pe- ripheral regional states, particularly in the field of education. The establishment of the Ethiopian Civil Service College (ECSC) in 1995 is a case in point. The ECSC was established with a view to enhancing the socio-economic develop- ment of the Ethiopian people, especially to create conditions under which civil servants working in the newly created regions can better serve the people by training them in various skills and professions, giving special emphasis to ad- mission of women and students from the peripheral areas. It was established specifically to meet the urgent manpower needs of the regional governments in the context of decentralization and devolution of power from the central govern-

16,Aware of this socio-political orientation some imperial government officials in the peripheral regions at times lobbied the central government to deliver services lest they should be suscep- tible to the subversive activities of the colonial states across the border.

ment, such that 'nations and nationalities have the right to determine their own affairs and the capacity to do this[17]. As such the genesis of the ECSC goes back to one of the constitutional provisions to redress the marginality of the 'least advantaged people'. Public service delivery was largely inadequate and civil ser- vice performance continued to be constrained by a lack of skilled and qualified personnel as well as inadequate administrative and managerial capacity. Since its establishment, the College has made a significant contribution in building the human resource capacity of the regional governments by providing education and training for their civil servants. Between 1995 and 2012, the College gradu- ated 8,500 civil servants, out of which 1,516 (17 per cent) are from the DRS. The education and training offered by the College has helped to alleviate the severe shortage of skilled human resources with which the regional governments were confronted. Apart from producing professionals to run the new regional states, the ECSC has created unprecedented new career opportunities for the new gen- eration of educated people in the periphery, who otherwise needed to overcome the stiff competition in the national school exit examinations to join any of the colleges and universities. In addition to the ECSC, the Ethiopian Management Institute has played an important role in building the capacity of regional gov- ernments not only by providing short-term training for their civil servants but also by helping the regional states to establish their own management training institutes. The establishment of the Civil Service College and regional manage- ment institutes is perhaps one of the most visible and effective measures taken by the federal government to build the institutional capacity of regional states, especially in the lowland periphery where it has produced the first generation of educated people. The establishment of regional universities in the DRS has also contributed to the educational awakening of peoples of the periphery, and has created a new field of possibility and opportunity to advance their educational careers at home and in a more family friendly way[18].

The solidarity principle in the distribution of resources within the Ethiopian Federation

Federations are called cooperative or competitive on the basis of whether the organizational principle is, respectively, competitive or solidarity-driven (Tar 2001; Wade 2008). As Zimmermann-Steinhart (2009:1) noted, in competitive federalisms, 'the assumption prevails that the governments of the constitu- ent units are responsible for the development within their jurisdiction, which will then result in economically, socially and politically diversified states'. Besides, a second assumption claims that 'economic and/or political competi- tion among the constituent units leads to an overall growth and better living

17,Ethiopian Civil Service College Brochure.
18,Among the 30 new regional universities three are found in DRS regions: Afar (Semera Uni- versity); Somali (Jijiga University), and Benishangul-Gumuz (Asosa University). Metu Univer- sity in Oromia has also recently opened a new campus in Gambella.

conditions'. The solidarity principle of a cooperative federalism, on the other hand, focuses on 'a stronger co-operation between the federal and the sub-national governments on one side and between the sub-national governments on the other, in order to achieve equal or at least comparable living conditions across the whole country'. This implies 'a responsibility to support weaker parts of the federation either through the federal government only, or through direct support of the weaker units through the stronger ones' (ibid).

On the basis of the thrust of its Constitution and related practices, the Ethiopian Federation can be called cooperative. The preamble of the Con- stitution states that 'the Constitution is based on the voluntary commitment of the Ethiopian "Nations, Nationalities and Peoples" to build a political community which ensures lasting peace, economic and social development through mutual support and mutual respect'[19]. This implies that 'the goals of lasting peace, the rule of law, democratic order and sustainable economic development can only be achieved through equality, mutual respect and sup- port by rectifying past injustices. This statement builds the foundations of the equality and solidarity principles which find further expression throughout the constitution' (Zimmermann-Steinhart 2009:2). Thus, Article 39 grants the right of self-government to all Nations and Nationalities including the establishment of the necessary institutions, which has wide implications on administrative costs; Article 41 (3) grants the right to equal access to pub- licly funded social services; Article 89 (2) obliges the Government to provide equal opportunities to improve their economic conditions to all Ethiopians and requires the Government to promote an equitable distribution of wealth among Ethiopians. Besides, Article 90 (1) refers to the provision of access to basic social services to all Ethiopians, whereas Article 89 (4) stipulates the "Government shall provide special assistance to Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples least advantaged in economic and social development." As Zimmer- mann-Steinhart further noted, providing least advantaged Nations, Nationali- ties and Peoples with special assistance in order to close the gap to others, ultimately leads to additional spending.

National resource-sharing during the previous governments was not transparent. The annual budgets of the central government and the provinces were dependent entirely on the goodwill of the central government authori- ties. As such, there was no formula for revenue sharing where any citizen could see how the annual budgets were made. On the other hand, the new political order 'makes a revenue-sharing formula constitutionally mandatory and it is institutionally vested in the powers of the House of Federation or the House of Nationalities'.(Barnabas 2003: 126).The Federal government 19,Preamble of the Constitution of the FDRE, 1995.

has used fairly simple formulae of revenue sharing: (1) Population size (2) level of development favouring the marginalized and (3) revenue generation, favouring those who collect more revenue. The peripheral regional states get more federal funds in the spirit of affirmative action.

