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## Multiethnic Federalism in Ethiopia: A Study of the Secession Clause in the Constitution

Alem Habtu

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### Abstract

In 1991, Ethiopia's new leaders established a multiethnic federation that provides for the right to secession. The secession clause was incorporated for reasons of ideology and necessity. The federation consists of largely ethnic-based territorial units and encourages political parties to organize along ethnic lines. The Ethiopian case is a radical departure from most other federal systems. This analysis focuses on (1) Ethiopia's secession clause, (2) the House of Federation, and (3) state-federal relations. The future of federalism in Ethiopia is unclear. The provisions of a liberal democratic constitution conflict with the reality of authoritarian centralist practice and therefore jeopardize the future of federalism. Although the secession clause has symbolic value, it is unlikely that any Ethiopian government would allow secession to take place.

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