

Beyond the Facade of Participation: Unmasking the Mechanisms of Control and Manipulation in Ethiopia's Electoral Process

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Abstract

This paper examines the mechanisms of control and manipulation employed by the EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front) to influence the electoral process in Ethiopia, their consequences on the legitimacy and fairness of elections, and the resultant impact on the country's democratic development. The research methodology utilized is a qualitative approach, drawing primary data from key informant interviews and secondary sources such as archival reports, legal and government documents, books, research works, and journal articles. Contrary to early promises and the formal recognition of multiparty democracy, the research findings suggest that the EPRDF has evolved into an authoritarian regime, maintaining a facade of electoral procedures. The absence of a political culture based on compromise and the EPRDF's hegemonic aspirations have further hindered democratic development, with the ruling party employing tactics such as arrest, resource manipulation, and clandestine payments to infiltrate and undermine opposition structures. Despite the conduct of five general elections between 1995 and 2015, these processes have been marred by irregularities, with election campaigns and results consistently contested by opposition parties. Boycotts, protests, complaints, and rejections of results by political parties and international observers have become a common manifestation, leading to the public voicing their grievances through street demonstrations. The paper concludes that the EPRDF's strategic use of control and manipulation mechanisms has significantly undermined the legitimacy and fairness of elections in Ethiopia, with adverse consequences for the country's democratic progression.

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Introduction

This article examines the mechanisms and processes employed during elections under Ethiopia's former ruling party, the EPRDF, aiming to extract lessons for the current Ethiopian leadership by dissecting the regime's motives for holding elections. Democracy thrives on empowering citizens to shape their destiny and participate in government with defined and limited powers (Makinda 1996; Pridham & Lewis 1996). The true test of democracy lies in the quality of its electoral competition (Diamond 2002; Schedler 2006). Authoritarian regimes may hold multiparty elections, but these are often rigged in favor of the incumbent through restrictions on opposition campaigning, biased media, and manipulated results (Donno 2013). Elections signify more than choosing leaders; they signal the regime's control and popular support (Brownlee 2009; Gandhi & Lust-Okar 2009). Scholars propose various reasons why autocrats embrace elections, including gaining legitimacy and retaining power (Schedler 2006), appeasing Western democracies, and securing international acceptance (Levitsky and Way 2010). Elections can serve as a pressure release valve for autocratic leaders lacking popular legitimacy and managing potential threats (Ali 2018). Some scholars highlight the power-sharing and informational benefits of authoritarian elections (Gandhi 2008;

Magaloni 2008). Miller (2015) suggests that such elections channel public grievances, reveal citizen preferences, and inform policy adjustments. New democracies face unique challenges due to a lack of established structures and experience, but institutional changes can foster a democratic culture (Vengroff and Magala 2001). While elections are a cornerstone of democracy, they can be expensive, lack perfect competition, and generate uneven perceptions of legitimacy (Powell 2000).

This article dissects the EPRDF era's electoral mechanisms and processes, uncovering their motivations and implications for Ethiopia's current government. Specifically, it explores the mechanisms of electoral control and manipulation that influence the electoral process and outcomes including the long ran impact in democratic downturn since 1991; and forwards a prospective way out to undo the authoritarians' entrenchment with electoral politics merely for instrumental power grip, rather than promoting the normative business of election for consolidated electoral democratic dispensation.

This article aims to analyze the election process in Ethiopia, particularly the EPRDF regime, and answer the following research questions to conclude how the current regime will take lessons and forge democracy in the country.

- What mechanisms of control and manipulation influence the electoral process in Ethiopia?
- What are the consequences of control and manipulation on the legitimacy and fairness of Ethiopia's elections, and how does this impact democracy?

A Note on Methodology

This paper primarily employs a qualitative research approach. Drawing on the theoretical framework of electoral authoritarianism, the article examines the trajectories of electoral authoritarianism in Ethiopia, particularly during the EPRDF ruling period (1991-2018). The study relies on both primary and secondary data sources.