The new Federal Budget Grant Distribution Formula, adopted by the House of Federation in May 2009, combines mechanisms of balancing vertical and horizontal imbalances. It builds on three main pillars: balanc- ing differences in revenue raising capacity; balancing differences regarding expenditure needs, and reserving a grant from the distribution pool for the peripheral regions which have significantly lower revenue raising capacities and higher expenditure needs than the rest of the regions. This means that us- ing the general distribution through the first two pillars of the formula would make it extremely difficult for these regions to provide the necessary services and to undertake the prescribed investments. Therefore, the formula applies a third step. Dividing the overall amount of the Budget Distribution Grant into a 99 percent share, which is divided according to the principles of vertical fiscal equalization, and a one percent share, which is reserved for the four de- veloping regional states, includes an element of horizontal equalization into the formula (Zimmermann-Steinhart 2009). The Tigray Regional State has gone one step further in showing solidarity with the peripheral regional states, for it has provided since 2012 financial support from its regional budget to the DRS as a further act of solidarity. As part of capacity building of the develop- ing regional states the Ministry of Federal Affairs has also designed what it calls the twinning arrangement according to which the DRS are assigned to the four 'developing' regional states, respectively Tigray for Afar; Amhara for Benishangul-Gumuz; SNNPR for Gambella, and Oromia for Somali re- gional states to provide technical assistance and build their institutional ca- pacity. The solidarity principle is also being applied within regions to foster equitable development. Oromia and SNNPRs, for instance, allocate funds, in addition to the block-grant, to their peripheries, respectively, the pastoralist Zones of Borena and Fentale, and South Omo and Bench-Maji Zones.

III. Setbacks and Challenges

A critical appraisal of Ethiopia's federal experience shows some major flaws at the level of principle; setbacks in the form of re-centralization; and emerging challenges in implementation capacity. In the following sections we examine these limitations and how they are acted out in the DRS, aka peripheral parts of the country.

Federal encroachment into regional autonomy

The Ethiopian Federation has been governed by the EPRDF through what John Young (1997) calls a 'two-tier' governance structure. The EPRDF coalition, through its member organizations, has directly governed the four 'highland' regional states of Tigray, Amhara, Oromia and SNNPR. The remaining five, four of which are the peripheral regions, are not members of the EPRDF coalition. They have been indirectly governed by regional parties affiliated to it. According to EPRDF line of thinking, the political autonomy of the DRS *vis-à- vis* EPRDF was also justified to save them from the party's political structure built on the principle of 'democratic centralism', whose majoritarianism could disadvantage political parties that represent national minorities[20]. There could also be other factors that explain this dual governance structure. For one, these regions had a separate political history and mobilization. Liberation Fronts in these regions had operated independently of the EPRDF, though they were closely allied to it. As such, it was much easier for them to negotiate their autonomy than most of the political organizations established under the auspices of the EPRDF after it seized state power. It seems that these organizations were also tolerated by EPRDF to give the impression of a multi-party democracy[21]; without running any risk of serious challenge to the establishment. Yet another explanation is a difference in political culture between EPRDF members which are hailed from highland peasant societies and the 'tribal' politics of the lowland pastoralist so- cieties. Be the rationale behind the governance structure as it may, it has never- theless serious implications for the regional autonomy of the peripheral states.

Ostensibly 'left alone' to mind their own affairs in the spirit of self- determination, political practice however has it that federal interference in the regional politics of the peripheral states abound. This is expressed in various ways. Before the establishment of the Ministry of Federal Affairs in 2001, the office of the Prime Minister was actively involved in the political process of the peripheral states through the institution of the *amakari* (advisers). The need for political advisers to the peripheral states was justified by 'capacity gaps'. After all, a distinction is made within the Ethiopian Federation between 'developed' and 'developing' regional states, representing respectively, the highland and the lowland regional states. Political advisors attached to the office of the regional presidency were supposed to facilitate the democratization process at the region- al level. However, in real terms they had functioned *de facto* 'king-makers' and power brokers in regional politics (Dereje 2006; Assefa in this issue); a problem

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20,Personal communication with Mulugeta Gebrehiwot, former Central Committee member of TPLF/EPRDF,Addis Ababa, November 3, 2012.
21,ETV interview with the late Prime Minister MelesZenawi, Chairman of the EPRDF, on the eve of the 2010 election.

which was later on recognized by EPRDF when it abolished the office of politi- cal advisers in 2001. Besides, the *amakaris* sent from the federal government are invariably Highlanders who are often no better qualified than the new generation of educated people in the periphery. Nevertheless, the institution of *amakari* has continued to exist even after the establishment of the Ministry of Federal Affairs, though under the disguise of 'development' advisers. Some of these advisers are still professionally incompetent, while heavy-handed in regional politics. This type of interference is deeply resented by the educated élites of the peripheral regional states. In their perspective, this is reminiscent of the centre-periphery relational mode, now expressed in the form of a domineering attitude of the pro- fessional Highlanders towards their 'superior' regional leadership.

