

Crisis Leadership in Ethiopia: A Comparative Analysis on the 1989 Coup D'état and the Post-2016 Protracted Political Instability

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Abstract- This article provides a comparative analysis on the post-1974 crisis leadership of Ethiopia. For this purpose, the 1989 coup d'état and the post-2015/16 protracted instability were selected. Methodologically, descriptive analysis has been employed based on the data gained from an array of secondary and primary sources of data. The 1989 coup was plotted by the military chiefs of the armed forces against Mengistu Hailemariam's regime. The regime had considered this crisis as a threat. As a result, the crisis decisions had emphasized on defusing blames, and defending the status quo. Negotiations and power sharing scheme were discredited. The systemic problem had denied both in problem analysis and crisis responses. On the other hand, in post-1991, ethno-nationalism has been recognized to be the vortex of the political norms. The extreme politicization of ethnicity constrained the shared vision of the people. The spaces for democratic struggles have banned which resulted in the formation of nominal opposition groups. Generally, the problems were both systemic and implementation though the government did not recognize the prevalence of a systemic problem. In its decisions, the regime has considered the crisis as a threat—not as an opportunity—though it has certain deviances from the former in its attempt to use legal and political measures. Therefore, it is recommended that the incumbent government need to consider the crises as an opportunity to adopt systemic reforms.

Index Terms- Crisis, leadership, Mengistu, Regime, Ethnicity, Opportunity

I. INTRODUCTION

The history of our world is characterized by “the good and the evil.” This may be attributed by “conflict and cooperation, peace and war, mutual trust and security dilemma, and economic boom and economic depression. In many instances crisis is the “evil” which is in need for critical leadership. The term crisis is general that encompasses many forms of risks such as economy, politics, military, social and technology. Crisis is a condition in which things are highly unprecedented, and the environments are uncertain. According to Griffiths, et al (2008), crises are quite sudden transformations of ‘normal’ relations between states. This definition focuses on the change of status quo from normal to abnormal ones. For others such as Boin, McConnell & T Hart (2010), crisis encompasses the real events and the shared views towards the event. According to these authors, “Crises are the combined product of unusual events and shared perceptions that

something is seriously wrong (Ibid: 230); and such broad definition is necessary since the crisis decision is dependent on the state of shared perceptions towards the incident.

The prevention of aggravated danger that resulted from the crises demands appropriate leadership. In other words, the gravity and the intensity of the danger posed by the crises are highly dependent upon the effectiveness of crisis leadership. Crises leadership is concerned with a process of damage limitation both at operational and strategic levels. Sometimes crises may not be accompanied by evil results/consequences. Rather they have the potential to provide leaders with new and unique opportunities to discard old policies and commitments, kick start new ones, reform public organizations, and reshape the political landscapes by forging new coalitions (Ibid). According to this saying, crises are watersheds in giving up the old system and establishing the new one. In doing so, there is a need for effective leadership. Crisis is a litmus test of the quality of leadership. When leaders at national levels are seen to have not succeeded, their political capacity and the legitimacy may shrink swiftly. Thus, depending up on the leadership, crisis may result in either elevating or deteriorating the legitimacy to the ruling bodies. The failure to redress crisis in time may also result in exacerbation of risks, and the malfunction of the state systems.

The prevalence of regional or global crises could have the potential to cause crises at national levels. The historical events such as the rise of oil price and the 1974 political shake in Ethiopia, the 2008 economic crisis driven political turmoil in Greece, the Arab spring driven regime changes in Egypt and Yemen are few examples in substantiating the above claims. The aforesaid crises were accompanied by the destabilization of state systems such as weakening of state machineries, deposing of leaders, and abating of the bargaining power of the states.

Regarding Ethiopia, in post-1974, the country had faced numerous crises of different magnitudes. The 1974 execution of the high officials of the imperial regimes, the “white terror” and “Red Terror” the 1977/78 Ethio-Somalia war, the Military loss of Red Star Campaign, the 1984 Famine, the 1989 military coup, the collapse of the Derg, the resignation of Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) from the Transitional Government, the Ethio-Eritrea war of 1998, the 2005 election crisis, the 2015/16 onward instability were some the crises. The Derg (committee in Geez language) was the ruling group from 1974 to 1991. Later, since 1991, Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) is the political organization in charge of passing crisis decision. With the full power to do so, both the Derg and the EPRDF had passed their respective crises decisions.

The objective of this study was to conduct comparative analysis on the crisis leaderships of the earlier and the current regimes of Ethiopia. For this purpose, two key crises were selected. These are the 1989 Coup d'état against president Mengistu and the "2015/16 political fiasco." These two events have been chosen because, they were relatively inclusive and tempo changers. They can also represent other cases since they were multi-faced in their nature. What all the review of existing literature revealed, comparative studies have not been conducted so far on the issue under question even though the gravity of the problems demanding adequate and informative academic studies.

Based on the above backdrops, answers will be sought to the following questions: How did the past and the current governments of Ethiopia respond to the crises? What has succeeded and what has failed? Why failure and what could have been done to avert failures? What key lessons can be drawn from both crises and respective crises leadership processes?

II. METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

The analysis of the crisis leadership in Ethiopian cases includes a range of variables whose effects are difficult to isolate. The study takes into consideration various contextual issues, and thus, the comparative study is the best method to arrive at meaningful conclusions. By choosing such a strategy, the study used sources and benefit from theories to guide the analysis of data. To achieve the general objective of this study, multiple sources of evidence, that are mainly *secondary and primary sources* were used. As secondary sources different qualitative documents were critically analyzed. It includes public reports, reputable news, and academic literatures. The majority of the literature written on the Ethiopian political history is focused on the key constituent events of crisis and the vital decisions during the crisis. Therefore, this study utilizes the recorded facts to analyze the subject of this study through triangulation of data.

Primary sources: *Legal documents:* The legal codes are also examined as primary sources of evidence. The legal documents are among the foundation for the study of the de jure crisis leaderships of Ethiopia and hence some legal documents of the regimes of post-1974 have been assessed. *Observatory participation:* Evaluating of the political directions and crisis responses of the incumbent government through participating in consultative conferences of 2017 and in the "deep reform" scheme as a practitioner was another means of data collection.

III. THEORETICAL APPROACH OF CRISIS LEADERSHIP

In this work, established perspectives, and generalizations are used to throw light on the empirical case selected for analysis. Investigation of crisis leadership theories and practices were explored, with the aim of finding perspectives that could provide tools of analyzing the data. Hence, in this study, the theoretical and empirical findings have mutually nourished each other towards a better understanding of the issue. Therefore, in this section the theoretical concepts of crisis and approaches of crisis leadership have been given a major emphasis.

