

# Dire Dawa under Coalition Rule: Ethiopia's Regional Ethnic Politics or Federal Geopolitics?

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*Ethiopia adopted ethnic based federalism to manage its ethno-linguistic cleavages two decades ago, and subsequently, the city of Dire Dawa became one of the bones of contention territories between Oromo and Somali ethnic forces. This paper assesses the underlying factors which caused the Federal Government to directly administer the city, and shed light from below on the pattern of its coalition rule arrangements since 1993 and the consequences of using consociational model. The finding has attempted to establish that the rise of territorial ownership conflicts over Dire Dawa, the multi-ethnic nature of the city, and the geopolitical significance of Dire Dawa especially in connection with Ethiopia's dependence on Issa/Somali-controlled Djibouti seaport, in permutation, have set Dire Dawa within the federal jurisdiction with charter status but without constitutional recognition. As a result, Dire Dawa lingered under centrally assigned unelected committee rules until its first local municipal election in 2008. The current magic formula known as the 40:40:20 is the result of political deal agreed between the ruling parties of Oromia and Somali regions in 2006. Finally, the paper has revealed that the special administration of the city has not only promoted linguistic segmental autonomy in public schools and broadcasting media but also caused ethnically unfair access to civil service jobs, and 'electing without choosing' party politics.*

## Introduction

Ethiopia's experiment with ethno-linguistic federalism has now had two decades of working political experiences. It aimed at mitigating the age-old ethno-national dominations and the attendant conflicts in the country. Put differently, it was introduced as an anti-thesis to what was usually seen as a system that gave a near monopoly to the Amhara ruling class (Markakis, 2011). To this end, the constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) assures the "unconditional rights of nations, nationalities, and peoples to self-determination, including the right to secession" (FDRE, 1995: Art. 39). On this core self-rule principle, the Ethiopian polity was reconstructed into nine member states of the shared federation (Art. 47). Besides, Addis Ababa acquired a constitutional exceptional status as a federal capital city but requires "the special interest of the state of Oromia in Addis Ababa [...] arising from the location of Addis Ababa within the state of Oromia, shall be respected" (Art. 49). Of course, this 'special interest' has never been explicitly defined and implemented.

More anomalous, the city of Dire Dawa has no constitutional recognition. Asnake Kefale (2010) fairly argued that the special administrative arrangement

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of Dire Dawa came to exist as a politico-administrative instrument of conflict management but to the detriment of basic constitutional institutions and principles. This study draws on Asnake's thesis and further sheds light from different angles on the underlying rationales, patterns of coalition governance and the attendant consequences which altogether are of crucial importance to gain an updated understanding of Ethiopian ethnic federalism and Dire Dawa City Administration.

Dire Dawa is a multi-ethnic city located in eastern part of Ethiopia. According to the 2007 census, ethnic groups that account for over one percent out of the entire 342,827 population of the city include Oromo (46.08%), Somali (24.24%), Amhara (20.09%), Gurage (4.54%), Tigrie (1.23%) and Harari (1.08%) (Central Statistical Agency, 2008). Similarly, languages spoken in the administration include the Oromo language (47.95%), Amharic (26.46%), Somali (19.74%), Gurage (2.78%), and Harari (1.04%) (ibid). The city is located between Oromia and Somali regions which made it, since June 1992, a bone of contention between the Oromo and the Somali ethnic groups. This paper assesses the underlying factors which caused the Federal Government to directly govern the political affairs of the city, and shed light from below on the pattern of magic formula arrangement since 1993 and its consequences. The central thesis of this piece is that Dire Dawa City under coalition governance (seemingly consociation) is the result of not only Oromo-Somali border/ethnic politics but also of federal geopolitics highly dictated by the ruling EPRDF's top-down party channel without constitutional basis. To this end, this paper is organized into four sections. The first is a brief conceptual framework of analysis. In the second section, the paper discusses the institutional-constitutional and/or the legal basis of Ethiopian ethnic federalism and the City Administration of Dire Dawa. This piece, in its third section, outlines the competing explanations of post-1993 Dire Dawa's special arrangement ranging from regional ethnic politics to federal geopolitics. Section four critically assesses Dire Dawa's power sharing/coalition politics of magic formula and the attendant opportunities and challenges by taking four public institutions (school, media, civil service, and electoral politics). The findings are based on primary data (individual interviews, group discussions, and the researcher's own observations) collected in 2012 and secondary data.

### **Managing Post-conflict Multi-ethnic Societies**

Literatures on post-conflict and divided societies identify four schools of thought on power sharing arrangements which include consociationalism, federalism, integrationism and theory of power-dividing. This paper adopts the first school of thought, namely consociational model, as its framework of analysis. This form



of power sharing is most closely associated with the work of Arend Lijphart, a scholar who identified four structural features shared by consociational systems – a grand coalition government (between parties from different segments of society), segmental autonomy (in the education and cultural sectors), proportionality (in the voting system and in public sector employment) and minority veto (Lijphart, 1977). The first two are now primary elements and reinforced by the last two which constitute secondary features. Consociation has been developed further in the context of its use as a mechanism of inter-ethnic accommodation in Lijphart's own later writings on the subject. He has included bicameralism and legal pluralism as additional forms of power sharing and segmental autonomy, respectively (Choudhry, 2009).