Federal interference is also evident in imposed mergers among various and competing regional parties in the DRS. While keen on maintaining the po- litical allegiance of the peripheral states EPRDF has adversely interfered in the democratization process by favouring the regional ruling parties during elec- tions, thereby blocking both intra-party and multi-party democracy. Coalition politics and mergers *per se* are not undesirable, but the manner in which they have been imposed in these regions is one of the drivers of political instability. Party politics in the Gambella is a very good case in point. When the Regional State was established in 1991 the Anywaa-based GPLM, a liberation movement which was closely allied with EPRDF during the wars against the Derg, took over the political leadership of the region with the support of the EPRDF. How- ever, GPLM fiercely defended its political autonomy *vis-à-vis* EPRDF. EPRDF responded by co-opting some of the leadership, ultimately changing it into a par- ty, the Gambella Peoples Liberation Party (GPLP) in 1995. Backed by EPRDF, GPLP had sought to exclude other parties in the regional power politics, particu- larly its major contender, the Nuer-based Gambella Peoples Democratic Unity Party (GPDUP). EPRDF then engineered an imposed merger between GPLP and the GPDUP in 1998, leading to the formation of the Gambella People's Demo- cratic Front (GPDF). Contesting the imposed merger, educated Anywaa had es- tablished a regional opposition party called the Gambella People's Democratic Congress (GPDC). Supported by EPRDF, GPDF had sought to suppress GPDC in the run up to the 2000 regional election. Notwithstanding the double pressure, GPDC had achieved significant electoral gains. As it transpired, however, GPDC was violently excluded from the regional political process. Most of its leader- ship were imprisoned or fled the country. As soon as GPDC was eliminated from regional power politics, GPDF was split between its constituent parts which had only grudgingly accepted the merger in the first place. Furthermore, in 2003 all the existing political parties were abolished and were replaced

by new ethnic parties modeled on EPRDF's People's Democratic Organizations (PDOs). Accordingly, three political parties were established: APDO (Anywaa People's Democratic Organization),NPDO (Nuer People's Democratic Organization), and MPDO (MajangirPeople's Democratic Organization); ostensibly representing the three major indigenous titular groups in the Gambella Regional State. These Gambella 'PDOs' were organized, much in line with EPRDF, into a coalition known as the GPDM (Gambella People's Democratic Movement). Af- ter the dissolution of the GPDM coalition and its constituent ethnic based organizations in 2007 yet another regional party was established under the auspices of the EPRDF: the Gambella People's Democratic Unity Movement (GPDUM). In this process of merger and dissolution the hand of the Federal Government/EPRDF loomed large, effectively undermining the democratization pro- cess at the regional level. An adverse effect of this is the extroverted nature of the political legitimacy of the regional parties. Aware of the significance of federal patronage, the regional political leadership in the peripheral areas pays less attention in responding to its domestic constituency than to building and cultivatingloyalty to Addis Ababa. A government official in the Gambella Regional Council used the Amharic metaphor of *chikal* (anchor) while describing the centrality of federal patronage in regional politics: 'one needs *ye federal chikal* [federal anchor] to advance politically. That is why we have even stopped asking what this or that policy is about or how it is justified. We just simply say "*chiku mejelar"* [in the Nuer language it means "because the government says"]. Questioning government policies, especially those which come from the federal government, will cost you the hard-won political position. And there are many out there who will readily take over your position'.[22]This governance structure seems to have also created a blame-game between the regional political leader- ship and the federal government. On the one hand, the federal government picks the 'self-determination' card when things go wrong in these regions, whether the eruption of deadly conflicts or lack of development. On the other hand, the regional political actors pick the 'federal interference' card to explain why things go wrong in their respective regions. The political leaderships of the DRS have also started questioning the wisdom behind their status as *agar* (partners), not fully-fledged members of the EPRDF coalition. The resentment came to the fore during the 2012 joint political and ideological indoctrination session when the 'subordinate' status of the ruling parties in the DRS was openly contested. The DRS political leaderships proposed either full membership or an independent status; shunning the label 'affiliates' and the asymmetrical connotation of 'de

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22,Similar opportunism is observable among the Afar political class. *Katela* ('throat' in the Afar language) is a popular term coined to refer to the uncritical compliance with government orders and policies in general.

veloping', which, in their perspective, has not only reinforced the domineering attitude of the 'advisers' but has also created a loophole for unregulated federal encroachment into regional autonomy[23]. At the heart of the contestation is also the ill-defined and fuzzy 'memorandum of understanding' for the 'partnership' between EPRDF and its *agar* parties which fails to specify EPRDF's mandate for 'political mentoring'. Be the ongoing political contestation between the 'partners' as it may, federal/EPRDF encroachment into regional autonomy has on the other hand provided a political justification for the continued existence of armed ethno liberation movements within a federation whose *raison d'être*is fostering inter-ethnic relation and a new sense of national belonging. Paradoxi- cally, most of the armed ethnic liberation movements are found in the peripheral regional states[24].

The motives in the drive towards political control of the peripheral areas might be many. From the government perspective a certain degree of politi- cal centralization is found to be necessary to achieve what it considers the new 'integrative imperative' to maintain a polity built on a fundamentally different basis of unity.[25] Accordingly, a radical switch from a deeply entrenched unitarian to a federal system has partly unleashed centrifugal forces including a seces- sionist political agenda among some of the armed ethno-liberation movements. Besides, the lower level of state formation in the peripheral areas, and the politi- cal fragility connected to that, seem to have further necessitated governmental control and securitization of political pluralism in these regions, which are also all borderlands. Ironically, except in the Somali Region which has been more susceptible to external influences, political dissent in the peripheral areas, par- ticularly in the first decade of the federation, did not have centrifugal tendencies. On the contrary, it was rather a call for deepening of the democratization pro- cess at the regional level with greater demand for self- rule within constitutional bounds. As Turton (2006) noted, the major challenge to the Ethiopian Federation is not because it is too ethnic, as its detractors would surmise, but rather 'because it is less federal'.