Crisis is a decisive stage that can have significant consequences in the future of a particular system in which the

core values could be affected. According to (Rosenthal, et al, 1989:10), "a crisis occurs when policy makers experience a serious threat to the basic structures or the fundamental values and norms of a system, which under time pressure and highly uncertain circumstances necessitate making vital decision." The definition covers diversified phenomenon of crisis and works to deal on the crisis such as coup d'état, environmental disaster, policy fiasco, terrorist attacks, revolution, and so on.

3.1. Key Characteristics of crisis leaders

Characteristically, crisis leaders have some sort of differences from crisis managers. Although leading and managing are complementary, leaders take a long view, formulate visions, encourage diversity, empower others, initiate changes, explore new territory, whereas manager take short view, make plans, enforce uniformity, control others, stabilize status quo, and maintain existing patterns (Allio, 2003). Accordingly, unlike managers, leaders probably consider crisis as an opportunity and exploits the crisis situation to devise critical system reform. Moreover, seeing things for what they are, strategic and tactical thinking, taking risk, and readiness to admit mistakes are some of the characteristics of crisis leaders. These are detailed as follow:

"Seeing things for what they are: *Crisis leaders live on the front end of reality. They recognize events and their significance and do not shy away from the consequences of what they see. Strategy and detail:* They are in need to see the big picture as well very detailed knowledge of the issues. **Take risk:** *Crises often bring the leader face-to-face with a set of situations they have not previously seen. They will deliver bad news when they need to and do it in a way that avoids panic and provides a realistic level of hope for the future. Prepare to admit mistakes:* leaders know that making an imperfect and risky decision can often be better than making no decision at all. Hence, in the face of certain failure, big leaders are courageous to admit their mistakes" (Rowe, 2008). Niche

This articulation shows that leadership demands expertise, and quality of sensing the realities of disastrous situations, interpretation and passing rational decision in time in the face of risks. In addition, there are other characteristics of leaders discussed as follow:

Collaboration: *Leaders understand, however, that a long-term solution requires the input and involvement of many stakeholders. They identify those individuals and work together towards a solution that most support. Gathering contrarian viewpoints from individuals with whom they might not agree, but respect, likely means they may create solutions not previously tried. Listening to unpopular advice:* Successful leaders listen not only to those who agree with them. Rather, they include individuals with whom they may not agree and whose advice may be contrary to that of their closest advisers. **Multiple options:** *When they have identified the problems, they are willing to consider multiple approaches to how these may be addressed. Initially, they engage others in brainstorming potential solutions without judgment, even though they may have a preferred solution in mind (Ibid).*

For crisis leaders, having this category of the characteristics is vital to widen the scopes of the vantage points of problem

analysis and to connecting the big picture with the operational issues.

3.2. The nexus between event, Perception, Posture, and decision

Crises are realities of unusual events and the constructed and share perceptions of the danger of the real events. Given this notion, when leaders are confronted with events of crisis they may adopt fundamentally different postures. This may be the

result of their idiosyncrasy, and experience and the ability of them to amalgam niche perspectives to understand the situation. Sometimes, perceptions are ordered through pre-set belief systems that are both valuable and potentially dangerous; they can lead to wishful thinking and faulty analysis (Griffiths, et`al, 2008). Generally, decisions are dependent of perception and as a result of perception some use crisis as opportunities for institutional reform others may not (see the figure 1 bellow).

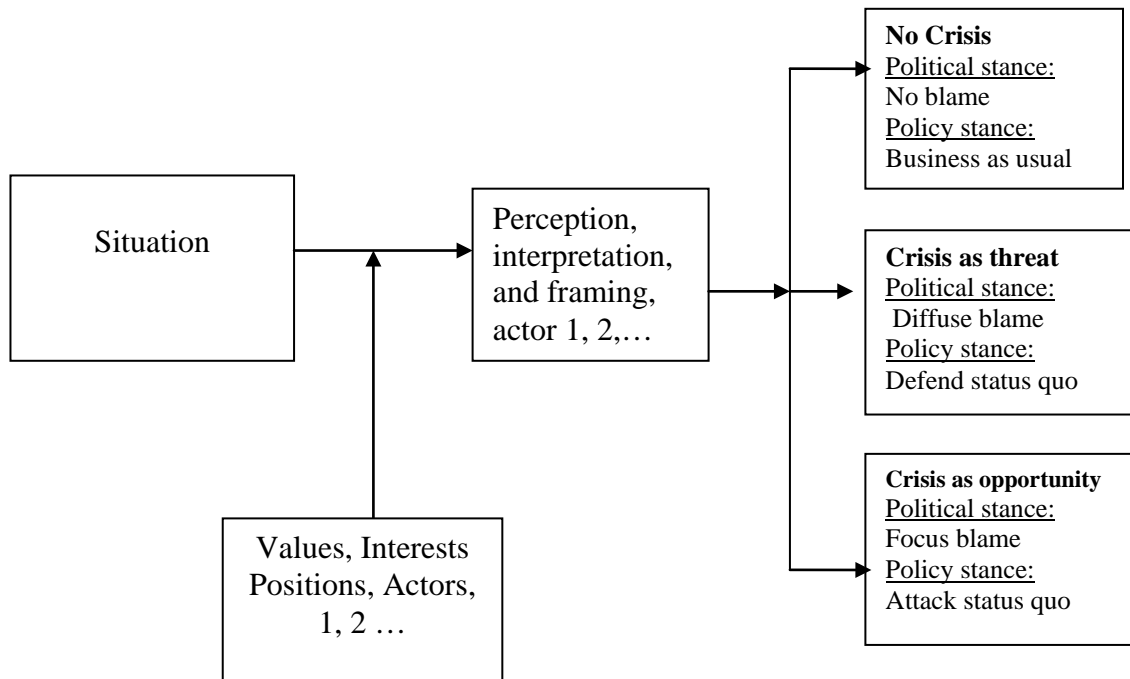


Figure 1 Identifying crisis: perceptions and their political implications
 Adopted from Boin, `t Hart, and McConnell, 2009, P.84.

Perceptions and its implications: As mentioned above, leaders may take different postures about real incidents due to the differences in their perceptions and postures about the incidents. This has discussed as follow.