*Grand coalition:* In grand coalition, leaders of all significant segments rule together, searching compromise and consensus. The importance of a grand coalition government reflects the thoughts of Rousseau that important and serious questions should be solved with near-unanimity (Lijphart, 1977). In a deeply divided society, or a post-conflict society, almost all questions discussed in government will be of importance for the segments and the stakes will usually be high. Parties to a civil war will be especially concerned with executive power (Walter cited in Lijphart, *ibid*). Because of the high levels of distrust and suspicion between the segments after civil war, and extensive security challenges, it is better to be in government together with your counterpart, than to trust him to govern in favour of your interests while you are in opposition (*ibid*).

At the executive level, Lijphart has a clear preference for parliamentary government over presidential government because the former is more likely to be ethnically inclusive than the latter, since a president will be drawn from a single ethnic group and presidential elections are 'majoritarian in nature' (Choudhry, 2009: 20). Contrarily, Horowitz advocates a presidential form of government which provides an "opportunity for vote pooling across ethnic divides" (*ibid*: 22).

*Proportional representation:* The most common use of the proportionality principle is as an instrument to distribute seats in the legislature. But it is also a means to allocate civil service, judicial appointments, and financial resources and to assure an adequate representation within the army and state-owned companies (*ibid*). It contrasts sharply with the winner-take-all character of majority rule. Hoddie and Hartzell (2003) express the necessity of proportional representation in a new national army following a civil war, where the rebel combatants are included in the regular national forces.

*Segmental autonomy:* In plural societies, it is wise to leave as many decisions as possible concerning the different segments to themselves (Lijphart, 1979). Issues of the minorities' exclusive concern, among others, questions



about religion, language, culture and education need segmental autonomy based on either personal self-identification or territorial principle, depending on the demographic distribution of the people. Where the regional cleavages correspond to the segmental cleavages, this might take the form of federalism. This is based on a “personality principle” or non-territorial federalism, which Carl J. Friedrich refers to as corporate federalism, an aspect of consociational element in federal theory guaranteeing the equality of nationalities and cultural autonomy (ibid).

*Mutual veto:* Lijphart argues that “although the grand coalition rule gives each segment a share of power at the central political level, this does not constitute a guarantee that it will not be outvoted by a majority when its vital interests are at stake” (1979: 501). The very purpose of the mutual veto, also known as minority veto or concurrent majority or negative minority rule, is to provide such a guarantee. In conclusion, politics therefore is treated not as a game but as a serious business.

The major critique of consociation came about by Horowitz (1999) who sees grand coalition as “motivationally inadequate” and if at all, consociation is more likely where there is no clear majority. Switzerland and Netherlands are western classic examples of consociational democracy. Cyprus and Lebanon are failed consociations. By using this model, this paper examines coalition governance in Dire Dawa since 1993.

### **Governing Ethnic Cleavages in Ethiopia: Institutional Framework**

Ethiopia is one of the developing countries struggling to manage its internal social divisions through federalism. The constitution of Ethiopia sets general guiding principles and institutions of managing ethno-linguistic conflicts and diversities of the country. For instance, its preamble (1995) opens with “We, the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia [...] to live together on the basis of equality.” Moreover, it precisely outlines the necessary criteria for the formation of member states of the Federation—“settlement patterns, language, identity and consent of the people concerned” (Art.46). It also provides ethno-linguistic groups with the rights and procedures to establish, at any time, their own regional states (Art.47). More specifically, it defines principles and procedures of resolving border disputes between member States (Art.48). The institution that is entrusted with resolving inter-regional border conflicts is the House of Federation (HoF).

All State border disputes shall be settled by agreement of the concerned States. Where the concerned States fail to reach agreement, the House of Federation shall decide such disputes on the basis of settlement patterns and the wishes of the peoples concerned. The House of Federation shall, within a period of two years, render a final decision on a dispute submitted to it (FDRE constitution, 1995: Art.48).



The HoF “shall strive to find solutions to disputes or misunderstandings that may arise between States” (Art.62). The case of Oromia-Somali regional conflict over Dire Dawa persisted outside these constitutional frameworks.