23,A regional senior official from the DRS fiercely criticized 'clustering of people' as 'devel- oped' and 'developing' for its negative connotation and instead proposed a politics of equality/ inclusion rather than a politics of difference between the ruling parties of the DRS and EPRDF. Anonymous, December 2012.

24,This includes the GPLF in Gambella; the BPLF in Benishangul-Gumuz; the ONLF in the Somali Region, and Ugugumu in the Afar Region.

25, Professor Andreas Eshete, advisor to the Prime Minister, at a panel discussion on the role of political parties within federations, Forum for Federation, November 9, 2012, Addis Ababa University.

Hegemonic attitude towards traditional authorities

One of the pillars of federalism is the creation of a political space that allows multiple centers of power. The Ethiopian constitution in fact recognizes political pluralism not only in the form of multi-party democracy but also in the political role traditional authorities can play at the regional and local levels of government. The DRS, particularly the eastern periphery, are ideal places to test how far the Ethiopian Federation has delivered on one of its promises. Ironically, these regions, unlike the western periphery which was on the receiving end of state encroachment, have 'benefited' from neglect in as much as they kept their traditional institutions intact. Among the Afar and Somali, clan elders play crucial roles in maintaining social order. But unfortunately, the federal government leans more towards co-option than building a sensible partnership with these traditional authorities who are being turned into mere state functionaries put under the government payroll. Although the specific modality varies from re- gion to region, traditional authorities are salaried and assume new government administrative roles. In the Somali Regional State, for instance,clan elders were brought to Jijiga, the regional capital, and were renamed as *lataliye*, advisers to the regional government. In Gambella elders' councils were established at the regional level as well as at the wereda (district) level. In the Afar Region clan elders remained within their respective communities but received government salaries. The federal government's policy of reaching out to traditional authorities in the peripheral areas has failed more glaringly in the Somali Region where, as soon as elders were brought to the regional capital, the local people elected substitutes in their place. In the eyes of the local people the 'government elders' (*lataliye*), were far removed from local needs and were subject to governmental partisanship on account of the remuneration they received from the state.(Hagmann 2012:65). This approach is destined to fail because it often results in the loss of legitimacy of the traditional authorities' *vis-à-vis* their local constituen- cies. There is certainly a question about the *lataliye's* independence from the regional ruling parties. The *lataliye* were first appointed in the Somali Region just before the 2000 elections and many openly worked for the ruling party, the Somali People's Democratic Party (SPDP).

Local institutions and their traditional leadership, with their respective bases of legitimacy, could supplement dispute settlements and enhance social accountability of service delivery at local levels. In fact, some of the traditional authorities might have a wider constituency than the government administrative units, and the consent of these authorities is crucial at various levels of governance and the development process. Among the Afar, for instance, the Sultans are recognized as moral authorities; the clan elders are powerful among the So

mali; the Sheiks are influential among the Berta, and the *diel* are opinion-makers among the Nuer. To realise the governance potential of traditional authorities the federal/regional governments need to go beyond co-option. Co-option of traditional authorities is self-defeating, for as soon as this happens they would lose their bases of legitimacy; the very appeal which prompts governmental co- option in the first place. Moreover, co-option undermines the salience of tradi- tional authorities as foci of local and regional, and even trans-national, politics. Among the Issa Somali, for instance, the political influence of the Ugaas extends even beyond the Ethiopian borders to Djibouti and Somaliland. [26]

Where co-option fails, or traditional authorities grow too powerful, this is often perceived as competition by government officials. The resurgence of the Afar Sultanate and its troubled relationship with the regional/federal govern- ment/EPRDF is a case in point. Initially EPRDF forged an amicable political tie with the Sultanate which also contributed to the regime change, as it participated in the liberation struggle through the Afar Liberation Front (ALF) that it had es- tablished. The ALF, headed by the family of Sultan Alimirah, took control of the political leadership of the Afar Regional State during the transition period (1991- 1995). Priding itself as an autonomous political organization and legitimated by its link with the historic Aussa Sultanate, the ALF had further bolstered its politi- cal authority by creating closer ties with clan elders and by following a vigorous policy of 're-traditionalisation' (Vaughan 2003; Akmel 2011; Yasin 2011). Upon his return from exile, Sultan Alimirah had convened a conference consisting of clan elders to create what appears to be a "neo-traditional" government structure within the new Afar Regional State under the leadership of the ALF. Threatened by the emergence of a vibrant and autonomous centre of power and failing to co-opt the Aussa Sultanate, EPRDF has sought to neutralise the power of Afar traditional authorities by grooming new political élites dependent on the federal government. Since the mid-1990s, EPRDF succeeded in replacing members of Sultan Alimirah's family step by step by capitalizing on corruption scandals of some of the ALF leadership. To mark the transfer of the regional political power from the Sultanate to the new regional political leadership the regional capital was shifted from Asaita, the seat of the Sultanate, to a newly built town at Se- mera. As was to be expected, this has generated an underlying political tension between traditional authorities and the new regional political leadership, closely backed by the federal government. Politically marginalised since 1995 the Sul- tanate has however shown a sign of revival with the coronation of a new Sultan, Sultan Hanfrey Alimirah, in November 2011.