1. *Position of no crisis:* Sometimes leaders may deny or downplay the potential threats. For instance, “the Bush administration`s stance on Al-Qaeda prior to 9/11, levee protection in southern Louisiana prior Katrina, or climate change- the message is that there is no crisis” (Boin, McConnell and Hart, 2009:230). This is the manifestation of consideration of incidents as simple unfortunate events. Thus, no significant responses would also be taken.
2. *Crisis as a threat:* This involves the leaders` consideration of events as a critical threat to the social setting and public interest. As shown in the above figure such posture dictates them to defend the system from criticism. As a result, diffusing blames against the policy and organizational policies and practices, maintaining the status quo and adoption of corrective measures to avert the threat are the responses of the office holders.
3. *Crisis as opportunity:* In Marxist theory, crisis is an opportunity for the working class because the crisis is the

break or split of capitalist structural system. The central thrust of our interpretation of Marxian theory is to see accumulation as the expanded reproduction of a fabric of capitalist control that is always tenuous and repeatedly threatened by working class struggle (Cleaver and Bell, 2002). Crisis is thus, most basically, the rupture of that fabric and a positive consequence of the development of the working class as subject. The essence of crisis driven opportunity is concerned with leaders` recognition of events as fortunate happening. They hold the position that the event is critical to expose deficiencies of status quo beforehand; and cherishing the blame rather than diffusing. Corollary, they likely devise measures to furnish new organizational set up with discarding the status quo in question.

3.1. Challenges of Crisis Leadership

Some of the challenges of crisis leadership are sense making, decision making, and coordinating, meaning making, terminating and learning (Boin, McConnell & T Hart, 2010:235). *Sense making:* A crisis does not announce its onset, it is unprecedented. Hence, it may be difficult to sense the actual incident as a crisis. The difficulty of extracting coherent and credible signals from the multi-faced abnormal noises of crisis, and the countless and bewildering noises of crisis that impair the

ability to collate and interpret information are the challenges sense of making.

Decision making: Crisis is a litmus test of the quality of leaders' decision. One of the classical examples of crisis is the invasion of Somalia against Ethiopia in 1977. During which the leaders of the revolution, particularly, Colonel Mengistu presented with the intelligence information about the conventional war declared by Somalia. Whatever his choices from the possible alternative options such as air strike, mechanized defensive attack, blockage of arms supply and naval attack, and others. However, it was hard to forecast the exact consequences; one thing seems certain that any decision would have impact on the relationships of Ethiopia with global partners of Somalia. Albeit the situation needed an urgency of decision, the military apparatus of Ethiopia was weak (Fikiressilassie, 2014¹), not in a position to compete with that of Somalia's forces. Even no resource to purchase weapons and more importantly there was a must to have willingness from the suppliers of the necessary weapons. America, the long time partner of Ethiopia was not willing to sell, and or give military hardware and spare parts for existing U.S. made Weapons. There was little time to consult with advisors, colleagues, and the likes. The situation was taught and challenges for decision makings.

Coordination: When we see the same case, when Said Bare declared war against Ethiopia, the leaderships of the Derg were in a critical challenge of mobilizing and organizing the public to the campaign due the prevalence of local groups those who were in a civil war with Derg and siding Somalia. On the other hand, the country had too few infrastructures and state machineries. In the face of these uncertainties coordination of the logistics, weapons, diplomacy, and troops was not an easy task. As a result, there were irregularities and communication breakdown between the stakeholders of crisis management. This was an impediment in pursuing effective coordination.

Meaning Making: "In time of crisis, there are high expectations on leaders to quell uncertainty and produce an authoritative account of what is happening, what caused it to happen, and what action needs to be taken" (Boin, McConnell & T Hart, and 2010:235). They can meet the expectation if and only if they are capable of interpret and understand the essence of the crisis. But, this might not be happen due to the abundance of incorrect information, and the inability of leaders to collate and synthesize them in a manner that helps their decision.

Termination: The full-fledged Crisis leadership is about the cessations of the operations and general strategy. This is also concerned with the avoidance of prolonged and too short emergency measures. Such maneuvering necessitates a diminishing and gradual easing of the business of crisis. In this respect, leaders possess authoritative legal or policy powers to terminate a crisis, for example, by ending state of emergency or

revoking martial law (ibid). However, the situations challenge to pass effective decisions because the complexities of the environment can constrain the decision of leaders on how to terminate, when to terminate and what are the appropriate measures following termination.

Learning: According to Boin, McConnell & T Hart (2010), only weeks after hurricane Katrina had destroyed the coastal areas of Louisiana and Mississippi, Hurricane Rita entered the Gulf of Mexico. Accordingly, when the tragedy projection of Rita included Houston, the Texas authorities quickly ordered an evacuation; and the lesson of Katrina had been learned. In this case, the authorities learned the lessons. The events before today were histories and they have lessons for today and tomorrow if leaders are positional learners. Unless there would be another crisis and that could aggravate the pre-existing crisis. Drawing lesson is not easy; it is a challenge for crisis leadership.

IV. CRISIS LEADERSHIP IN ETHIOPIA: CASE STUDIES

4.1. The 1989 coup against Mengistu H/mariam

The military Junta by the name of Derg came out of the 1974 revolution that discarded the Solomonic dynasty. It was first organized by the representatives of the Military units of different divisions. After the possession of the political power, the Derg adopted socialism as an ideology of the state and devised radical political and economic policies. From the inception, the formation of government by the military wing had faced extreme criticism by the pro-socialist forces that were the initiators of the change. Most revolutionary groups poked upon the Derg, requested the establishment of civilian rule though the Derg was unwilling. In the heyday of this disagreement, one of the Dé facto party called All Ethiopian Socialist Movement (AESM) formed an alliance with the military group. The other civilian party named by Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Party (EPRP) declared "White Terror" against the leadership of the Derg and AESM. As a result the "Red Terror"² was declared by the Derg aided by AESM. Consequently, the Derg had hammered the EPRP until the party's leaders dismantled. The capacity of the EPRP to challenge the power of the Derg gradually declined. However, the military rule did not defeat the ethnic based resistances of the north and elsewhere.

On the other hand, there were worth-mentioning crises events that the leaders properly endeavored to solve. For instance, the security crises of the nation during the late 1970s was the pivotal decisions of the Derg and the chairman of the committee that saved the nation from the savage and fierce invasion of Siad Bare's forces. According to Fikresilassie (2015), the leadership of Mengistu in getting support from the socialist countries through diplomatic persuasions, the process of

¹"The number Ethiopia's ground forces were half of Somalia's one, Somalia possessed modern and out numbering Weapons such as the tanks, Cannon, grenades, Machineguns, Armored vehicles, rockets, missiles, ant-tank and anti-air Missiles, varieties of explosives, and light weapons. Regarding the air forces, Somalia has hundreds of Mig-17, Mig-21, and Mig-23 whereas Ethiopia's forces had tens of U.S. made F-5 fighters" (Fikiressilassie, 2014:388).