Proclamation No.7/1992 provided for the formation of fourteen regions of the country, by which Dire Dawa was supposed to become part of Oromia (House of Peoples’ Representative, 2004). These transitional regions were transformed into nine member states of the federation in 1995. In 1992, Dire Dawa was nationally represented by two Oromos as members of the Constituent Assembly (Transitional Electoral Board of Ethiopia, 1992). However, the Somali ethnic group voiced ownership counterclaim to Dire Dawa in June 1992. According to John Markakis (1994), the government first urged the two groups to cease their violent way of claims to the city until its final fate is determined. Tegegne G.E. and Kassahun B. (2007) suggest the establishment of ‘special’ administrative statuses of Dire Dawa and Addis Ababa cities within the decentralization wave of the early 1990s Ethiopia.

As a result of the claim and counterclaim, since 1993, lists of authorities directly assigned and controlled by the Prime Minister Office began to rule the city in the name of “special administration” (House of Peoples’ Representative, 2004). After a decade, the draft law proposal states that the outcomes of the hitherto ad-hoc administrations were negative (ibid: 5):

For the last one decade, Dire Dawa stayed without good governance and development that severely affected the residents of the city and surrounding peoples of Oromia and Somali regions. In order to make the city centre of development in eastern part of Ethiopia, thereby contribute meaningfully to it, Dire Dawa needs legal personality status.

Both Oromia and Somali regions have already sent their respective letters to the House of Federation requesting resolution (ibid). Many Oromo-Somali regional border disputes have been settled pursuant to the constitutional procedures. However, the House of Federation did not render final decision to the Dire Dawa issue. On the contrary, the House of Peoples’ Representative adopted the current Dire Dawa Administration Charter in 2004 as a temporary solution. The charter states that:

Whereas, legal foundation that enables self-administration is necessary to ensure good governance and to expedite development in Dire Dawa city until a lasting solution is secured; [...] it is necessary to confer self-government power on the residents of Dire Dawa and to legally determine the organizational structures and operations of the city in conformity with democratic principles (See the preamble of Dire Dawa Charter, 2004).

This temporary charter, which confers self-government power on the residents



of the city, clearly determines the relationship arrangements between the city administration and the federal government in the following words:

The city administration shall be part of the federal government. The city administration shall be accountable to the federal government. The Ministry of Federal Affairs shall, as an agent of the federal government, follow up the performances of the city administration and shall support the capacity-building undertakings of the city. The city administration shall submit to the Ministry of Federal Affairs annual and periodic reports concerning its plans, budget and the overall status of the city (ibid: Art. 51).

This clause openly contradicts its self-government powers granted to the residents of the city. Furthermore, the Charter declares that the accountability of both the City Council and the Mayor shall be to the Federal Government and to the residents of the city - dual accountability (see Art. 15 & 20). It therefore requires an elected body to be accountable to and legally dissolvable by the central government (ibid). Ministry of Federal Affairs has no constitutional prerogative to demand upward accountability of locally elected council. For one thing, the charter has no constitutional basis. Second, it exhibits not only classic rigidly-centralized unitary but also non-democratic characteristic features which go against self-determination of nationalities in Ethiopia guaranteed by the FDRE Constitution (1995).

### **Dire Dawa's Special Arrangement: Competing Explanations**

Available sources on the post-1991 Dire Dawa politics identify contending but interlinked factors that caused the special arrangement of the city of Dire Dawa, chiefly including regional territorial claims to it, its geopolitical importance, its economic muscle and multi-ethnicity.

*The Rise of Territorial Conflicts:* The relationships among political forces in Dire Dawa during the early transitional period were full of collusions and collisions dictated by their political interests. Sources from elders showed that eleven flags of political forces along with Ethiopian flag were hoisted in front of the municipal administration of the city. There were violent conflicts among these forces. First, political conflict occurred between the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia (IFLO) in which the EPRDF formed temporary alliance with the latter against the former (Focus Group Discussions, May 09, 2012; March 22, 2012). Second, the OPDO/EPRDF and the OLF conducted conflicts against each other three times in the city and that resulted in the killings of many. Hence, the OLF stayed in the city only up to the June 1992 regional elections of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia which let the EPRDF become more dominant party in the city. Thirdly, after the withdrawal of the OLF from the city, the EPRDF conducted brief conflict with



the IFLO and made them disappear. Fourth, there were several military confrontations between IFLO and IGLF on Malka Jabdu, west of Dire Dawa. Fifth, a major bloody conflict took place in the city between the OPDO/EPRDF and the Issa and Gurgura Liberation Front (IGLF). The IGLF was defeated militarily but negotiated with the central government. With the formation of the Ethiopian Somali People's Democratic Party (ESPDP) in 1996, the OPDO/EPRDF office in Dire Dawa got closed until the EPRDF Committee office was re-opened in 2006. Finally, the rest of political organizations in the city either left the transition, or opted for peaceful struggle or co-opted into the EPRDF forces (ibid). The root causes of these conflicts were ethnic territoriality in nature involving the Somalis and the Oromos.

