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down to work. In the meantime, while the UN tried to accommodate the ideological antipathy of the Bush administration to the international criminal court, another 100,000 people would have been killed in Darfur. One of the six reasons cited by the UN commission for recommending the international criminal court was precisely that it could be activated immediately, without any delay.

Now ministers tell us they are looking for a way forward, but that will only be possible through agreement in the security council – in other words, with the US. But do they really believe that the Bush administration would have the gall to cast a US veto to block Darfur being committed to the international criminal court? Where would that leave all the warm mood music on freedom and justice with which George Bush punctuated his inaugural speech only last month [January 2005]? Come to that, where would it leave the impassioned pleas of Tony Blair for the world to address the plight of Africa as a scar on our conscience?

A US veto would be as embarrassing to Blair as it would be shaming to Bush. But just as embarrassing would be for Britain once again to be seen doing the rounds and trying to persuade the rest of the world to accept the Bush position and not to push the issue to a vote. The only way out with dignity is for Blair to call in some of the many debts that Bush owes him. This is the time when a candid friend should tell Bush to put the urgent need of the people of Darfur for justice before his own dogmatic hostility to the international criminal court.

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The Ethiopian Election of 2005: A Bombshell & Turning Point?¹

Abdi Ismail Samatar

Ethiopia's parliamentary election in May 2005 was a spectacular event in the country's political annals as the opposition² captured nearly 50% of parliamentary seats.³ Two competing interpretations aimed at assessing the significance of the results have emerged. One scenario posits that international pressure has finally forced the regime to relax some of its controls on the political process and permit democratic expression of views. An amalgam of ethnicist opposition forces, many international institutions that supported and monitored the election, and others have endorsed this proposition. A second submission asserts that the political strategy TPLF-dominated regime pursued, which allowed different ethnic communities to govern themselves within the context of the federal constitution, is slowly but steadily maturing. This, most recent election, they allege, has vindicated the government's efforts during the past decade. Hence, the Ethiopian Prime Minister's declaration that he 'is proud to have introduced democracy to Ethiopia.' Both theses contain important elements of truth, however, they fail to grasp the event's significance *for the future* in the context of the country's oppressive and sectarian political history.

We, therefore, propose an alternative explication that recognizes the outcome as an important milestone towards a democratic political order, but which underscores how the confluence of disgreeable but opportunistic opposition forces could possibly lead to a political cul de sac. These contradictory forces derive from the legacy of the assimilationist ethnic politics of the Amhara-dominated regimes and those

induced by the Tigray-led government since 1992. How the conflicting agendas of the various political-ethnic groups are recast in the new electoral context shall determine whether 2005 marks: (a) Ethiopia's emergence as a democratic and civic polity; (b) as another attempt by the regime to hold on to power through illegitimate gimmicks; (c) as a way for chauvinist opposition to re-impose the dead order; (d) other sectarian elites to further fragment the social fabric. All three latter courses will invariably prolong current violence and instigate a new civil war that might lead to the break up of the country into 'ethnic' fiefdoms.

We tender that this electoral opening is an opportunity to embark on the difficult task of re-building the political fabric of the country and caution that chauvinist elements of the opposition intend to reverse the course of history by erasing 'ethnic politics' in Ethiopia through the re-imposition of an Amhara/Christian identity. Such an attempt will trigger a new wave of violence as communities will resist their re-colonisation. Further, other elements in the opposition dream of creating their ethnic Bantustans in which the 'natives' are free from Abyssinian dominance and will return to their original state. This illusion, even if it transpires, will merely relocate the conflicts within groups as we have already witnessed in Ethiopia since 1992. The vital question which this briefing will explore is how might the election results be turned into an opportunity to initiate a civic and democratic beginning for Ethiopia? The rest of the essay is divided into three parts. Part one briefly identifies two contrasting political reconstruction strategies in Africa that have similar objectives (democracy/justice), at least in appearance, but different means of achieving them. A key factor that distinguishes the two strategies is the way in which they treat cultural and political identity. Part two is a short summary of how the promise of 1991 in Ethiopia turned into a dead end. Finally,

the conclusion assesses the prospect of transforming the 2005 election into an opportunity to embark on a civic journey.

Contrasting Political Strategies: Ethnic vs. Civic

In the 1990s in Africa two sharply contrasting models of state-society relations and the role of ethnicity in national affairs have emerged: namely ethnic and civic. The first is what we call the *ethnic road* to political reconstruction. This approach deems ethnicity as the overriding form of identity among the population that can not be ignored in public affairs. Proponents argue that ethnicity has been a central factor in public life, usually since a particular ethnic group colonised the state and subjugated other communities. In such circumstance, the dominant group denied the importance of the ethnic factor and castigated dissident communities for being sectarian. Prime Minister Zenawi articulated this position and noted that Africa's ethnic reality could be ignored at our peril.