The study primarily relied on sources gathered during a year of fieldwork in Addis Ababa from 2018 to 2019. These sources include: an extensive archive of audio and video materials from the Ethiopian Television (now Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation), unpolished reports, both in Amharic and English, from the Ethiopian Electoral Board, selected government publications, and semi-structured interviews with Ethiopian government officials, political party leaders, researchers, and analysts. The data presented here is part of a larger study. The interviews cited in this article were selected from a pool of 20 interviews focused on elections and party politics under the EPRDF era. In addition to the primary sources predominantly, a comprehensive literature review of existing research on electoral control and manipulation in Ethiopia was conducted. Sources included political parties' registration proclamations, directives, election reports, and political parties registration, academic journals, international organizations reports, and news articles were consulted for this study.

In this study, purposive and convenience sampling techniques were employed to select interviewees. Participants were purposefully chosen based on their expertise, knowledge, and experience in Ethiopian election and party politics. A particular emphasis was placed on leaders from both opposition and ruling parties. Moreover, thematic data analysis was conducted in conjunction with document analysis. Upon completion of data collection, researchers organized various thematic areas aligned with the research objectives by triangulating interview data and related written materials.

To adhere to ethical research standards, researchers obtained informed consent from all participants, informing them of their right to ask questions. The researchers committed to maintaining participant anonymity unless explicit permission was granted, thereby safeguarding participant privacy.

Conceptual Understanding: Why elections in an authoritarian regime?

The quality of elections both in its normative forms and actual practices is an essential boundary that separates a democratic regime from electoral authoritarian regime. In spite of the fact that 'Electoral Authoritarians' formally allow multipartyism and conduct elections regularly, in practices failed to adhere the norms of freeness and fairness as well as the equality of the 'electoral playing fields'(Diamond 2002; Schedler 2006; Donno 2013). In autocratic regimes, multiple parties can compete in elections, but the conditions are unfair. Incumbents may place barriers on opposition campaigning, create media bias, stack electoral commissions and courts, or manipulate votes (Donno

2013). In hegemonic authoritarian regimes, the ruling party enjoys overwhelming dominance, winning 70-75% of the vote or seats in parliament (Donno 2013). Election results signal the regime's control and popular support (Brownlee 2009; Gandhi and Lust-Okar 2009). Overwhelming victories discourage elite defections and deter voters from supporting the opposition (Simpser 2013). Scholars suggest autocrats hold elections to gain legitimacy and maintain power (Schedler 2006), fulfill aid conditions, and gain international acceptance (Levitsky and Way 2010). Elections can also serve as a safety valve for managing threats. While appearing democratic, these elections often maintain power and control rather than promote accountability.

Following Robert Dahl's notions of democratic elections, Schedler (2002), has contrasted seven lists of norms and premise between democratic election and autocratic election, which is essentially relevant to account the Ethiopia's autocratic elections. According to Schedler (2002, pp.39-46), the conditions that delineate democratic elections from autocratic elections are, first the purpose is for *empowerment* implying elections is meant for citizen to withhold power through delegation of chosen public official unlike autocratic election who limit the scope of elective offices in *reserved position* or restricted jurisdiction of electoral offices; second a *freedom of supply* that citizen must have access of choices, freedom to form, to join and to support alternative parties, policies and candidates; third, citizen has the *freedom of demand*, free access to awareness about alternative choice of policies, parties or candidates through sources of information with no restriction of civil and political right as well as unfair access to media and resources; fourth, there must be *inclusion* in "equal rights of participation with no suffrage restrictions to all full members"; five, citizens must have a freedom to express their preference without coercion and corruptive abuses, what is to be termed *insulation*; six, *integrity* on aggregation of preferences implying one man, one vote without any fraud or biases; seven, the imperative of *irreversibility* on consequences of choices that elected official must not prevented to exercise their constitutional power or should not prevented to take their offices (Dahl 1991; Adjeoumbi 2000).

Multi-party elections is though conducted by electoral authoritarianism in regular and routine basis, the objective is not more than a procedural just for 'window dressing' intent, instrumentally to buy electoral legitimacy. Schedler again in his another work has interestingly pointed out the ranges of electoral riggings by electoral authoritarianism under guise of formal democratic norms:

Under electoral authoritarianism rules, elections are broadly inclusive (they are held under universal suffrage, as well as minimally pluralistic (opposition parties are allowed to run), minimally competitive (opposition parties, while denied victory, are allowed to win votes and seats), and minimally open (oppositions parties are not subject massive repression, although they experience repressive in selective and intermittent way). Overall, however, electoral contest are subject to state manipulation, so severe, wide spread and systematic that they do not qualify as democratic. Authoritarian manipulation may come in many guises all serving the purpose of containing the troubling uncertainty of electoral outcomes. Rulers may device discriminatory electoral rules, exclude oppositions parties and candidates from entering the electoral arena, infringe up on their political right and civil liberties, restrict their access to mass media and campaign finance, impose formal and informal suffrage restriction on their supporters, coerce or corrupt them in to deserting the opposition camps, or simply redistribute seats and votes through electoral fraud (Schedler 2006, p. 1).