The territorial dispute over Dire Dawa between Oromia and Somali regions, according to the Charter of Dire Dawa (2004) is the sole reason for central intervention and its attendant special arrangements since 1993. According to Habtamu Assefa, the man who administered Dire Dawa from 1991 to 1993 as part of Oromia, Somali's claim to the city was explicitly voiced during the June 1992 regional election (Interview, May 30, 2012, Dire Dawa). He witnessed that Dire Dawa was to hold regional election as part of Oromia and as a result the National Electoral Board, Dire Dawa Branch finalized registration and even provided training for the registered political parties (ibid). Before the Election Day, he added, the IGLF entered into an open war with the OPDO/EPRDF as mentioned earlier demanding that "Dire Dawa should not undertake its election as part of Oromia." Because the top agenda of the transitional government was restoring peace and stability, the Electoral Board of Ethiopia announced a temporary suspension of Dire Dawa from holding regional election and the center imposed its direct rule (ibid).

For this reason, the people of Dire Dawa were kept away from exercising their local voting rights from 1992 up to 2008. This case could have been determined by Proclamation No. 7/1992 or later on by the House of Federation. After the 1992 regional election in Somali Region, the Somalis were concerned about the fate of the city and even "the newly elected representatives attended a seminar in Dire Dawa, the presumed capital of the Somali Region, organized by the transitional government" to discuss unity among Somali parties (Samatar, 2005: 52). Subsequently, according to government officials, the Oromo demanded the city to remain in Oromia while the Somali advanced that the city be part of Somali Region. The rivalry resulted in Oromo-Somali inter-ethnic fierce competition for power in the city (Interview, December 1, 2012, Dire Dawa). The redrawing of borders on the basis of ethnicity led to the conflict: "the case of Dire Dawa shows the difficulty of clearly delineating the country along ethnic lines. It also reveals how ethnic federalism could lead to territorial claims and



competitions with the possibility of precipitating into conflicts” (Asnake, 2010: 215).

**Geopolitical Significance of Dire Dawa:** In addition to conflicting claims of the two groups to Dire Dawa, Asnake argues that “a number of other factors might have also influenced the decision of the federal government to establish a special administration for Dire Dawa, which is directly controlled by it” including “the geographical significance of Dire Dawa and its adjoining areas to Ethiopia’s linkage to Djibouti’s port services” (2010: 210). Therefore, the question of Dire Dawa is strongly linked to an international geopolitical factor, i.e., Ethiopia’s access to Djibouti port. Dire Dawa’s proximity to Djibouti combined with Ethiopia’s desperate quest for access to the sea after the loss of Assab has increased strategic importance of the city for the federal government of Ethiopia (ibid).

Furthermore, since its independence in 1978, Issa/Somali-led Djibouti state has its consular office branch in Dire Dawa to protect the rights of Somalis in the city. The headquarters of Issa/Somali’s clan leader, Ugas, has been Dire Dawa since the city was made part of Issa and Gurgura District in 1962. Djibouti state leaders such as the president himself are sons of Dire Dawa. Since 1998, Ethiopia is exclusively dependent upon Djibouti port. Thus, Dire Dawa remained special administration “chiefly due to Djibouti’s pressure on landlocked Ethiopia [...] One who irritates the Issa in Dire Dawa irritates the Issa in Djibouti as has indeed been revealed during the early 1990s Oromo–Somali conflicts” (Interview, May 30, 2012, Dire Dawa). Asnake relevantly observes that:

The geographical significance of Dire Dawa as a transit to Ethiopian exports and imports through the port of Djibouti undoubtedly influences policies of the Ethiopian government about the governance of the city. Indeed, both the Haile Selassie and the Derg (military regime 1974-1991) regimes were influenced by their desire to maintain the security of the rail connection with Djibouti when they decided to make Dire Dawa first part of the Issa and Gurgura Awraja and later part of the Dire Dawa autonomous region. In the post-1991 period, the geographical significance of Dire Dawa was reinvigorated because of the disintegration of governmental authority in Somalia and more significantly because of the 1998-2000 Ethio-Eritrean war, which suddenly made Ethiopia dependent on Djibouti for most of its port services (2010: 210-211).

Ethiopia’s landlockedness more likely affects the status of Dire Dawa. Asnake adds that “under these circumstances, the central government does not seem to be ready to take chances by changing the status of Dire Dawa from the existing special administration by giving it either to the Oromia or the Somali regional states” (ibid).

Likewise, Dire Dawa is located on the sole Ethio-Djibouti railway road, import–export flow path and thus has been economically significant. In the early 1990s, it was the second largest lucrative economy next to Addis Ababa. This



might have whetted the federal government to directly control the political affairs of the city. Finally, Dire Dawa has been selected as 'industrial development corridor' for its four neighboring member states of Ethiopian federation—Oromia, Somali, Afar, and Harari (Charter of Eastern Ethiopian Neighboring Regions' Congress, 2009).