... [P]eople in Africa feel that they can wish away ethnic difference. Experience in Rwanda has taught us this is not the case. Experience in Liberia has taught us that this is not the case. What we are trying to do in Ethiopia is to recognize that ethnic differences are part of life in Africa, and try to deal with them in a rational manner. Rather than hide the fact that we have ethnic difference, we are saying people should express it freely. That, I think, pre-empt the type of implosion we've had in Rwanda.⁴

Zenawi's statement essentialises and homogenises ethnicity and the specificity of his articulation creates a quandary: acknowledge its existence or deny it. It is argued that denying or suppressing ethnic identity has had calamitous social, political, and economic repercussions. Consequently, advocates of the strategy imagine that one of Africa's major politi-

cal riddles could be solved by anchoring citizenship in the soil of ethnic belonging. Ethiopia chose the ethnic road to political reconstruction as a means of depoliticising ethnicity in the long run.

The *civic road* to reconstruction differentiates between two types of ethnic identities. First, there exists a non-state centric tradition based on shared values that are not legally defined. An alternative to such identity is one sanctioned by the state and which is therefore enforceable. Recognising these two identity forms create the opportunity to overcome the dilemma posed by the Ethiopian Prime Minister. Thus, to acknowledge the first form of ethnicity does not necessarily mean to endorse the second.⁵ Distinguishing these identity variants is necessary but insufficient to understand how old cultural traditions became political instruments of the state. To grasp the origins and nature of cultural identity's metamorphosis one needs to re-examine colonial state formation in Africa.

*... colonial powers were the first fundamentalists of the modern period. They were the first to advance and put into practice two propositions: one, that every colonized group has an original and pure tradition, whether religious or ethnic; and two, that every colonized group must be made to return to that original condition, and that return must be enforced by law. Put together, these two propositions constitute the basic platform of every religious or ethnic fundamentalism in the postcolonial world.*⁶

The creation and development of the colonial state distorted older cultural traditions and turned them into instruments that served the dominant forces. It is this colonial reinvention of tradition that is at the heart of contemporary ethnic/political problems in the continent, including Ethiopia.⁷ State imposed Amhara language and culture-defining Ethiopianess and the denial of other communities' political and economic

rights characterised Ethiopia's colonial form. The civic approach to reconstruction recognises the existence of cultural differences among the African population and acknowledges the damage done by ethnic forms of cultural politics. However, it insists that accepting political ethnicity as an old African tradition reinforces the legacy of colonialism rather than inspiring a common citizenship. South Africa is the most recent example of an African country that accepts cultural difference without confounding such identity with state politics.

Divergent historical experiences shaped recent developments in South Africa and Ethiopia. Two qualities of the liberation and resistance movements in the two nations brought about different political outcomes. First, the political leadership in South Africa that made the termination of the old regime possible did not come from a single ethnic group or region and had wide public support across the country. In contrast, the core members of the Ethiopian leadership lacked legitimate representatives from non-Tigray regions and therefore could not claim popular support in most parts of the nation. Second, the military wing dominated the Ethiopian movement and determined the political outcome of post-war transformation. TPLF military became the national defence force and consequently enforced the party's political agenda rather than provide the basis for political consensus.⁸

On the contrary, South Africa's defence force which failed to defeat the liberation movement remained intact. The compromise between the leaders of the apartheid regime and the liberation movement confirmed the military's neutrality in the political process. Consequently, the ANC led national unity government embarked on a gradual process of military reform and reintegration in order to insure the integrity of the force. Further, the split between the new political leadership and the old military made it improbable

for the post-apartheid regime to use the defence force to intimidate other parties to accept its political agenda. A critical analysis of the genesis of political ethnicity and the reform agencies involved is essential in order to figure out effective ways of terminating the legacy of 'divide and rule.'