The high profile coronation ceremony, attended by dignitaries and tradi

26, Currently based in Dire DawaUgaasMustepha Ibrahim was initiated in Zeila, Somaliland, in 2010 after crossing over all Issa territories in Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somaliland.

tional authorities as far as Eritrea and Djibouti, indeed made the political élites within the Regional State of Afar aware that this represented not merely the emergence of an alternative centre of political power but of a very formidable one at that[27]. On the other hand, the event was represented by the leadership of the Afar Regional State and in the Ethiopian government media as if it were a "cultural affair", reducing the new Sultan to the status of a mere 'spiritual leader of the Afar". This is in sharp contrast to the Sultan's self-representation as the new Afar political voice. To the surprise of many observers the federal government of Ethiopia had kept a low profile - represented in the coronation ceremony by an Afar State Minister from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism - whereas the government of Djibouti was represented by its Prime Minister and nine senior government officials. It remains to be seen whether this will generate greater political tension with geopolitical repercussions. The track record so far, however, shows that the Ethiopian Federation, and the ruling party that governs it, need to come to terms with multiple centres of power. Co-existing with tra- ditional authorities is a harbinger of the possibility of the federation being gov- erned by political parties other than the EPRDF either through power-sharing or competitive elections. The political leadership of the Afar Regional State has exhibited some stability, unlike the leadership in the other peripheral regional states where there has been a higher turnover.[28]It has remained in power since 1995, more on the basis of loyalty to the EPRDF than through earning domestic political legitimacy; for the Afar Regional State lags far behind in terms of socio-economic development indicators, even by comparison with the other peripheral regional states. It is also one of the most conflict-ridden regions; in particular, both the regional and the federal governments failed to bring to an end the pro-tracted Afar-Issa conflict.[29]As such, the incumbent regional leadership is deeply resented by the younger generation of educated Afar who established the Afar National Movement for Democracy and Good Governance (ANMDG), popu-larly known as *ye mihuran parti* (party of the educated) in the run-upto the 2005 elections. This was reminiscent of the 'party of the educated' (the GPDC) in Gambella in the run-up to the 2000 regional elections. In both cases the alterna-tive parties were established by graduates of the Civil Service College, a product of EPRDF's own affirmative action in the field of education. The massive turn- out during the coronation ceremony of Sultan Hanfrey in 2011 was, on the other

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27,The Afar live in the three countries of the Horn of Africa: Ethiopia; Eritrea and Djibouti, an area also called the Afar Triangle.

28,The problem of Political turnover is more acute in the Somali regional state where no presi-dent so far has completed his five years term of office.

29,The Issa Somali have encroached deeply into Afar territories, occupying strategic locations along the Ethio-Djibouti Road.

hand, as much a 'no-confidence' vote in the regional government as it was sup- port of a historically legitimated alternative political order; the Aussa Sultanate.

Continued economic marginality

The Ethiopian Federation has carried out affirmative actions with appreciable results in political, cultural and social domains. But it is yet to redress the issue of the continued marginal position that peoples of the periphery occupy in their respective regional economies. As such, the solidarity principle of the Ethiopian Federation is currently largely confined to issues related to ethno-national or cultural justice. The same principle should be extended, in a morally obligatory way, to the economic domain. Nearly in all these regions big business is domi- nated by people who come from the Highlands. A combination of a differential start, entrepreneurial cultural background - aided by the acquisitive lifeworld shaped by the dictates of migration - , as well as access to wider economic net- works, has given the highlanders a competitive edge in the regional economies of the peripheral areas. In Gambella, for instance, one hardly finds an Anywaa or a Nuer owning a hotel or running a shop. The few indigenous entrepreneurs who struggle to set up business have faced multiple challenges. Steeped in a culture of sharing, accumulation is also a moment of dispersion; members of the extended family staking a claim on the wealth of those who laboured to save or accumulate. In Gambella, of the 691 officially licensed traders in 2002, for instance, only handfuls were Anywaa or Nuer. Nearly all the major shops or hotels are run by the highlanders. Entrepreneurship demands an entrepreneurial culture. The migrants' network is one of mutual support and is geared towards one goal – the accumulation of capital. Of course, as in any society, one finds individual Anywaa or Nuer who are struggling to do things differently. Unfor- tunately these entrepreneurs find themselves trapped by yet another constraint – access to capital from financial institutions. The following narrative by Solomon Wal Lual, a Nuer businessman who runs a restaurant and transport boat in Matar district, aptly captures the discriminatory acts which indigenous entrepreneurs are often subjected to:

I cannot compete with the Buny [a Nuer term for highlanders]. Nobody lends us money. I cannot borrow from the bank because they ask for *wastina* [collat- eral]. After all, who are the workers there? Are they not Buny? They once said to me, 'once upon a time an Anywaa borrowed money from the bank and he never paid it back. For them all black people are not trustworthy. On the other hand, all Buny traders have various support bases. Take my Buny competitor in Kurgeng town. She has rich brothers in Gambella town. They have hotels and mills. They can borrow money from the bank on her behalf. Whom do I have? Nobody. I asked the bank for a credit twice but I was rejected. I

generated my own small capital by working with Jalab [Sudanese Arabs] in Khartoum. I made 50,000 *taraqa* as a domestic worker. I then joined Sudanese shopkeepers from whom I learnt how to do business. I went to Akobo with lots of candy from Sudan and exchanged it for maize. I stayed in Akobo until the 1993 conflict between Lou and Jikany and then came to Kurgeng. I set up a small restaurant in Kurgeng but the Nuer [Gaajak] officials there were not sup- portive. They created all kinds of excuses to extort money, blackmailing me a foreigner, because of my Sudanese connections. When I heard that there is a good business in Matar I went there to be near to my people [Gaajok Nuer], only to find myself subjected to endless demands (extracted from field note, Matar Wereda, January 2007).