To sum up election in electoral authoritarianism, are simply instrumental, covered in forms through democratic element, but in substances systematically favors incumbent.

Control and Manipulation in Electoral Process of Ethiopia, 1991-2015

Institutionalization of election trends and the practical experiment was rooted since 1992 under the ruling period of Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) led EPRDE establishing Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) by the transitional period charter envisioning fundamentals of electoral democracy. Two experiment of voting were conducted in transitional periods. These were the 1992 regional election, and the 1994 election of Constitutional Assembly before the four years closing of TGE that EPRDF, won in both in about 96.6% (Lyons 1996) and 94% (Kasahun 1995). Neither of these elections proves however, the regime initial roads towards genuine multi-party electoral democratic orders (Kasahun 1995; Lyons 2010). The elections were indeed, not a confirmation of positive transformation of the regime to multiparty democracy, rather an initial sign of the culmination of this aspiration and "the consolidation of one party hegemony" (Kasahun 1995, p.135). In 1995, the constitutional framework was endorsed officially envisioning electoral democratic order. Nonetheless, the new regime attempt to entertain both

cultural and political pluralities was more instrumental than genuine democratic moves as demonstrated by the sections below looking the practices of national electoral conducts from 1995-2015.

The 1995 General Election

The May 1995 general election was the first parliamentary election under the new constitution. It is the period in which the transitional period ended and served to consolidate the ruling party's (EPRDF's) dominance. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopian (FDRE) constitution, which created the EPRDF, promised many things, including the right to participate freely in political activity, democratic elections, and establishing a freely and relatively democratically elected permanent government. In this regard, the New York Times wrote in its heading, *'in a bold political experiment, Ethiopia will hold its first elections on Sunday, implementing a federal system granting regional and ethnic groups the right to secede if they choose'* (Lorch 1995). He added that the election would face challenges in terms of logistics and management by saying, *'There will be about 40,000 polling places, but Ethiopia's remoteness, its many languages, and massive illiteracy make the process challenging. More than 1,000 polling places are beyond the range of AM radio, election officials say, and election officials can reach many more only by donkey or canoe' (Ibid.)*. It showcases the promises of a new era with democratic participation and a federal system but also foreshadows the challenges of holding elections in a vast and diverse nation.

According to the Ethiopian National Electoral Board, cited in Lyon, around 21,387,818 voters were registered during the election, which was a good turnout (Nohlen et al. 1999, p. 383). About candidates for the election, there were a total of 1,881 candidates vied for the 548 seats; of these total candidates, the majority of 960 were independent candidates, and the rest were from 58 political organizations that competed during the election (Lyons 1996, p. 132). Despite insecurity, most Ethiopians remained interested in the 1995 election. The National Electoral Board delivered ballots and all necessary logistics to thousands of nationwide polling stations (Ibid). The large number of independent candidates suggests a nascent political landscape, and there was a high turnout despite political party boycotts.

International observers from different countries closely observed the first multiparty national elections under the new constitution. Observers came mainly from European countries, the USA, Russia, Australia, and Canada, and several international organizations, including the Organization of African Unity (OAU), later known as the African Union (AU) (Dahla 2012, p. 24). The presence of international observers signifies the international community's interest in the success of Ethiopia's democratic experiment since then.

The transitional period of 1991-1994, characterized by the state's restructuring in line with the EPRDF political agendas and the weak opposition groups in political participation and the democratization process, had predetermined the May elections. In the 1995 election, the principal and robust political parties were boycotted. Four¹ of the seven political parties at the national level, they are boycotting the elections, arguing that the process of the election is not fair and is biased toward the ruling EPRDF. Melese Zenawi, the late prime minister, as cited in Dahla, stated that all opposition political parties refused and boycotted the election. However, we had tried to persuade the opposition to participate. He explained that the opposition decided to boycott the election because they did not have as much support as they claimed they had (Dahla 2012, p. 24; Lyons 1996, p.132). Most political organizations were poorly organized and lacked a clear program. The report written by the New York Times is reported in this regard as *'to most Ethiopians, the issues debated by the parties in Addis Ababa and other cities are largely irrelevant. People say peace and stability are the only concerns in the countryside'* (Lorch 1995).