Ethiopia & the Ethnic Road

In the early 1990s Ethiopia embarked on a seemingly novel political project that divided the country into nine 'ethnic provinces'. The presumed rational for this political strategy was to overcome the imposition of Amhara culture and language on Oromos, Somalis, Afars, the people of the southern region, etc., and the denial of their cultural heritage through state control. The challenge of post-1991 was how to undo past subjugations without reifying cultural differences through politics.⁹

Before exploring what became of the challenge, it is imperative to know why TPLF choose the ethnic road? Three crucial objective conditions which TPLF faced necessitated its strategic choice. First, TPLF needed to gain some degree of legitimacy for the new regime with non-Tigray populations. Establishing ethnic provinces seemed the most visible route to accomplish this goal since it dovetailed with the party's ethnic orientation. Second, the party's leadership appreciated the depth of injustice visited on non-Amhara populations. Consequently, it was predisposed to experiment with a political system that could have immediate resonance with various ethnic groups, but which could also focus attention away from the centre during those crucial early days of the transition. Finally and most significantly, TPLF came to power through the barrel of the gun and like all such organisations desired to maintain itself in power at whatever cost. Senior party strategists considered the establishment of ethnic regions as a vehicle to engage ethnic leaders in ways

that would reduce their challenge to TPLF dominance at the national level.

The interplay between these three factors circumscribed the dynamics of the ethnic political order and its resourcefulness to respond to local and national imperatives. It is worth remembering that ethnic federalism was meant to restore cultural dignity to local communities and grant them greater autonomy to mind their affairs, such as electing their regional and federal representatives. If steady progress has been made on these two vital arenas one could legitimately argue that the ethnic instrument might lead to a civic outcome. Enough evidence has accumulated over the past fourteen years to gauge how much progress has been made and the prospects for future development.

Re-drawing the administrative regions of Ethiopia along ethnic lines had some immediate and apparent benefits for communities who were previously marginalised, demonised, or whose existence was denied. The declaration of Oromo, Somali and others regions finally put an end to decades of suppression and denial of these communities' rights. For instances, former Amhara regimes deprived Oromos, who are the largest language group in the country, of the right to express themselves in their mother tongue. These regimes went the extra mile to systematically destroy cultural traditions of the Oromos and many other communities in order to naturalise their vision of Amharanised Ethiopia. Ethiopia's development since 1991 was a dagger at the heart of this chauvinist ethnic project.¹⁰ One of the major benefits of the new order was the establishment of script for many languages and their use as medium of instruction in regional primary schools. This single act has liberated various communities from Amhara cultural tyranny and has enabled children from non-Amhara regions to gain confidence and relish their heritage for the first time in recent history. It

also demystified cultural basis of political domination. Recognising this type of cultural diversity was a vital step in disconnecting political ethnicity from cultural identity and was therefore an essential step towards the creation of civic order. However the success of the cultural element of the new dispensation has been blemished by federal authorities who dictate the type of official history taught in schools and sectarian regionalists who distort history to legitimate their ethnic political project. In spite of these shortcomings, most reforms in the cultural/educational field have been relatively successful despite the limitations noted above.

The political reform programme has been the Achilles heel of the new order. Vital elements of federal dispensation were presumably established to allow regional communities manage their local affairs, and have the freedom to elect their leaders and hold them accountable. Local autonomy and democracy was intended to erase the legacy of ethnic-based political privileges to the extent that the constitution sanctions a region's right to secede from the federation. Given these new constitutionally endorsed rights, two issues deeply worried TPLF leadership. First, they were concerned about some regions opting for independence given their deep sense of alienation from the centre. Second, they assumed that if regional elections were free and fair, particularly in Oromia,¹¹ an opposition party might come to power which could easily challenge TPLF dominance. The combination of TPLF's need to support the restoration of human rights of grievated communities and maintain itself in power dictated its policies in the regions. Driven by this compulsion, it *created* a liberation organisation for other groups, the so-called PDOs, even before it captured Addis Ababa. The first ominous sign of TPLF's *modus operandi* was the expulsion of Oromo Liberation Front from the transition.¹²

TPLF's instrumentalist political agenda and practice contradicted the rhetoric of liberation and regional development. The PDOs which the Tigray party spawned won provincial elections in 1992 and dominated federal parliament ever since. Two subsequent elections reconfirmed a new pattern of supremacy in which TPLF held all organs of political and military power. Such manufacture of puppet parties beholden to federal authorities and pseudo-elections doubly undermined regional autonomy from the centre and accountability of leaders to their communities. TPLF's practice to unseat and appoint any regional authority at will has completely alienated the public from the system of governance, and has turned local authorities into sycophants who serve their masters and themselves.¹³ The dominant federal party's obsession with retaining power in spite of its narrow popular base has deprived the country of an opportunity to gain a civic footing, and has unnecessarily heightened ethnic political identity.