*Multi-ethnic Nature of Dire Dawa:* The other factor some raise for Dire Dawa's special arrangement is related to its ethno-linguistic demographic diversity (Interview, June 07, 2012, Addis Ababa). Dire Dawa is a multi-ethnic city hosting more than sixty nationalities with varying numerical sizes and this, it is argued, has invited the federal government. Dire Dawa is a cosmopolitan city established with the coming of railway roads in Ethiopia in 1902. All these competing justifications identified are interlinked and, with varying weight, attracted the central government's direct control.

### **Dire Dawa: Post-conflict Consociationalism or Centralism?**

Political parties, no doubt, play a central role even in classic consociational countries for the fact that "on their shoulders fall the duty to control their followers, and at the same time to mediate conflicts prevalent in society" (Sciarini & Hug, 1999: 135). Divided societies such as Switzerland have invented the so-called magic formula which is an arithmetic formula employed for dividing the seven executive seats of the Swiss Federal Council between the ruling parties. Accordingly, the seven men have comprised two members each from three larger parties, as well as a single member from each of the smaller parties which results in the 2:2:2:1 ratio. The formula is not an official law, but rather an agreement amongst the rather coalition of large parties (ibid). Following regime change in Ethiopia in 1991, the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) incorporated Dire Dawa as part of Oromia Region until the counterclaim to the city was pronounced by Somali forces in 1993. Since then, the city of Dire Dawa has been ruled by varied administrative "magic" coalition arrangements created by the central government through its party channel.

*Dire Dawa Transitional Administration (1993-1995):* Towards the end of 1993, the central government of Ethiopia formed an administrative rule known as Dire Dawa Transitional Administration to be run by directly assigned executive committee composed of two Somali and one Oromo with the chairmanship of Somali. It was a 2:1 coalition formula. This top-down committee could not jointly perform due to their unsettled ethnic conflicting interests and consequently it was replaced in 1996 by another centrally appointed committee (Interview, May 30, 2012, Dire Dawa).

*Dire Dawa Administrative Council (1996-2003):* The Dire Dawa Administrative Council was established from five-men executive committee in October



1995 under the Prime Minister's Office (Asnake, 2010: 213). This second coalition rule was composed of two members from Oromo, two from Somali, and one from Amhara. Even though the ultimate leadership was assumed by Amhara, there was an attempt to strike ethnic balance between the Oromo and the Somali. The arrangement was a 1:2:2 ratios. After a year, this power sharing formula was reduced to three men—one Amhara, one Somali and one Oromo —1:1:1. An Amhara continued to lead the Council in addition to running the positions of the two dismissed cabinets (Interview, May 25, 2012, Dire Dawa). Ethnic groups in conflict were marginalized in power.

*Dire Dawa Provisional Administration (2003-2008)*: Being the third political deal, the Dire Dawa Provisional Administration came into being with the dissolution of Dire Dawa Administrative Council in 2003. It was once again centrally appointed executive committee composed of seven men: three from Oromo, two from Somali, one from Tigrie and one from Amhara (ibid). It produced a 3:2:1:1 inter-ethnic elite coalition. Dire Dawa became a chartered city administration in 2004 with the Proclamation No. 416/2004. A Tigrie became the first Mayor of Dire Dawa up to 2006 while the Deputy Mayor was Amhara. None of the two leading figures were from the concerned groups—Somali and Oromo. The second mayor was an Oromo who was replaced by a Somali mayor in 2008 (ibid).

It is fair to say that, though they portray features of grand coalition rule, pre-charter ad-hoc arrangements were essentially centrally crafted and imposed rules which had neither constitutional basis nor any legal backing. Asnake aptly puts that in this way: “by far the most frequently used instruments in managing conflicts in federal Ethiopia are politico-administrative to the detriment of constitutional institutions and principles” (2010: 213). The local government of Dire Dawa was under centrally assigned unelected executive committee rule from 1993 to 2008. The court in the city itself was a direct extension of the federal courts. These centralized arrangements (only accountable to the center), some observed, jammed the progress of the city (Milkessa, 2013).

*Dire Dawa Administration (2008—present)*: In 2008, Dire Dawa started voting for its local leaders within the framework of a power sharing deal known as ‘the 40:40:20’. Once more, elected local administration continued to “be part of the Federal Government” and “accountable to the Federal Government” (Dire Dawa Charter, 2004: Art. 51). The Charter only establishes its legal personality to the detriment of the constitution but it did not produce self-rule. It rather legalized upward accountability. Before discussing local election, it would be good to briefly present the current power sharing deal, language autonomy in education and media as well as access to civil service of Dire Dawa.



*The 40:40:20 Power Sharing Agreement:* The 2008 experiment of local election was to organize elected local government of Dire Dawa. Before that, in 2006, the office of the EPRDF Committee was launched in the city and the 40:40:20 political power sharing agreement was signed between the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) and the Ethiopian Somali People's Democratic Party (ESPDP) under the auspice of the federal government (Interview, May 25, 2012, Dire Dawa).