²"From 1976, a period of violence occurred, where EPRP assassinations of members of AESM and supporters of the Derg were followed by the Red Terror, where the Derg and its supporters haunted EPRP members, imprisoning 30,000 and killing thousands of them"(Holliday and Molyneux, 1981). But the AESM's dominance within the mass organizations became strong for Mengistu, and from 1977 AESM was violently suppressed" (Aalen, 2002).

maneuvering to mobilize the public, and the deployment of newly recruited troops were successful. In this disastrous time, leaders managed the shift of public attention from the local political problem to the external issue. The result of the combination of different crisis decisions of the leaders culminated with the victory Ethiopia's forces. The regime enjoyed relative public support. The victory was also an impetus for the initiation of the "Red Star Campaign" against the rebelling group in Eritrea. However, unlike the war against Somalia, the civil war in Eritrea did not end up with the victory of the Derg. Gradually, the rebels such as EPLF and TPLF became strong enough to shake the regime. Military defeats became common.

There were a number of strategic military losses for the Derg especially, in the late 1980s. By March 1988, the mechanized army of the government defeated, weapons and a strategic place in Eritrea called "Afbet" were captured by the EPLF; and 20,000 troops were dismantled (Bahiru Zewdie, 2007). According to Bahiru, before this defeat, the commander of the said front, Major General Tariku Laynie executed by Mengistu following the disagreement between them concerning the leadership of the war. This resulted in the moral damage of the combatant forces. This moral failure was one of the factors for the defeat. In Shire Endasilasie, by February 1989 another defeat occurred, and TPLF got a significant victory. In this battle, the Third Division revolutionary mechanized force with 40,000 troops was obliterated (Ibid). The forces of the regime have withdrawn from the entire Tigray areas. The defeats in Afbet and Shire marked the beginning of the end of the Derg regime. In the midst of these losses, senior officers, known to be dissatisfied with the President's pursuit of protracted civil war, in which the army has suffered from aforementioned severe defeats, staged a coup on 16 May 1989. But, it was foiled within three days in Asmara and Addis Ababa. This unfortunate coup exposed the coup makers for Mengistu's revenge.

According to Perlez (1989), Major General Merid Negusie, and the commander of the air force, Major General Amha Desta, had been killed in the fighting. Major General Demissie Bultu and a number of his compatriots were killed by the pro-Mengistu regime Commandos in Asmara. The body of Demissie dragged inhumanly on the street of Asmara (Bahiru, 2007). Further, as a result of this crisis, between 300 and 400 officers were reported to be arrested (Research Directorate, Immigration, and Refugee, 1990). On 26 December 1989, Mengistu's government reported to have charged fourteen military officers with mutiny and attempting to overthrow Mengistu (ibid). Later, "12 of them including the army and police chief executed" by Mengistu (Los Angeles Times, 1990). The situation, particularly the revenges of the President was deterrence for other officers; signaling them that their life had no guarantee.

The coup d'état and specially the merciless measures of regime resulted in drought of leaderships of the military units. Dereje Demissie, the author of the book titled "Father Memoir" (in Amahric-"አባቱ ያችን ሰዓት") has compared the number of Ethiopian military generals killed by the protracted civil war plus Ethio-Somalia war and the number of generals executed by Mengistu. For this author, Ethiopia lost only 5 Generals during the civil war and Ethio-Somalia war where as Mengistu executed above 50 military Generals.

Mengistu had made reshuffling and new appointment of officers to fill the military leadership gap left by the arrested and executed generals. The promoted and newly appointed commanders to fill the vacant positions were ineffective and less experienced. It was because the new comers were inefficient to successes in the position that deserve to be lead by skilled and experienced Generals. More importantly, it is arguable that the soldiers and the new appointed ranks of the military would have no the moral courage of winning the civil war that was not achieved by the leadership of experienced late generals. What would be done to save the complete collapse? The crisis would demand the following actions:

- Negotiation with the coup makers, instead of killing and arresting;
- Negotiation with the rebels;
- Reconsideration of Global partners and
- Resignation of the president

I. Negotiation with Coup makers

In 1989, a dozen generals executed being found guilty of "treason and endangering the unity and territorial integrity" of the nation. Did the measure save the unity and territorial integrity? Indeed, the answer is no. Even the execution had accelerated the complete collapse of the nation. Due to the idiosyncrasy of Mengistu, the coup maker might not expect amnesty from his government but they might have the zeal not to be killed. Given this fact, they would have no motive to reject the call for dialogue that could save their lives and the country as well. It has been told that the master minds of the coup agreed and planned to have negotiations with rebels in view of searching for political solution for the civil war. Therefore, the government would have the chance to look for the political solution for the civil war by letting the coup makers to proceed with their plan of negotiation. Even, the survival and presence of those senior generals would have the power to diminish the hope of winning for the rebels. On the other hand, the determination for discussion with those generals by refraining from revenge would be better to alleviate the leadership drought in the military units.

II. Negotiation with rebels

Eritrea People Liberation Front (EPLF): It is already known that the EPLF had reluctances to continue the war and decided to "negotiate with the Derg by late 1970s"³ and later in 1989 with the coup makers. This shows that at that particular time (1989) EPLF was in a position to sit for peace deal. So, before the execution of the coup makers, the president has certain chances to continue the peace deal with EPLF. Through ensuring the participation of coup plotters in the truce process, Mengistu would have the chance to attract the heart of the supporters of the coup. Corollary, fear, and moral damage in the military would be insignificant. Even if the negotiation with EPLF resulted in granting the self-rule or secession of Eritrea, the state of Ethiopia still would have the bargaining power to secure the right of

³ Following the decision of Derg by 1976 to grant an autonomous self administration to Eritrea, there was relative subside of wars. Simultaneously, Negotiation was started by Sisay Habtie, the chairman of Derg's foreign affairs Committee though it was interrupted upon the death of Sisay (Bahiru Zewdie, 2007).

access to the sea. Moreover, the deal might have the role of separating the EPLF from TPLF. The truce with EPLF (It was pro-peace deal than TPLF) was possible; and it would be an opportunity to buy time to depreciate the moral and material impetus of the hardliners.

Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF): Though still the regime had the state resources to mobilize, the time was so hard to Mengistu's government than for the Rebel group, the TPLF. Hence, it was the Derg who was responsible to initiate and search for negotiation with the TPLF. It could exploit all the possible pacific means to be saved from the evil of disintegration. The state resources still would empower the leaders to have the bargaining power. In the process, declaration of temporary ceasefire, opening space to the international mediators including the westerns were possible. Due to the gravity of the crisis, the only way out was negotiation and downsizing the number of enemies. It would also save the regime from the complete collapse. The deal would open a win-win forum: no zero sum game in the power politics. In other saying, Mengistu's regime—which was zeal to take all—would have some.