Kut Awak, an Anywaa businessman in Abobo district, has gone through a similar set of challenges while struggling to set up a business:

When I heard that the Commercial Bank in Gambella was lending money for traders I went there with three highlanders from Abobo. The manager informed us that the policy has now been changed because many people failed to pay back. Had I not been there he would have given the money to the highlanders. He openly told me that Anywaa have problems. "When you get money you spend it with your friends and relatives. What guarantee do we have that the money would be paid back?" I tried to persuade him how different I am from other Anywaa. He was not persuaded (extract from field note, Abobo Wereda,
February 2007).

Similarly, among the Afar, to have is to share. Educated Afar and the political elites are hard pressed by the culture of sharing which militates against accumu-lation of capital. Some of them, such as in Amibara district close to the border with Djibouti, have made some attempts to start up business taking advantage of the cross-border settlement of the Afar but most of them went bankrupt because of onerous demands from the extended family. Alternatively, some Afar have now started to invest in the neighboring highland towns such as Kombolcha and Dessie to avoid visibility. This has created flight of capital and lack of indig- enous investment in their home towns which are being increasingly populated by migrant businessmen from the highlands. In Gambella there are some encourag- ing signs, though. Stimulated by the advent of commercial agriculture and the 'uplifting' of farming as a lucrative business, as well as anticipating the potential for being crowded out from the regional economy should they lose out in the current investment drive, some groups of educated Anywaa have established cooperatives and have invested their meager capital in commercial agriculture. *Logn* is a very good case in point; an agricultural investment in a maize farm on 500 hectare of land in Gog Wereda. Calling the cooperative *logn* (in Anuak language it means "yes we can") this indigenous entrepreneurs are trying hard to

invest their hard won saving and seek access capital from the regional and fed- eral financial institutions; a commendable initiative worth the active support of the regional and federal governments along the spirit of solidarity and fraternity.

Helping the indigenous people participate in business through enhanced access to financial capital is one of the glaring capacity gaps which the regional and federal governments could and should fill. Otherwise, the virtual monopoly of business by the highlanders in the peripheral areas has created a potential for conflict between them and the local population. On their part, successful high- lander business people feel insecure about their property, which is not legitimate in the eyes of the local people. This categorical association has created an ex- plosive mix between class and identity, fuelling tension between 'natives' and 'settlers' - one of the conflict-generating factors in the peripheral areas. A means of diffusing the simmering tension surrounding the skewed capacity to do busi- ness in the peripheral areas would be helping local entrepreneurs better compete with the migrants through access to financial capital and business skill training. EPRDF has set up micro financial institutions for rural credit in the regions that it directly governs – the four highland states - through its member organizations. It could have assisted the establishment of the same in the peripheral regional states through its allied organizations. Regrettably EPRDF's stronger political interference is not matched by even a moderate economic engagement in the peripheral regional states.

The sudden and high profile presence of foreign investors in the periph- eral areas, particularly in large-scale commercial agriculture, has introduced yet another 'foreign' category of economic players in the DRS whose business es- tablishments are yet to be seen as beneficial to the local people. There are already some indications that these transnational companies do not have even a strong sense of corporate social responsibility. For instance the Karaturi Company, the Indian-based commercial agricultural venture in Gambella with an investment in commercial agriculture of more than 300,000 hectares of land, has recently been reprimanded by the regional political leadership for failing to build a technically sound and fair dam which takes into consideration the interest of the down- stream users and settlements[30]. On the other hand, the burning of the leftovers from its maize farm in February 2013 despite the plea from the local community to make use of it suggests how distant the corporates are from a minimum moral integrity, not to talk about their acclaimed corporate social responsibility. To add to the local community's sense of injustice Karaturi has transgressed the investment code of conduct that stipulates a nine kilometer distance between the commercial farm and the villages. The result is a prevailing sense of insecurity not only among the local communities but also the foreign investors who seek military protection from the army; a political economy which is likely to further underline fuel the simmering peripheral discontent.

30,President Omot Obong, visit to the flood affected Anywaa villages, Gambella TV, November 2012.

Political empowerment of peoples of the periphery without an economic leverage would inevitably be only nominal, as they would be vulnerable to ma- nipulation and patronage by powerful economic players. Alternatively, wealth creation in the periphery by people from the highlands, however much it is made through fair-play, is likely to be politicized because it feeds into an explosive mix between class and social identity. Categorically, native peoples have al- ready emerged as the 'poorer' - save some few political élites who have amassed wealth through rent-seeking -, and the highlanders as the 'richer'. The Ethio- pian Federation needs to invest much more in the economic capacity-building of people of the periphery in the spirit of solidarity and fraternity that it has evinced in other domains of social life such as education and the introduction of an equitable budget formula. EPRDF needs to demonstrate its ideological rigor
- not in political patronage–but in reaching out to the peoples of the periphery by creating a favourable environment for them to re-negotiate their historically rooted marginality, and earn a decent living. Otherwise, the continued economic marginality of the peripheral people will ultimately translate into political alien-ation from the federal project.