The Ethiopian News Agency, as cited in Lyons, reported that former Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi used the Amharic proverb, "One can take a horse to the river, but one cannot force the horse to drink water," to describe the government's efforts to invite opposition parties to participate in the elections. Meles argued that his party had made efforts to promote open political participation, but the opposition parties were intimidated and harassed, making it difficult for them to participate. However, despite the intimidation, opposition parties were not officially prevented from participating in the election. For instance, the leader of the All Amhara People's Organization (AAPO), Professor Asrat Woldeyes, was arrested in 1994 and sentenced to six years in prison on charges of conspiracy and warmongering against the state. The opposition was also denied access to rural areas, and many

¹ The parties that boycotted the election were the Amhara People's Organization, the Oromo Liberation Front, the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Coalition, and the Ethiopian Democratic Unity Party.

international organizations and human rights institutions, such as Amnesty International, criticized the government's actions as violating human rights and hindering the democratization process. Meles Zenawi's proverb highlights the government's claim that they created an open environment, but the opposition's lack of enthusiasm suggests a different reality. The text presents a conflicting narrative - the government claims openness, while opposition parties face intimidation and harassment. This raises questions about the genuineness of the invitation to participate.

The boycott by various opposition parties received mixed reactions from citizens, with some blaming the political groups for not participating. In contrast, others supported the banned parties, particularly in the Addis Ababa and Oromia regions. Despite limited participation and irregularities, the election was held, with only the Ethiopian National Democratic Party (ENDP) and other weak ethnically organized parties campaigning against the well-organized EPRDF. The challenge was insignificant, and it was clear from the beginning that the EPRDF would win the election. As expected, the EPRDF and its affiliated party took almost all the seats in parliament as presented in table 1. The mixed public reaction highlights a divided electorate. While some citizens blamed the opposition for not participating, others remained loyal to the banned parties. This suggests a potential need for more trust in the government or the established political system. The weak competition against the EPRDF further strengthens the idea of a preordained outcome. The high number of seats won by the EPRDF reinforces the notion of a dominant party with limited opposition. From this, it is possible to understand that the EPRDF's victory in the election was a foregone conclusion, as they had a significant advantage over the opposition parties, who were intimidated and harassed, making it difficult for them to participate effectively. The election was marred by irregularities and criticized by human rights organizations, raising questions about the legitimacy of the democratic process.

[Insert Table 1 near here]

The EPRDF and its affiliated parties dominated the election, taking 86.1% of the votes, while other ethnic parties, supported by the EPRDF, won the remaining 13.9%. Despite well-organized logistics, the election was marred by irregularities, lack of privacy, intimidation, and harassment, failing to bring about genuine democratization. The power imbalance and the ruling party's tactics undermined the legitimacy of the electoral process, revealing the challenges of achieving democratic standards in Ethiopia.

The 2000 General Elections

It was the second general elections held under consolidated federal structure, based on the institutional concept of ethnic federalism as outlined in the new constitution (U.S. Department of State 2002). Under the leadership of Meles Zenawi, the transition from a unitary state to a federal republic continued. The 1995 elections had given a clear victory and domination to the EPRDF, bringing the country under the party's total control since it assumed power in 1991. The 2000 elections occurred during the Ethiopia-Eritrea war, which stemmed from a border conflict following Eritrea's secession. This ongoing war heavily influenced the election atmosphere. Unlike the 1995 elections, most opposition parties participated in the 2000 elections, including the Ethiopian Democratic Party, AAPPO, the Council of Alternative Forces for Peace and Democracy in Ethiopia, and the Oromo National Congress. This participation raised public expectations for a democratic process. However, opposition parties faced financial difficulties in conducting proper campaigns. According to U.S. Department of State reports, opposition parties lacked funds, limiting their effectiveness.