According to the agreement, 40% of top political positions is apportioned to the ESPDP, another 40% to the OPDO, and the remaining 20% to other member parties of the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), i.e., Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), and South Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Movement (SEPDm). The 40:40:20 power sharing deal is also commonly referred to as the 40:60 formula because EPRDF's political dividend makes 60%. As per the deal, the posts of the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor rotate between OPDO and ESPDP. The formula strictly applies for the city Council, city cabinets and other positions packed by political appointments. Even though the formula does not apply for the professional civil service positions (Interview, January 21, 2012, Dire Dawa), some interviewed Amhara and others express their discontent with the 40:40:20 and demanded it to be replaced by professionalism (Interview, May 25, 2012, Dire Dawa). According to the negotiating parties, it is a "win-win approach" to ethnic conflict managements (ibid). The two parties might consider it a win-win game, but fundamentally it has neither constitutional-legal basis for the fact that the FDRE Constitution and Dire Dawa Charter require majoritarian government nor is it proportional representation of ethnic groups in the administration.

*Language Autonomy in Education & Media:* Public education in Dire Dawa clearly represents multi-cultural education. To begin with, public primary schools in the city are shared among three languages, the Oromo language, Amharic and Somali, either solely or jointly. Of the 66 public primary schools, 34 (51.5%) teach only in the Oromo language, followed by 11 (16.6%) which use Amharic. Eight (12.1%) of the schools teach in Somali. Primary schools which use more than one medium of instruction are 13 (19.7%). Of these, 9 (13.5%) teach in the Oromo language and Amharic, 1 (1.5%) teaches in Somali and Amharic, and 3 (4.5%) teach in three different languages (Milkessa, 2013). Moreover, language education as a subject in high schools and in preparatory schools has been very important in Dire Dawa. All the ten public high schools in the administration teach Amharic as a subject which is common for all schools across the country. In addition to Amharic, seven of the ten high schools teach the Oromo language as a subject while the remaining three deliver Somali lan



language. In all the three government preparatory schools of Dire Dawa, two languages, Amharic and the Oromo language, are taught as subjects and students, depending on their interest, freely choose one of the two (ibid).

With regard to state-owned broadcasting media, Dire Dawa Administration has Dire FM Radio and Dire TV which broadcast in three local languages—Amharic, the Oromo language, and the Somali language. For instance, Dire FM Radio has 13 hours of daily air time of which 43.6% is broadcast in Amharic and the rest is equally shared between the Oromo language and the Somali language (28.2% each). Dire TV, on the other hand, broadcasts six hours daily, two hours in each language (ibid).

The case of Dire Dawa has shown the feasibility of providing multi-lingual education not only in one administrative jurisdiction but also in one school which opens up windows of opportunity for students to freely choose from among the alternatives. It has also witnessed the possibility of multi-lingual media. This is thus an evidence of the practice of linguistic autonomy in public education and media of the city.

*The Anomaly of Access to Civil Service Jobs:* Multi-ethnic city administrations like Dire Dawa are expected to promote merit-based inter-ethnic fair employment opportunity in their public service institutions. Practically, it is unlikely that civil service institutions of Dire Dawa mirror the composition of residents of the city. More specifically, according to the employment report, from 2003 to 2008, about 60% of the total civil servants of the Administration were Amhara by ethnicity while the Oromo on average shared 28%. The Gurage took a share of around 3.7%. Further, portion for the Somali rose from 0.9% to 3% while that of the Tigrie slightly increased from 2.6% to 3% (see Table I below).

The 2008 fiscal year was when Dire Dawa held its first local election which could have slightly influenced the shares of ethnic groups in public institutions. The 2012 report showed a decline to 45.4% for Amhara and a rise to 38.1% and 5.6% for Oromo and Somali respectively. The anomaly is that the two ethnic groups in conflict over Dire Dawa are the Oromo and the Somali while the single largest ethnic group constituting half of the city population is the Oromo. However, the largest public service employees are Amhara by ethnicity. Why such an unfair share?



Table I: Civil Service Employees in Dire Dawa Administration by Ethnicity (2003-2012)

Ethnicity	Percentage of Employee's by Fiscal Year								
	2003	2004	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Amhara	60.51	60.46	59.75	61.19	57.63	42.75	42.54	43.98	45.43
Oromo	30.82	30.74	27.17	25.83	28.76	36.34	35.46	36.14	38.14
Somali	0.92	0.91	3.05	2.98	3.05	2.97	4.96	4.86	5.65
Gurage	2.69	2.76	4.13	4.08	4.58	4.41	4.67	4.34	4.68
Tigrie	2.60	2.64	2.89	2.62	3.03	0.45	3.06	3.20	3.26
Others	2.45	2.49	3.00	3.26	3.31	13.06	9.31	7.40	2.85
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