III. Reconsideration of Global partners

By 1987 the regime adopted the constitution of People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE). The provisions foreign policy principles of the constitution have detail articulations about the relations and to whom the state aspired to have friendly relations. In this constitution, the working relations with the socialist' states have given emphasizes. The provisions read as:

1) *The people's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (PDRE), while safeguarding the national interest of the country, shall promote relations and cooperation with all states on the basis of equality and mutual benefit. It shall respect the rights of states to live under the social and economic system of their choice.* 2) *The PDRE shall promote all-round relations and cooperation with socialist states, and strengthen with the international working class movement and democratic revolutionary forces, national liberation movements and other democratic peace loving forces.* 3) *PDRE Shall staunchly, struggle against colonialism, imperialism, neo-colonialism, and other forms of oppression and exploitation (Article 28 of the constitution of PDRE).*

In 1989, there were a number of vivid manifestations of power shift and the ease of bipolar world structure. The time demand foreseeing of the mid-1980s onward Gorbachov's gradual termination of supports to the communist states (even in East Europe). This was the rationale to express the need of making reforms on the diplomatic relations of PDRE. The focus of the reforms would be the complete avoidance of the hostile policy against the western, and the siege mentality. It was better to implement the principle of Non-alignment: non-alignment was the long aged orientation of Ethiopia's foreign policy (since 1955). This principle was proclaimed in article 27 of the constitution of PDRE⁴. But, in practice, the government was not able to avoid aligning with the socialist camp. The realization of this principle would open the chance of increasing global partners. At that time, although the growth of satellite technology

⁴The foreign policy of People's Democratic republic of Ethiopia is the based on the principles of proletarian internationalism, peaceful co-existence and Non- alignment.

negatively affected the strategic importance of Ethiopia for western intelligence, still the western interests to have close relationship did not ease. Realistically, the political dynamism of the time demanded the pragmatic shift from the slogans such as "death to Imperialism", "Death to Bureaucratic capitalism" (Fikiressilasie, 2014: 329) to "Fair beneficent from globalization and uni-polar world structure." By doing so, the regime could exploit the diversified forms of relationships to pursue the national interest.

IV. Resignation

Since 1970s the difference between Derg and Mengistu has become blurred. He was everything and everywhere in the country's politics. The crisis was the manifestation of failure in his political leadership, and the coup was the result of loss confidence on his rule. His lingering for power until he lost every single instrument of defending his rule was self evidence that he didn't learn lessons from his predecessor as well as from the course of the crises. In other expression, if he had had the love with the country, he would have had to resign and provide the coup plotting groups with the chance to devise their own solution. Such decision would attract the heart of some dissidents to sit for negotiation. Inter alia, the deal for his resignation would have the possibility of ensuring the territorial integrity of the nation/PDRE/. By the way of summing up, it was much better to resign than fleeing after everything lost.

4.2. Crisis and its leadership under EPRDF

The collapse of the Derg regime by 1991 was a watershed that marked the coming of ethnic based rebel groups in the political scene. The ethnic based rebel groups such as Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) and Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Movement (EPDM) later; renamed "Amhara National Democratic Movement" (ANDM) controlled Addis Ababa by the name of EPRDF. The Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) and the Southern Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Front (SEPDF) joined the EPRDF at a later stage. Consequently, Politicization of language and ethnicity became the fashion of the time. The majority seat in the council (with seats 87) of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) occupied by those ethnically formed groups. According to Aalen (2002), the TGE included selected individuals and twenty-seven political organizations; a precondition for the organizations to be allowed to take part was that they were ethnically based. "The ethnic-question-comes-first-wing of the student movement had won over those who claimed that class and economy were the crucial issues to understand Ethiopia" (Teshale Tabetu, 1995) and the EPRDF's emphasis on ethnic federalism and ethnic political organization prevent viable trans-ethnic parties to emerge (Aalen, 2002).

Meanwhile, the focal point in the articulations of historical political problems of Ethiopia was the issues of ethnicity. Ethnicity continued to be the vortex in the political philosophy of EPRDF. Ideological issues, leaders' idiosyncrasies, international politics, the philosophy nation building, and other core values have given less emphasis in analyzing the historical problem of the country. For instance, "despite the Derg's appeals to Marxism and a non-ethnic policy, the ethnically based opposition defined Mengistu's government as an Amhara suppresser" (Aalen, 2002). Consequently, these ethnic based parties have

been occupied with naming and shaming against trans-national parties. Especially, where the senior partners of the transnational parties are the Amhara elites, the government defames them as nostalgic of previous regime.

The ethnic based rebel groups` dominated decisions continued to be the general framework of the politics of the country even after the coming into force of the constitution of FDRE in 1995. According to the "Constitution, Nation, Nationalities and People have granted inter alia unconditional right to self- administration, including the right to secession (see article 39). The constitution clearly allows the nationalities to exercise the right of session from the federation even in time when the country`s survival is in question (see article 92).

However, the said strategy of the current regime did not save the country from crisis. The first post-Derg crisis was the irreconcilable hostility between the victorious ethnic based rebels (TPLF with some others).⁵ In addition, the 1998 Ethio-Eritrea war, the 2005 election standoff, and the 2016 pervasive instability are some of the crisis situations. The post-2015/16 predicament is the gravest crises in which different ethnic groups have been queued up in forefront of the protests against the rule.

4.2.1. The Features of the post-2015/16 crisis

The general climates, the vigor, and scale of the danger of the 2015/16 Ethiopia`s crisis accentuated the "crisis of leadership (Lefort, 2016), and the focus of the discussion of this section is the leadership of the prevailing crisis. The relationship of the party and the government, public service governance, elections and party politics and politicization ethnicity are the key topics to deal with the issue under question.

I. The Party and the government

Realistically, the absence of practices of multi-party democracy and prevalence of the mix up of party and government is rampant in Ethiopia. It is difficult to differentiate the functions of government from the function the party. The speech of Kassahun Birhanu (2016)⁶, asserts this claim by arguing that the structure of the government and the Party are excessively intertwined. For instance, in most universities, EPRDF have tens representatives and coordinators. In pursuing of party`s mission such as meeting and conference, the coordinators are receiving per diem from the universities` budget. This has been practicing in other public organizations too. In some sectors, the executive bodies reported to be more powerful than the parliaments of the country. Kassahun (2016) asserted this claim by saying that "due to result of the fusion of

⁵The strategic co-operation between the OLF and the TPLF ended in 1986, when the TPLF was trying to get the OLF under its wings. The relationship between the two movements deteriorated in 1990 when the TPLF created its own Oromo satellite, the OPDO; and the animosity escalated into armed fights in the south-east of the country started in August 1991, which also included Somali and Afar factions in 1992 (Aalen, 2002).