While the capital city, Addis Ababa, saw relatively free election campaigns, opposition parties struggled with resource shortages (Pausewang et al. 2002, p.43). In rural areas, the situation was different. Observers noted that the government allowed free campaigning in the capital to present an image of democracy to the international community while maintaining strict control in the countryside, where 85% of the population lived. This tactic ensured that even if the EPRDF lost in the capital, it could still secure a majority through rural votes. Local officials in rural areas reportedly used intimidation and threats to suppress opposition support (Merera 2011, p. 670).

In the 2000 election, there were improvements and signs of willingness from the Ethiopian National Electoral Board (ENEB) to promote democratization, although the ruling party seemed resistant. Unlike the previous elections, the government did not invite international observers, arguing that a democratic nation did not need foreign validation for its elections. This was a shift from the 1995 elections when many observers were invited.

Although there were signs of improvement, the 2000 elections still fell short of fostering substantive democratization. The political atmosphere had changed somewhat, with more opposition participation and open political discussions in the capital. Nevertheless, serious irregularities and ambiguities persisted, particularly in the Southern Region. The final outcome of the election was the EPRDF's won of 481 out of 547 seats, with its affiliated parties securing an additional 37 seats. The national parliament was thus dominated by the EPRDF and its allies, similar to previous elections. However, 29 seats were taken by other political parties and independent candidates, indicating some progress.

Merera (2011) noted that the 2000 elections saw increased opposition participation but still lacked genuine democratization practices. The U.S. Department of State (2002) observed that, despite some free and fair aspects, significant irregularities occurred in the Southern Regions. The dominance of the EPRDF overshadowed the democratization process, with the ruling party continuing to control the regional and national legislatures. Merera's (2011, p.670) interestingly noted the trends of electoral politics in Ethiopia in detrimental to the transition to multiparty democracy.

Large segments of the population have characterized the democratization process in Ethiopia since 1991 as little more than window dressing. The TPLF/EPRDF changed its Marxist rhetoric in 1989/90 during the last phase of the struggle against the Derg regime and opened up for multiparty democracy and market economy. However, Ethiopians from different walks of life still argue that the change was only in rhetoric rather than in substance.

The 2000 elections showed some progress in opposition participation and political debate, especially in Addis Ababa. However, the democratization process remained slow and insubstantial, with significant control exerted by the ruling party, particularly in rural areas. As Tronvoll cited in Merera (2011), large segments of the population viewed the democratization process since 1991 as superficial, with changes more rhetorical than substantive. The EPRDF's future strategy, following its critical self-evaluation after losing 29 seats in the 2000 election, indicated a continued focus on securing parliamentary dominance rather than fostering genuine democratic competition (Pausewang 2002, p.44).

The May 2005 Election

The Ethiopian people began to hope that change was possible, marking a significant test for the country's democratization in consideration of the historical moment of 'competitive election' in the 2005 third national elections. Unlike previous elections, the ruling party opened the election to opposition political parties pressured by the international communities and domestic oppositions (Merera 2011). Abbink noted high registration and turnout, with individuals willing to wait in line for long hours, which was a significant gain for democracy (Abbink 2006, p.178).

In the pre-election period, several positive developments were observed regarding democratization. The EPRDF, under the strong leadership of the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, dominated the political scene. Acknowledging that the 1995 and 2000 elections were not genuinely democratic, Meles invited international observers for the 2005 election, claiming dedication to a "flawless" democratic process (European Union Observation Mission 2005, p.8). Extensive negotiations preceded the election, involving the main opposition coalitions and the ruling party, leading to changes in election laws, media guidelines, and the invitation of international observers. Despite these changes, opposition parties questioned the impartiality of the state-owned ENEB and the fairness of the election process. According to the European Union electoral observation mission, the opposition initially did not accept the appointment of the election commission, resulting in prolonged negotiations before agreeing to participate (Dahla 2012, p. 31). Opposition leaders argued that the ruling party was opening up the political space to enhance its legitimacy and international standing without genuine democratic challenges (Merera 2011).

The EPRDF took tactical measures amid mistrust and concerns. Merera observed that during the pre-election period, the ruling party deployed state resources for its benefit, exerting pressure on younger voters and candidate registration. Intimidation and forced withdrawals of potential opposition candidates were reported. Human Rights Watch noted arbitrary arrests, killings, and detentions of opposition activists during the 2005 elections (Human Rights Watch 2005; Merera 2011, p. 671). Despite the suppression and inconsistencies, many opposition parties continued their campaigns across constituencies. Lyons highlighted reports of violence and intimidation during the

pre-election period but noted that opposition parties persisted with their campaigns (Lyons 2005). Initially, the government controlled public media and restricted public rallies. However, as international observers arrived and election day approached, the political atmosphere improved, allowing opposition access to public media and live televised debates, creating unprecedented political engagement.