Peripheral peoples - 'object' or agent of development?
Acutely aware of the political risk of the continued economic marginality of peoples of the periphery, the federal government, particularly through its Min-istry of Federal Affairs, has embarked on what it calls "accelerated" or "rapid" development of these regions. One federal strategy to fast-track development in the peripheral areas is inducing livelihood shift. Most of the peoples of the periphery make a living on mobile pastoralism. Reminiscent of the mode of engagement with mobile pastoralism of most post-colonial African states, the Ethiopian federal government has also proposed and pushed sedentarisation in earnest as a solution to the issue of food insecurity and lack of social services in pastoralist areas. The policy is particularly applied in the riverine regions of the Awash Valley in the Afar Region, the Baro-Akobo Basin in the Gambella Region, the OmoValley in the South, and the Wabi Shebelle Basin in the Somali Region, where over a million pastoralists are to be resettled. Underground water development schemes are also underway in the pastoralist areas of Oromia.
Closely related to the mass sedentarisation/villagisation project - called by the government communes - is the large-scale state-owned and foreign in- vestment in commercial agriculture which includes production of new cash crops such as sugar and rice. This has entailed appropriation of large-scale prime grazing lands. The official government argument for resettlement is enhancing access to social services to pastoralists, and changing the 'backward' and devel

opment unfriendly mobile pastoralism.[31]Would be pastoralists-turned-farmers are also expected to benefit from the sedentarisation program either as labourers in the state farms or as out-growers to the government enterprises such as the sugar factories. Such grand transformational projects should normally entail a deliberative process particularly involving those people who would be directly affected by the projects. Similarly, Article 43/2 of the Ethiopian Constitution stipulates that "Nationals have the right to participate in national development and, in particular, to be consulted with respect to policies affecting their com- munity'. Reflecting a top-down conception of development, however, the federal government has pushed the resettlement project with a sense of mission and a fixed time table. Surprisingly, this is debated neither in peoples' representative bodies such as in the regional parliaments nor in the civil society organizations which includes not only so-called 'rent-seeking' trans-national NGOs, as the rhetoric of the federal government would make us believe, but also genuine lo- cal pastoralists' organizations. The federal government has so far engaged only regional cabinets in the DRS - the executive organ of the states - and some clan elders where, such as in the Afar Region, land appropriation entailed compensa- tion schemes. Villagisation in Gambella, for instance, has been implemented as a 'matter of fact' (cf. *chiku mejelar*) or securing one's subsistence among the Afar political élites (cf. *ketel*)instead of engaging in a consultative process, not even at the leadership level. This hegemonic attitude collides head on with pastoral- ists' understanding of the meaning of consultation. Deliberations on communal affairs have depth and are more participatory among pastoralist communities than government-organized public meetings which are scarcely different from announcements of government policies and their swift implementation. Critics are readily labeled 'anti-development' or 'anti-peace', with direct consequences at the local level for their well-being and chance of a better life.

Critics point not only to the lack of popular participation in making live- lihood choices but also to the rapid pace of change, which is not negotiated. Pas- toralists are being urged to change their way of life by adopting traditionally un- familiar livelihood strategies such as cash crop production. Lack of transparency is also another complicating factor. Peoples of the periphery are running a higher risk, perhaps paying the maximum without a guarantee that they would be the greatest beneficiaries from government development interventions. In the Afar Region, for example, the federal government first approached local communities as if the commercial farms would be established only on virgin lands (*yalilema- meret*). Many Afar originally consented. However, the government took over the state farms of the Derg as well as the lands of the surrounding communities; an <u>act which the Af</u>ar considered a breach of trust. The Federal Government

31, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, a speech delivered on the 5th Pastoralist Day, April 2011.

then responded by 'offering' compensation and advancing the argument that the 'take-over' was for the 'national good'.[32] Towards that end, clan elders benefited from the compensation scheme, on which the government has spent a lot of money. However, the majority of members of the clan received only a nominal sum which was too small to help them re-build their livelihood.[33]

The politics of compensation – who gets how much - has in turn created an intra-clan conflict while undermining the legitimacy of traditional authorities. On the face of it, the regional government, in reference to the country's con- stitution, enacted a law in 2011 asserting government ownership of land, thus seriously challenging the Afar traditional communal ownership of land hitherto tolerated or *de facto* accepted by the Federal Government. The enactment of the law is regarded by many Afar as a new legal framework for dispossession, rather than a constitutional act. The rising resentment against the government's grand scheme of commercial agriculture, which is intended to benefit as much the Afar as it is part of the wider plan of national development, is couched in a popular saying among the Afar which suggests a growing sense of relative deprivation: "let alone the Afar, even the land of Awash is thirsty for the Awash River'; a reference to the plastic channels that carry the irrigated water to the commercial farms. This sense of relative deprivation and disenchantment with the national public good emanates to a greater or lesser extent from the lack of debate over major government development policies and negotiation over the pace of change in the country's peripheral areas, which are otherwise rapidly be- ing turned into the new economic 'centers' with the prime objective of meeting national development needs. Exclusive in terms of popular participation, and vulnerable to 'élite capture', the fast-track development in the peripheral areas, however good intentioned, is deeply resented. Development needs to be people- centered, considering them as agents with a space for active participation in the development process. Otherwise, viewing people as recipients of development largesse indicates a perspective that considers people as if they were 'objects' of development.

Moreover, the terms of the debate about the viability and future of mobile pastoralism in Africa/Ethiopia is more complex than what the Federal Govern

32,Ethiopia's new Five Year Plan – the Growth and Transformation Plan (2010-2015) – aims to increase sugar production from 300,000 tons to 2,300,000 tons by 2014/2015. As currently sugar consumption is approximately 500,000 tons Ethiopia is projected soon to be a sugar-exporting country.