⁶EPRDF is of probably the party of five million people but the government of FDRE is the leader of 100 million Ethiopian. But, once the party won the election, it has the duty to formulate policies and follow up the implementation of the policies.

the party and the government, the executive bodies have given an excessive power. In addition, some of the heads in different parliamentary grouping (such as foreign affairs, social affairs, security affairs standing committees and so on) are the heads of the executive agencies and thus they have the manipulative power to dominate the parliamentary decisions. The heads of the executive agencies also have power to manipulate members of the parliamentary (MP) because many MPs experts and department heads of those agencies. On the other hand, partisanship with the ruling party proved to be imperative to have job security and easy access to job. As a result, Public servants build trust on the party than the governmental system; and they lack the courage to separate party business from the public services.

II. Governance in Public services

Both the government and other stakeholders of the country agreed up on the prevalence off problems in the public sector. The ruling party reiterated that the problem of the country is the deficiencies in implementation of the policy. In this respect, in many secessions of "deep reform," the government officials argued that the system created a demanding society and the crisis was simply the price of our successes. For them, such incident is a natural in development process, and nothing more than a stage, ordinary and inevitable.

However, practitioners and academicians have disagreed with the problem analysis of the government. According to Eyessuswork Zafu (2017), the current problems are both implementation and systemic. He stated that implementation problems relating to rent-seeking practices were the result of the system problems. Thus, it is impossible to ignore the systemic problem in dealing with the practical problems of the public services. The fusion of the legislative, executive, and judiciary organs (Kassahun, 2016) and the practices of *rule by law* were the sources of the problems. In practice, "there are different types and intensified multi-faced corruption that has never seen in Ethiopian history" (Ibid). Favoritism and the tendency of sabotaging the interest of the government for individuals benefit were visible. Though there are legal systems of controlling the mal-administrations, the personal connection with some political and economic elites has the power to overrule the legal norms.

Elections and Party politics

Constitutionally, democratic election and multi-party system have recognized. Regular elections are conducted, but these are often fraudulent and include severe intimidation of the political opposition (Aalen, 2002). Similarly, Kassahun (2016) argued that "repeatedly, the process and the result of the elections were controversial." The democratic election and the democratic process of the country gradually deteriorated (Lidetu, 2016). The number of seats won by the oppositions in the federal and regional parliaments also gradually diminished to zero by 2015 election. For instance, 21 seats in the 1995 election, 25 seats in the 2000 election, hundreds of seats in the 2005 election, and 1 seat in the 2010 election won by oppositions and individual candidates (ibid). According to the data gained from the National Election Board of Ethiopian (2015), 75 political parties were participated in the election of 2015; but, none of them except the members and affiliates parties of EPRDF won seats in the

parliament of FDRE. The above data evince that after the 2005 election political competition has showed radical declination.

The country's electoral rule and proliferation of fledging political parties, have also certain contribution for the defeat of oppositions and the dissipation of votes. To elaborate, proportional or mixed system of election is not allowed by the law. Thus, the party/front or coalition with simple majority votes is eligible to form a government. The oppositions were weak and divided and most of them organized to pursue ethnic agenda and were helpful for EPRDF's election victory. In 2015, from the 75 registered parties, the numbers of opposition parties engaged in election were more than 60. But, none of them had got parliamentary seats because the votes of the supporters of the oppositions were frittered away. In addition, there were invalidated votes since high number the populations of the country are illiterate—they are unlikely to put proper sign on ballot papers. In this condition, the EPRDF has the chance of winning even the sum total of the number of votes for oppositions and the numbers of invalid votes are exceeding the number of votes of EPRDF.

The ruling group has also been hammering the opposition parties through different maneuverings. It exploited unemployment, poverty, and backwardness as an opportunity to get supporters. The members of the ruling party are fortunate to get job in public institutions. Hence, for the youths, for the sake of survival and job access party membership become the best option. As a result, university students except the few best scorers opted to join the ruling party. On the other hand, most of uneducated mothers were organized under "mothers forums" in which the forums have the indirect mandate to indoctrinate EPRDF's agenda. Corollary, the fledging opposition parties lacked potential members and sources of finances. Their institutional strength is also challenged by lack of intra-party democracy. Consequently, space to express collective public grievances narrowed. Finally, in the heyday of the crisis, the absence of party politics and accommodative political forums to express collective grievances resulted in the growth of the influence and importance of social media. The Diaspora oppositions snatched the leading power from the government. Protestors had received instruction and order from the exiled oppositions mainly through social media.

III. The Extreme politicization Ethnicity

Currently, most of the political groups have no objection to the federal system. The disagreement is on the extent of accommodation of different political interests and the government's extreme adherence to politicization ethnicity. From the beginning, according to Aalen (2002:48), the lack of transparency and participation in the process has fed the argument that the EPRDF's ethnic federalism is a way of ensuring TPLF hegemony. Aalen's argument asserted that the federal arrangement has defects even in ensuring the equality of the members of the EPRDF. Structurally, from the beginning, the party hinges upon ethnicity to analyze the problems of Ethiopia. According to Marera Gudina (2016), the regime favors the weak and ethnically organized parties to realizing its policy of "divide and rule." The introduction of ethnic federalism by EPRDF is a means to institutionalize the principle of "divide and rule" and ensuring the ruling party's position (Abbink, 1997). The above sayings evince that EPRDF's extreme adherence to the

politicization ethnicities is to maintain its political power through discarding competent trans-ethnic political parties or groupings.

In addition, in his argument to show the limitation of the existing ethnic federalism, Kassahun (2016) points out that "the general frame of exaggerated identity based federal system has posed threat of abating the common visions or aspirations, objectives, and benefit of the people of Ethiopia." In different parts of the FDRE elites were mainly organizing and working to realize the objectives of their own ethnic groups. With the exception of few cities, the tendency to form non-ethnic organizations and the aspiration to build country wide vision are low. For instance, the Oromo protests were fundamentally opposed to the implementation of the Addis Ababa Master plan⁷ considering it as the plan to expropriate the lands of Oromos. The protest has no or limited trans-ethnic agenda and questions. The protesters also unlikely raised questions relating to the unfair evictions of urban dwellers of Addis Ababa by the name of investment.

The general system also allowed the elites to instigate distinct identities with downplaying the similarities with the others. For instance, in SNNRS, the political and security problems related to the identity questions of Konso people, Wolenie people (Guragie Zone) and Kucha people (Gamogofa zone) were the result of the system. By no means, the resistances of Welqait people in Tigray region and Kimant People in Amhara region have deviations from ethnic questions. Practically, the demands such as recognition of new ethnic identities, the demands for zone, special zone, special Wereda, and Wereda administration for particular ethnic groups, have proliferated.