Ethiopia's pretentious ethnic democracy could not be sustained for long without the heavy hand of the security forces. The international community's pressure on the regime to open up the political process finally had the desired effect of relaxing political controls, mainly in urban areas. A significant proportion of the estranged public took advantage of the opportunity to vent its displeasure by voting against TPLF and the most recent ethnic hierarchy, and for an opposition led by chauvinists who are wedded to the old oppressive order.

A Last Chance for a Civic Coalition

High voter turnout and the results of the election clearly demonstrate that a significant proportion of the population is dissatisfied with the policies and practices of the regime. Some elements of the opposition who have campaigned on

hideously sectarian platforms have misconstrued the outcome as an endorsement for their agenda which is to undo the federation and reinvent the former empire. Progressive groups' interpretation of the election results is at variance with the above and point out that most of the public voted not to undo the progress of the past decade, but to punish TPLF, and underscore the need to shift course and return to the spirit of the early 1990s. Although the TPLF dominated coalition seem to have 'won' a majority of seats in parliament, many of the MPs are PDO members who lack legitimacy and therefore do not have the strength to serve the people they contend to represent. Therefore, continued alliance of TPLF and PDOs can only reinforce the cynicism that has sapped the confidence of the positive spirit which the regionalization of the administration motivated.

Since neither the prolongation of the present condition nor a return to Amhara dominated Ethiopia is desirable or feasible, what options might exist to turn the regime's crisis into a national opportunity, and how could that be realised? The first declaration to make is that elements of the opposition who campaigned on exclusivist platforms can not inspire confidence among the majority of the population. Thus, only progressive members, including many regional nationalist, of the opposition have a fleeting opportunity to lead the civic movement no matter what political arrangement is made to resolve election results. The first step in such an endeavour is to convene regional civic conferences wherein communities can articulate their thoughts about the way forward for the Ethiopian federation and select their civic leaders. Subsequently, leaders from all regions can organize to form the national civic forum which will synthesize contributions from the regions into a national document. The proposed forum differs from the national conference which TPLF convened in 1991 as communities will have greater freedom to set the agenda

and select their representatives without external intervention. One goalpost that ought to guide the new civic alliance is: regional autonomy within a civic federation.

The progressive opposition has an advantage over others in instigating the movement, since it has not been tainted by the old practices of divide and rule. However, it does not have a monopoly on exploring the civic road, and the challenge is how to build a representative civic fabric. TPLF, by contrast, has been damaged by its strategy of political manipulation and coercion, and the outcome of the election has taught it a sobering political lesson; that is, it could not expect its humiliated partners to come to its rescue at the hour of its need. In spite of the recent turn of events many of those who voted for the opposition are weary of the chauvinists' return to power and might entertain a new contract with the government. This could mean some of the credit TPLF had with communities could possibly be salvaged. In order for the Party to regain some degree of trust with non-Tigray communities, individual leaders and the party must be ready to take the real risk of losing power. The first step in its rehabilitation is to candidly admit its past misdeeds, publicly commit itself to a new dispensation in which the security forces will not interfere with the political process, and consequently create an independent body to which the military and police forces are accountable. Further, it will have to acquiesce to new freedoms in which communities openly debate their affairs and elect their representatives without constraint. Only such a radical scheme from its Orwellian 'all animals are created equal but some are more equal than others' has a chance to restore some degree of credibility to the party and inspire the public.

Given the variety of ways of orchestrating a democratic future, here are four real possibilities in Ethiopia. First, the gov-

erning party can bury its head in the sand and continue to intimidate the public in order to hang on to power. Such a strategy is destined to fail. The only way a coalition with TPLF can have a life span longer than the next five years in a democratically inclined Ethiopia is to undertake a transparent and serious analysis of the ethnic formula and why the voters rejected the party that liberated the country from a fascist dictatorship. Such re-assessment must be qualitatively different from past *gimoges* in which certain groups had the privilege to scrutinize the 'wrong-doings' of underprivileged groups. Endorsing this approach does not guarantee TPLF's continued dominance but it will give the country the chance to build on the progressive contributions made in the early 1990s and transcend political ethnicity. Second, the chauvinist opposition could aim to seize power using massive street demonstration in Addis Ababa in order to reinvent Amhara dominance over three-quarters of the national population who are non-Amhara. This strategy will also lead to a dead-end. Third, the progressive elements of the opposition from various regions have an occasion to embark on the creation of a national civic movement which is respectful of cultural differences among the population, but that does not ossify it into state-sanctioned political identity. Establishing such a movement will require incredible dedication and good faith, an uncommon feature of Ethiopian politics. One of the key challenges for such a movement is how to build trust among a new generation of leaders that are genuinely representative. Creating such a movement is the most exigent route but could also be the most promising avenue to a civic future. Finally, a combination of circumstances driven by current political pressures might lead to a calamitous end. A cunning but dishonest TPLF remains dominant, an opposition that is driven by the tribal haughtiness or lust for power, and a disorganised public alienated from na-

tional politics could usher the end of Ethiopia as one country. *This is the nature of the crossroads which the 2005 election signifies: reject ethnic chauvinism, respect cultural differences, and nurture a just civic federation, or perish.*