33,Even from the clan elders' point of view the compensation scheme is very asymmetrical. In the Tendaho compensation the clan elders initially thought it was a fair deal. However, it did not take them long to complain about the 'unequal exchange'. As it transpired, group of clan elders went back to the government in 2010 wondering about their new revelation: "the land that we have given you is still in use whereas the money that you gave us is finished long ago'.

ment appears to have reduced to a mere 'photo-op' for western tourists, aka "ex- otic consumerism". Romanticizing pastoralism is only one strand of the argu- ment for mobile pastoralism. The ecological/economic argument has it that some arid parts of the world can only be utilized optimally through mobile pastoralism. Pastoralism in Ethiopia constitutes a way of life for close to 10 million of the country's total population and spreads around 61% of the country's landmass, providing 40% of the livestock population in the country. The livestock sector in Ethiopia, whose mainstay is mobile pastoralism, contributes 12% of the total and 33% of the agricultural Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and provides a live- lihood for 65% ofthe population. The sector also accounts for 12–15% of total export earnings, the second in order of importance (Ayele et al. 2003). In fact, for all the skepticism of their 'unmodern' way of life, it should not be forgotten that many pastoralists are actually relatively wealthy in comparison to other Ethio- pians, save in areas where they are severely hit by repeated drought and other natural calamities. In some cases mobile pastoralism can even be more competi- tive in returns than government-subsidized commercial farms. A study in 2010, for instance, found that returns from pastoralism were actually equal or greater per hectare than state-subsidized and irrigated cotton and sugar farms (Littleman 2010). Still others argue that mobile pastoralism as a way of life is worthy of recognition and as such 'enriches the increasingly pluralist society of our time'

- an aspect of diversity duly recognized by the cultural policy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Recent studies have also shown that indeed mobile pastoralism could also be an evasive strategy of marginal communities to keep state encroachment at bay (Girke 2012). Forwarding access to services as a primary argument for 'mass sedentarisation' by the Government also sug- gests indirect coercion in what is considered 'voluntary' resettlement schemes. Though more expensive, it is still possible to provide services to pastoralists in a mobile-friendly way, given the competitiveness of the pastoral economy. Nor is the budget allocated to the provision of services to the sedentarised pastoralists a persuasive argument. It would be rather more desirable to build on pastoralists' own initiatives in livelihood shifts where pastoralism is found not to be viable. Among the Afar, for instance, some clans in the lower Awash Valley have long ago settled along the Awash Basin engaged in farming with some involvement in trade. The same has been observed among some Somali clans in the Wabi- Shebele Basin. Adapting to climate change and responding to repeated drought, some groups of Borena pastoralists in southern Oromia, on the other hand, have shifted away from cattle to camel pastoralism.

IV. Conclusion: Outlook for the Peripheral Regions

The political change that has occurred in Ethiopia since 1991 is much more than a regime change. It has involved the restructuring of the Ethiopian state from a unitarian state, which was oblivious of the country's diversity, to a federal political order with a constitutional recognition of ethnic diversity and associated rights. This change is more visible in the peripheral parts of the country which previously had either been neglected or adversely incorporated into the Ethiopian state. The new federal political order has delivered on some of its promises, such as the creation of a new regional space; greater political representation of peoples of the periphery at the national level; regaining of self-esteem and cultural reassertion; enhanced access to basic social services, and redistribution of national resources based on the principles of equality and solidarity. The principles of equality and solidarity that underpin the *modus operandi* of the Ethiopian Federation make it more of a cooperative than a competitive federation.

However, there are also setbacks and challenges to the federal order, especially in the lowland periphery. Political empowerment is undermined by federal encroachment into regional autonomy. Although the peripheral regional states are not directly governed by EPRDF the ruling parties in these regions are not only affiliated to it but have come under its stronger grip. In the peripheral areas, apart from creating a blame-game between the regional and federal states, this governance structure has also induced an extroverted form of accountability undermining the necessity to build a domestic constituency. Much also remains to be done before the federal political order will be able to accommodate mul- tiple centers of power. As it stands, the dominant trend is co-opting traditional authorities instead of cultivating a sensible partnership with power foci built on different bases of legitimacy. This is likely to 'disfigure' local institutions and undermine the emergence of traditional authorities as alternative foci in local, regional and even potentially, given their cross-border spheres of influence, as bridges for transnational politics.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to the federal political order in the periph- eral areas is in the economic domain. The continued economic marginality of peoples of the periphery has threatened to undermine their political voice, while at the same time fuelling tension between local populations and migrant groups who wield a more competitive edge in the regional economies. An economic affirmative action is acutely needed to enable peoples of the periphery to re- position themselves in local and regional economies. Last, but not least, there is a need to shift from considering peoples of the periphery as objects to consider- ing them as agents of development. Livelihood shifts and other forms of directed change need to be negotiated at local levels by creating a deliberative space for

making informed and meaningful choices. Equally important is to ask not only what the peoples of the periphery can give to the centre in the name of national development but also what and how much they gain in return, beyond wage labour and the risks associated with the sudden shift from subsistence to the volatility of an 'outgrower'. The continued marginality and the top-down devel- opment projects are likely to feed into the rising peripheral discontent, the signs of which are already becoming apparent, once again making them susceptible to cross-border political orientation. The challenge remains how to open up the natural resources of the periphery for national development purposes without lo- cal communities losing out in the process. Transparency (to make informed and meaningful decisions); consultation (to set local priorities and identify compara- tive advantages);space for negotiation (over the pace and relevance of directed change); participation (beyond recipients of top-down development projects), and equitable development (sound compensation schemes; delivery of the much talked about social services and viable livelihood alternatives) will go a long way to allay legitimate local fears and concerns regarding the 'darker side' (so- cial cost) of the development process and raise their comfort level regarding the necessary sacrifice for the greater public good, as much as 'peoples of the centre' need to make.

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