On the other hand, although the Amhara elites used to propagate Pan-Ethiopianism, nowadays, they have been called Amhara nationalism. The youths have also welcomed the call warmly. The slogans⁸ of the 2016 protests in Gonder and Gojam unequivocally showed the boil-over of Amharas' ethnic resistance. This was a shift of political strategy from pan-Ethiopianism to ethnic nationalism. By implication, it was a downplaying move against the leadership of non-Amhara elites for Amhara People (currently, there are key non-Amhara officials within in ANDM).

V. COMPARISON OF CRISIS LEADERSHIP THE PAST AND THE CURRENT

A. Party politics

Under leadership Colonel Mengistu multi-party system was not practiced. During the early stage of the revolution, there were de facto mass parties, EPRP and AESM. Later, there were some organizations formed with socialist orientations. Upon the declaration of the constitution PDRE (1987) multi-party politics

⁷When EPRDF announced its readiness to implement its "Integrated Development Master Plan" in the middle of April 2014, it provoked an immediate reaction from university students across the State of Oromia (Tsegaye, 2017).

⁸Slogans in Gonder and Gojam: "Amhara is not terrorist", "our border is Tekeze" Wolqait is Amhara" "Amhara struggle continues", stop mass killing on Amhara people", and "respect for Amhara-identity, and others.

had outlawed. WPE was the only de jure political party which had allowed controlling the National Shengo. The space for party politics, the forum for collective expression, and the accommodation of diversified views were legally banned. Inter alia, this dark political environment dictated the military generals to plot the 1989 military coup.

The practical situations in the present regime have certain similarity with its predecessor. After the 2005 general election party competition highly declined. EPRDF postured itself as the only legitimate party of the nation though multi-party system has constitutionally recognized. The functions of the party and government have lost distinction, the parties have involved in every business of government. Like that of the WPE, EPRDF has tried to be everything to everyone. Weak and nominal ethnic based parties were proliferated and still recognized to sustain as weak as to challenge the EPRDF. Most of the trans-ethnic parties based in Addis Ababa and they suffered from the tactical and strategic influences of the ruling elites. The elections were symbolic and seem only to renew the licenses of EPRDF and its affiliates to rule the country. In this respect, it has no substantial difference from the former. In addition, like its predecessor, the EPRDF faced an aggravated crisis almost two years after the election victory.

B. Position of the ruling elites on the crisis

The basis for crisis leadership is sense making, meaning making, perception, and problem analysis. Both the Derg and EPRDF regimes considered the crises as the threats, none of which used the crises as opportunities. As a result, no structural or system reforms have been undertaken. In 1989, business continued as usual after the execution and detention of the coup makers and their supporters. Mengistu did not consider the risks of system failure in his decision of executing the military leaders and continuing the civil war. He attempted to diffuse blames and defended the status quo since he regarded the coup as a threat. Today, according to the “problem analysis” of the EPRDF, the current crisis is not systemic; so neither are the constitution or the institutions, nor the political line (Lefort, 2016). Such analysis had shaped the posturing of the government to *consider the ongoing stalemate as a threat*. Prior to 2016, the government has downplayed the impact of the disapproval of Oromo students to the Master Plan and the question of identity of Welqait People. Some of the students who protested against the Master plan received different punishments. In the latter case, the members of the committee formed to amplify the question of Welqait People were harassed, and imprisoned. Later, when the coverage of Oromo protests widened and the Amhara resistance engulfed, the government was forced to recognize the crises.

C. Response to the crisis

Political and Forceful Measures: The Derg regime severely punished the perpetrators of the coup and labeling them as espouse of the secessionists and betrayers of the national integrity. It continued to rule the country without substantial political reform. The civil war continued as it was though the rebels were in a continuous victory. Like its predecessor, the EPRDF attempted to diffuse the crisis. They blamed the protesters as trouble making criminal elements. In both regimes, the military and political measures have been implemented interdependently. The government blamed the Diaspora media and armed groups as instigators of the crisis. As a result EPRDF

has used the military forces as an instrument of crisis response. Oromiya and Amhara regions entirely and SNNP and Tigray regions partially fall under military rule. During the state of emergency some of the frontrunners of the protests of the country have been killed, injured, disappeared, tortured, and detained (Alemayehu, 2017). According to the report of the secretary of the Command Post, Siraj Fergesa, in the course of the crisis, more than 600, and more than 21, 000 people were killed and detained respectively. Upon the suspension of the “state of emergency” he reported to the federal parliament that 7737 people were under custody, waiting train on remand.

Officials Reshuffling: In 1989, appointees were reshuffled. New generals and civil officials had appointed after the failed coup. But there was no significant change in the politics of the country. Similarly, the EPRDF has adopted ministerial and middle level leadership changes mainly in the federal government. The September 2015 established cabinet was replaced by new one on 22 October 2016. Most of the new comers in the cabinet were professionals and technocrats. For the second time, by late August 2017, there was another reshuffling in the members of federal cabinet and diplomatic missions. The latter reshuffling is self-evident that evinces the first cabinet change was hurly-burly decision. Regarding the regional government, the cabinet of state of Oromia has taken similar measure- including the appointment of new president. In general saying there was no policy change in both levels.

Substantial differences of the two regimes

Politico-legal measures: During the state of emergency of 2016/2017, the government has devised normative and practical measures of crisis maneuvering. These were nationwide “deep reform,” announcing of draft proclamation to ensure the special interest of Oromia in Addis Ababa. However, the draft proclamation will be unconstitutional if the right of participation and self-administration of the people of Addis Ababa is denied. The constitution of FDRE in article 43 (2) has granted the people’s right to have pre-consultation upon the decision that are concerned with their fate.

Inter alia the fundamental and immediate causes of the current crisis were related with the Addis Ababa master Plan and the question welqait Amhara identity. In this respect, the suspension of the master plan and the drafting of law in view of answering the question of Oromo ethnic group have undertaken. The EPRDF decision of drafting law on the basis of article 49 (5)⁹ of FDRE’s constitution is a step forward in realizing the constitution though “there are reasons to hold skeptic speculation on the prospect of the decision in bringing general peace.”¹⁰ On

⁹The special interest of the State of Oromia in Addis Ababa, regarding the provision of social services or the utilization of natural resources and other similar matters, as well as joint administrative matters arising from the location of Addis Ababa within the State of Oromia, shall be respected. Particulars shall be determined by law.