To challenge the dominance of EPRDF various political parties formed coalitions. The main coalition blocs are the United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF) and Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD), campaigned on significant political issues. UEDF opposed ethnic federalism, while CUD emphasized its risks, reflecting a competition between the EPRDF's federalism and the opposition's liberal unitarianism (Lefort 2007, pp. 253-273). A burgeoning opposition movement gained traction, exposing vulnerabilities within the incumbent government. Public sentiment shifted, reflecting dissatisfaction with economic stagnation, agricultural shortcomings, inadequate food assistance programs, corruption, and lack of transparency. Improved relations between the opposition and the ruling party during the pre-election period initially suggested progress towards democratization. However, post-election realities raised doubts about the country's democratic trajectory. Large-scale demonstrations erupted, primarily in major urban centers. Despite harassment, people voted for their candidates on election day. The then-prime minister declared a semi-state of emergency in Addis Ababa, banning political rallies for thirty days (Dahla 2012, p. 33). The post-election period revealed the ruling party's unwillingness to share power, leading to severe measures to control the situation, including a ban on public demonstrations, accusations against the opposition, and arrests of journalists (Abbink 2006, p. 185).

Tensions escalated when both the ruling party and opposition claimed victory before official results were announced. The ENEB's delay in publishing results fueled rumors of fraud. The opposition's announcement of winning 185 seats and the EPRDF's claim of 300 seats intensified the situation. The ENEB began announcing preliminary results, but the delay in final results increased public anxiety and tension. On June 5, university students in Addis Ababa protested, leading to widespread demonstrations accompanied by severe government repression. Special armed units, predominantly Tigrayan soldiers, aggressively suppressed protests, resulting in deaths, injuries, and arrests (Abbink 2006, p. 186). The protests spread to other cities, with further government repression. Thousands were arrested, and many were killed (EU Election Observation Mission Report 2005).

After four months, the ENEB published the complete election results in September 2005. The EPRDF and its affiliates secured around 70% of the total votes, gaining 327 seats out of 546 in parliament. The opposition gained more seats than in previous elections, with CUD and UEDF securing 109 and 52 seats, respectively. Despite dissatisfaction with the results, 90% of the elected opposition candidates took their seats in parliament (Merera 2011, p. 672).

The ruling party introduced new parliamentary rules to weaken the opposition's power, including high thresholds for introducing agendas, rules for removing members for defamation, and time limits for debates (Abbink 2006, p. 185; Merera 2011, p. 672). These changes limited the opposition's effectiveness and independence in parliament. Despite the crisis, the 2005 election was a step forward in the democratization process, with increased opposition representation in parliament. The opposition seats increased from 12 in 2000 to 174 in 2005 (Abbink 2006, p. 184).

The 2005 general election, in general, raised hopes for democratic change but ended with clashes and civilian deaths. The election highlighted the country's long journey towards democratization. Scholars described the 2005 elections as a "discomfiture of democracy" (Abbink 2005), a "turning point for the worst" (Merera, 2011), and "one step forward and many steps backwards" (Aalen 2006). The ruling party tolerated opposition only to a certain extent, curtailing activities beyond a perceived "red line." Meles Zenawi's analogy of "Giving the opposition a long rope does not mean true freedom" (EBC 2005) is apt encapsulated the situation. The expansion of concepts and terminologies are the most practicable political tactics during the regime. Despite increased opposition presence in parliament, the ruling party's manipulation and unwillingness to share power made the election a disappointment for those hoping for a more democratic future.

The 2010 General Election

Ethiopia conducted its fourth multiparty election in May 2010. The election process and the people's hope for a democratic election were a letdown compared to previous elections. After the 2005 post-election shock, the EPRDF leadership, with Meles Zenawi at the forefront, enacted new laws and used alarmist language to polarize and narrow the political space. Tronvoll stated that the government was curbing dissent by developing new policies and ratifying restrictive legislation, contradicting both the constitution and international law (Tronvoll 2010). Additionally, EPRDF also increased its campaign to boost party membership, produced manuals and booklets to train its cadres in controlling opposition movements and consecutively adopted a series of new laws in 2007, 2008, and 2009. This multi-layered and complex strategy aimed to prevent the opposition from achieving electoral success similar to the 2005 elections.