\*The author could not obtain the 2005 report

Source: Dire Dawa Administration Civil Service Bureau, 2012

Top-down flawed choice of working language emerges as a major underlying factor for the anomalous access to civil service jobs in Dire Dawa. The Charter of Dire Dawa declares that “the official language of the city Administration is Amharic” (2004: Art.5) although Amharic is currently spoken by only a quarter of the city (Central Statistical Agency, 2008). So, the Charter helped maintain historical linguistic imposition. Somali elders argue that “We [Somali] are excluded from our own civil service jobs because we cannot speak Amharic” (Focus Group Discussion, March 22, 2012, Dire Dawa). This demonstrates that the working language of the administration has tended to serve the Amharas more than any other ethnic groups. Weinstein rightly observed that “official language has the potential to enlarge participation in power, wealth and prestige and to restrict it. Restricted participation eventually means that one group is dominated by another” (1983: 79).

*Election Politics in Dire Dawa - Electing without choosing:* The people of Dire Dawa have been voting for members of national parliament since 1992. However, local election for local government took place only in 2008.

*National Elections:* Elections in Dire Dawa (both national and local) are characterized by bi-party politics mostly between OPDO/EPRDF and ESPDP. The city has two constituencies for the national election and is represented by two Members of Parliament.



Table II: National Election Results in Dire Dawa (1992-2010)

Constituencies	1992/Constituent Assembly	1995	2000	2005	2010
Dire Dawa 1	OPDO	ESPDP	OPDO	CUD	OPDO
Dire Dawa 2	OPDO	ESPDP	OPDO	ESPDP	ESPDP

Source: National Electoral Board of Ethiopia, 2010

First, during the 1992 election of members of the Constituent Assembly, who approved the 1995 Federal Constitution, Dire Dawa was represented by two members of OPDO because Dire Dawa was part of Oromia Region and the territorial claim from Somali side was not yet seriously advanced. Second, both seats of Dire Dawa in the 1995 national election were swept by ESPDP mainly for the fact that there was no OPDO/EPRDF office in Dire Dawa since 1993 (Interview, March 11, 2012, Dire Dawa). Surprisingly, in 1994, the demographic size of the Somali in the city was only 13.9% of the total population of Dire Dawa on which the winning party relied; but the Oromo constituted 48% followed by the Amhara (27.7%) (Central Statistical Agency, 1998). In the 2000 election, both seats went to OPDO. In the 2005 contested election, the two seats slipped out of the hand of OPDO/EPRDF and were each taken by the opposition party, Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) and the affiliate party, ESPDP. Threatened by its defeat in Dire Dawa, the EPRDF opened its Committee Office in 2006 and introduced the so-called 40:40:20 power sharing formula (Focus Group Discussion, May 09, 2012, Dire Dawa). Finally, the 2010 national election was organized to fit to that formula, and accordingly, the two constituencies were divided between the ESPDP and the OPDO to prevent electoral competition among them. Parts of constituencies with diverse ethnic backgrounds were arranged to vote for a party that officially claims to represent another ethnic group.

*Local Elections:* Unlike other parts of Ethiopia, local election experiment was postponed for sixteen years in Dire Dawa in violation of the FDRE Constitution (Art.38). This happened due to the ad-hoc nature of the administrative responses to the problem of the city before the charter. Its first local election was held in 2008 and formed an elected local government. This election, as per the Dire Dawa Proclamation No.1/2008, created a local legislative body, i.e., City Council, composed of 189 seats. The 40:40:20 power sharing deal dictated the outcome of the election. Accordingly, of the total 189 seats of the City Council,



75 (39.68%) went to the OPDO, 74 (39.15%) to the ESPDP, 24 (12.70%) to the ANDM, 12 (6.35%) to the SEPDM, 3 (1.59%) to the TPLF and 1 to a private candidate (National Electoral Board of Ethiopia, 2009). The practice of inter-ethnic-based party power sharing deal faces problems when that deal is required to get legitimacy of the electorates. First, it creates a mismatch between the ethnic background of the constituencies and the candidates who officially represent another ethnic group. This essentially goes against the will of the voters. The critique of the City Council election was that:

The number of seats in the council is organized according to the 40:40:20 principle. Thus, the EPRDF and ESPDP shared the peoples of Dire Dawa for elections and agreed not to compete against each other. As a result, some Oromo and Amhara areas were arranged to vote for candidates from the Somali party (Interview, December 09, 2012, Addis Ababa).

The discrepancy between ethnic-based party and ethnic background of the voters is the result of an imposed political deal which disregards ethnic structure of the city's population. The paradox is that the Somali constitute 24% of the total population of Dire Dawa but the party that claims to represent them runs for 40% of the seats of the City Council.