¹⁰When system challenged by political forces in Addis Ababa and elsewhere, EPRDF proved to use its Oromo affiliate as a play card to pursue indirect control and to confront its rivals. This was happened in the aftermath of the 2005 election victory of oppositions for the entire seats of the city. In this particular case, EPRDF decided the shift of Oromia region’s capital from

the other hand, the question Welqait seems a “Hot Potato,” still untouched. The question is direct to TPLF, a dominant party in EPRDF. However, optimistically, still there is time to give genuine strategic solution for the said identity question by the TPLF.

Discussion with oppositions: In the aftermath of the crisis, unlike its predecessor EPRDF called general discussion. Twenty one (21) fledging political parties have been participating in the discussion with the ruling party. There is escapism on the capacity of negotiations and negotiators in bringing structural changes. Such doubt resulted in the boycotting of the discussion by certain popular and stronger parties. Practically, disregarding to the decision of the majority, the ruling group has the power to reject or and accept the ideas of the oppositions. For instance, according to Alemayehu (2017), EPRDF has objected to discuss on the issue of sea outlet/ international border, releasing of political prisoners, national reconciliation, amendment of constitution and three others. The discussion has been undertaken without arbiters; and the extent of the fruitfulness of the said discussion is dependent upon the commitment EPRDF. The final agendas for negotiation presented in June 2017 (Yohhanis, 2017). These are amendments on the electoral law, anti-terror law, Charities and Societies proclamation, Media proclamation, and some others. Optimistically, the ongoing discussion is a step forward in dealing with the crisis.

Corruption related measures: During the Derg regime, there was no massive or systemic corruption. As a result, the issue of corruption had no or little emphases in crisis decision of the time. As stated above, in post-1991 corruption became the game of the system. In response, the incumbent government has been taking sporadic politic-legal measures. Currently, in late July 2017, the federal government imprisoned more than forty middle level officials and experts. This was applauded by the communication minister press release of late July 2017. It was proved that most of the suspects were former middle level officials and experts and thus the measure was accompanied by criticisms¹¹. Political activists expressed that the high level officials who had expected to involve in systemic corruption continued to be key actors in detaining the low level corrupters. Generally, due to this and other reasons the corruption measures unlikely attract the attention of the public.

Instrument of regime survival: The Derg had no ethno-linguistic political base; rather it has come out of a committee formed from the armies of the country. The instrument of safeguarding of the regime was the military might and the propaganda of pan-Ethiopianism. Whereas the main root of

EPRDF was the former rebel groups that formed along ethnic lines. And currently, gathering of people in their ethnic lines. Unlike the predecessors, the current elites utilize the ethnic plurality for the survival of the regime by the tactic of divide and rule. *Loyalty of the military elites:* The Derg regime was merciless for any misconduct and political divergence of military leaders. The system vividly betrayed by those generals though the root of the Derg was the armies. This was one of the factors that accelerated the collapse. On the contrary, most of the current military chiefs are the commanders and fighters of the former rebels who formed the ruling parties. In other saying, they were the leaders of the military wing of EPRDF and criticized by their allegiance to the ruling party, not for the democratic system.

VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

During and in the aftermath of the 1989 coup, the crisis decision of president Mengistu was shortsighted. He did not consider the coup staged by the senior military leaders as a beginning of the end of his regime. Upon the failure of the coup, the coup makers were mercilessly executed. The political, military, and legal measures against the coup makers supplemented each other. Finally, the national forces left without experienced leaders and the processes resulted in the declining of the combating morals of the troops. In the face of the problem, the obvious military measures of the president against the rebels had continued. Although the regime had certain political bargaining power before and during the crisis of 1989, there were signals of risks of system collapse. The president did consider the majority crises of his leadership as threats, and he did not use it as an opportunity to build a new way of doing state business. As a result, he failed to have genuine negotiation with coup makers and rebels. Negotiation and an inclusive breakthrough with rebels along with the reconsideration of international diplomacy, and resignation of the president would have the possibility to minimize the risks that the country had faced later. If the president did so, the radical ethno-nationalists might not get a chance to realize the principle “divide and rule” in post-1991. Further, arguably, the Ethio-Eritrea (1998) war and the loss of sea outlet would not have the possibility to happen.

With regard to the current crisis of Ethiopia, since the type and the modes of the crisis were different from the past, some of the decisions of EPRDF have certain deviances from its predecessor. The responses for the insurrections in Oromia, Amhara and SNNPRS were peaceful negotiations, legal maneuverings and forceful measures. The government employed these tactics side by side. In the inception, there government attempted to discuss with religious leaders, community leaders, and youths though later the military measures have given priority.

More importantly, the suspension of the Addis Ababa Master Plan, the promise to devise political solution to the question of Welqait people, the undertaking of “deep reform” within the government apparatus and the ongoing negotiation with opposition parties” were some of the political measures. In addition, the drafting of law for the realization of the constitutional rights of Oromo people was one of the tempo changing political decisions of the regime. However, the regime’s problem analysis and the decisions were unlikely to recognize the structural problems related to the extreme ethnic

Adama to Addis Ababa to counter the wining trans-ethnic party. Currently, the transfer of the issue of Weqait to *Tigray Region*, applauding of the Oromo’s right in Addis Ababa and the historical behavior of EPRDF dictate to express the fear that the effort of EPRDF to answer certain Oromo questions could be used as a tactic of get respite in its effort to diffuse, or to pass bungled responses for Welqait resistances.

¹¹The critics said that the detention of those suspects was an attempt of setting agenda to divert the attention of the public from the strike and boycott against the regime’s general policy. Most of the activists reiterated that top level officials who have been suspected in grand corruption were not arrested.

nationalism, ignorance to pan-Ethiopiaism, the mix up of government and party, the deterioration of multi-party politics and democracy.

Moreover, in the history EPRDF, there were limitations in conducting fruitful negotiations with dissents groups. The previous attempts were not ended up with power sharing and accommodating the desires of ethnic nationalist and Pan-Ethiopianists. The ongoing discussions between EPRDF and the opposition political parties have been also accompanied by skepticism and boycotting by some political parties. Regional parties were excluded from the discussion. Most of the parties who have been participating in the ongoing negotiations are pseudo parties; they lack the bargaining power and organizational strength. However, the government has still the opportunity to pursue genuine negotiation that could touch both systemic and operational issues. This may be a way out to save the country from further chaos. Here, the ruling group is the duty bearer since fruitful result is dependent on the political will of the resourceful negotiator than the weaker parties of the negotiation. Generally, the regime is still in need for considering the current crisis as an opportunity to devise the mechanism of systemic reform and accommodation of pluralistic interests.

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