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Endnotes

1. Previous opportunities for civic reconstruction were wasted, including 1974, 1991.
2. The opposition mainly consists of two groups: chauvinists led by the Amhara elite and regional nationalists. The regional nationalist can be divided into two main groups: civic and sectarian nationalists.
3. We might never know the exact number of seats won legitimately by the opposition or the government party.
4. Zenawi, M. Zenawi, Quoted in Steven P. Tucker, 'Ethiopia in Transition, 1991-1998', unpublished manuscript. For a contrasting reading of Rwanda, See M. Mamdani (2001), *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nationalism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
5. M. Mamdani (2004), *Race and Ethnicity as Political Identity in the African Context* in Nadia Tazi (ed.), *Keywords: Identity*, New York: Other Press. 1-24.
6. Ibid. p. 6.
7. Colonialism in Ethiopia meant the supremacy of the Amhara and the conquest and subjugation of non-Abysinian cultural groups such as the Oromo, Somalis, Afar, Gambella, and many others.
8. For an interesting analysis of the military see, R. Luckman, 'Radical Soldiers, New Army Models and the Nation State in Ethiopia and Eritrea', Draft Paper.
9. A.I. Samatar (2004), 'Ethiopian Federalism: Autonomy versus Control in the Somali Region', *Third World Quarterly*, 25, 6: 1131-1154.
10. Many supporters and apologists of the old order deny that Amhara ethnicity was a major political factor in the past. Instead they claim that a class system was the devil. This is quite similar to some of the arguments put forward by apologists of the apartheid regime some of whom completely denied the existence of Afrikaner state privileges.

11. Labeling political opponents as terrorists is the hallmark of ethnic politics.

12. L. Lata (1999), *The Ethiopian State at Cross Roads: Decolonization and Democratization or Disintegration*, Lawrence, N.J.: Red Sea Press.

13. A. I. Samatar, S. Pausewang, et al. (2002), *Ethiopia since the Derg: A Decade of Pretensions and Performance*. London: Zed Books.

Who Calls the Shots? How Government-corporate Collusion Drives Arms Exports

Campaign Against the Arms Trade

The Official Reasons for Arms Export Support

The UK government continues to offer a programme of political and financial support to UK-based arms exporting companies at levels disproportionate to those received by civil industry. Those questioning this support are directed towards the wider gains that are said to accrue from involvement in the international arms market, i.e. economic, strategic, and peace and security benefits. Yet these rationales lack credibility to such an extent that other explanations are required.

The Real Reasons Behind Arms Export Support

There are a number of alternative explanations for the government's support of arms exports. These range from the existence of unstated foreign policy goals or the government's susceptibility to company lobbying on jobs, to the less tangible influence of Tony Blair's military bent. Many of the explanations are useful and may provide part of the picture, but analysis of a potentially key ration-

ale has so far been lacking: the influence and political power of arms companies within government. This rationale dovetails with the others indicated above but also provides perhaps the single most significant reason why, against ethical concerns and economic reason, the government continues to promote UK weaponry around the world. This report considers how the military industry has retained and developed this political influence despite the end of the Cold War and the arrival of a government touting an 'ethical' foreign policy.

The Revolving Door

The close customer/client relationship between UK-based arms exporters and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) is incomparable across government. No other industry has attracted such a large number of high ranking departmental staff while at the same time offering many of its own employees to the MoD via secondment. The institutional boundaries between the two bodies are so blurred that the existence of any real separation has been questioned.

A Web of Advisory Bodies

These boundaries are further eroded by overwhelming industry representation within an extensive network of UK and European-based bodies advising government on military policy. This network is not only more extensive than those advising high-level government on non-military areas of policy, but is continuously growing under the Labour government, raising urgent questions about transparency, accountability and favourable access to ministers.

Use of Lobbying Companies

The industry's profile within the domestic decision-making arena is raised further by military industry's use of lobbying companies whose purpose is to distort the advocacy playing field in the inter-