Second, the EPRDF controls 60% of the seats in the city council but does not form the executive and lead it. The ESPDP apportions 40% of the seats and other political positions according to the formula. More critically, the first elected mayor of the city was from among the ESPDP's members of the City Council. This contradicts the will of the people who voted for the majority, which violates the constitution and the city's charter. The FDRE Constitution requires "a political party, or a coalition of political parties that has the greatest number of seats" to form the executive and lead it (1995: Art.56). The Charter of Dire Dawa declares that "The political party occupying the majority seats of the Council or, where such does not exist, the coalition of political parties shall constitute the executive of the city" (2004: Art.19). Thus, local elections programmed by the top-down inter-party deal jeopardize the constitution as well as the charter. It also looks that local election was introduced only to rubberstamp what is already determined by the two parties to the detriment of the will of constituencies, and thus voters are electing without choosing. This diametrically opposes Elazar's two faces of democracy: "one, the use of areal division to ensure neutrality and equality in the representation of the various groups and interests in the polity, and the other, in the use of such division to secure local autonomy and representation for diverse groups within the same civil society"(1987: 167). In a nutshell, the post-conflict arrangements of Dire Dawa experienced a high degree of centralism than federalism through centrally dictated inter-party coalition rules.



*Discussion:* The subsequent administrative responses to the city may partially be explained by Lijphart's consociational model. First, the operation of grand coalition between political parties, especially in the form of 40:40:20, successfully contrasted the majoritarian 'winner-take-all' system; further, it jeopardized constitutional principles as evidenced by the first local election which caused what is identified as 'electing without choosing' in some constituencies. If at all, consociation is more likely where there is no clear majority but we know that 60% of the seats of the Council were controlled by the EPRDF who generously formed a coalition government. In terms of democracy, assigning a mayor from the minority party goes against the will of the majority votes. Dire Dawa was suspended from its basic constitutional rights of self-rule including the right to vote and be elected for the local administration for sixteen years, until 2008. This shows the prevalence of party decisions over the constitutional principles.

Second, public schooling and broadcasting media in Dire Dawa have rather proved segmental linguistic autonomy, even if the city administration is part of and directly accountable to the Ministry of Federal Affairs which defeats the core concept of Elazar's democratic "local self-government" (1987: 189). Third, not all major ethnic groups in the city are proportionally represented in the shared city government both in the civil service and political positions. The problem related to access to civil service jobs (Somali and Oromo - the conflicting parties - are marginalized) is the result of imposition of the working language of the federal government upon the city administration and this came with the direct federal control. Fourth, because the hitherto coalition rules have been centrally crafted and dictated, the principle of minority/mutual veto is not yet exercised. Overall, it is linked to the argument that the functioning of self-rule and shared-rule of the Ethiopian federation is affected by the ruling EPRDF party channel, thus in practice making the processes much more centralized than its constitutional form (Assefa Fiseha, 2007). The institutional mechanisms stipulated in the constitution to manage conflicts are overridden by top-down party channel. The regional claims and the multi-ethnicity reasons are now more of official "window dressing" dramas.

## **Conclusion**

The experience of Dire Dawa has shown that there are irregularities in the application of the constitutional instruments because of the dominance of party channel which is also responsible for the magic formulas. The conflict over the ownership of Dire Dawa between Oromia and Somali Regions was kept without being constitutionally resolved for the last two decades. In addition to regional territorial conflicts, the federal government opted for its own direct temporary



control of the city for other varied reasons. The other factor is Dire Dawa's multi-ethnicity. Third, Dire Dawa's proximity to Djibouti port and Ethiopia's exclusive dependence upon this port for its export-import transactions has augmented the geopolitical significance of the city which deemed to have caused the special status of the city. Fourth, top leaders of Issa-dominated Djibouti government are sons of Dire Dawa; and the same Issa advanced ownership competing claim to the city. Previous regimes were also apprehensive to Issa/Somali for the Dire Dawa-Djibouti railway was under Issa/Somali control. Even, the Dergue military regime approached the bones of contention areas in Ethiopia including Dire Dawa through granting autonomous regional status in principle. Hence, it could be concluded that the special arrangement of Dire Dawa under the direct federal rule was impelled by multiple intertwined factors but now the geopolitical importance of the city appears to be the dominant reason which in turn has kept Dire Dawa outside constitutional basis.

Finally, Dire Dawa's experience during the last two decades portrays a twin process of Ethiopia's federal state building: political centralism and cultural decentralism. The architect of all coalition arrangements, designed as temporary partly consociational solutions, has been the ruling party itself but without constitutional basis. This has promoted state multi-cultural education and broadcasting media. It has also caused electing without choosing problems and ethnically unfair access to civil service jobs. The federal government in the short-run does not seem to render final solution to it either by constitutional amendment or by holding referendum to subsume part or whole of it either to Oromia or to the Somali Region. Conversely, Dire Dawa's special arrangement would be disturbed if opposition political parties won even some seats in the City Council. It could, therefore, be predicted that the fate of Dire Dawa depends on the electoral democratic processes and political developments in Ethiopia.

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