Ethiopia's democratization process has shown a downward trend since the aftermath of the May 2005 election. Puddington noted that democracy in Ethiopia had declined, with freedom becoming increasingly inaccessible. This decline was attributed to the narrowing political landscape leading up to the May 2010 general elections. Government actions targeting non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and using the anti-terrorism law against strong opposition parties further restricted democratic freedoms (Puddington 2010).

Following the 2005 elections, the ruling party embarked on a massive re-ideologization campaign. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi authored several booklets to re-indoctrinate the party apparatus and align its cadres with the party's agenda of retaining power (Tronvoll 2010, p. 123). In early 2006, the party conducted numerous seminars and trainings based on the ideology outlined in a booklet titled "Democracy and Democratic Unity." This booklet framed the choice for the Ethiopian people as one between "dependency and anti-democratic forces" (specifically using terms like "chauvinism" and "narrow nationalism") associated with opposition groups and the "revolutionary democracy (peace and development)" championed by the EPRDF (Ibid p. 124). The message was clear: support the EPRDF or be seen as an opponent. The ruling party aggressively employed and financed this political campaign and its associated propaganda.

According to Merera, the series of laws adapted from 2007 to the pre-election period of 2010 and the various trainings given to EPRDF cadres in 2006 were tested during the 2008 local elections, forcing the opposition parties to withdraw. As a result, the EPRDF fully controlled the Kebele (the lowest administrative units) (Merera 2011, p. 673). The ruling party used many tactics to target members of the opposition, human rights defenders, opposition parties, and individuals to avoid criticism. Individuals who voted for the opposition in 2005 were selectively pressured and threatened not to repeat their actions. Private media were closed, and journalists and reporters were harassed, detained, or forced to flee the country (Tronvoll 2010, p. 125). The political scene was under EPRDF control, creating an atmosphere of fear, repression, and undemocratic practices.

Despite facing harsh repression, opposition groups in Ethiopia actively sought to unify in the lead-up to the 2010 general election. They formed the Forum for Democratic Dialogue (FDD) in 2008, which later merged with Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ) to create the Ethiopian Federal Democratic Unity Forum (EFDUF) (Dahla 2012, p. 37; Merera 2011, p. 673). This represented the most significant opposition movement for the 2010 election. The EFDUF negotiated with the ruling EPRDF on key issues like the release of political prisoners, electoral reforms for a more independent National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), access to state media, adherence to the rule of law, and government funding for political parties as mandated by electoral law. These discussions, mediated by the British Embassy in Addis Ababa, resulted in a draft code of conduct for political parties. However, the EFDUF, considering the code inadequate, refused to sign it (Tronvoll 2010, p. 125). Conversely, after two months of negotiations, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of the EPRDF signed the code alongside leaders of minor opposition parties on October 30, 2009 (Tronvoll Ibid., p. 125). These signatories included Hailu Shawl of the All Ethiopian Unity Party (AEUO), Lidetu Ayalew of the Ethiopian Democratic Party (EDP), and Ayele Chamisso of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy Party (CUDP). Subsequently, the EPRDF's coalition members and affiliated parties signed the code (Ibid., p. 125).

A fundamental weakness of the opposition parties was internal division (Abbink 2011, pp. 213-239). While shared antipathy towards the EPRDF initially united them, their vastly different ideologies often led to friction and hampered effective decision-making (Dahla 2012, p. 37). The ruling party exploited these divisions to weaken the opposition. The 2005 election results prompted the EPRDF to take significant steps to curtail opposition campaigning. Opposition movements reported disruptive behavior by local officials, police, and ruling party

members aimed at hindering their campaigns (Dahla 2012, p. 37). As the election approached, intimidation and harassment of the opposition intensified. The EPRDF also restricted international observers, further disadvantaging the EFDUF. Additionally, reports emerged of vote-buying, arrests, and beatings of opposition candidates, along with disruptions to their rural campaigns (Merera 2011, p. 673). These actions violated democratic electoral processes.

Despite the non-free and unfair nature of the campaign, characterized by harassment, violence, and threats from both sides, the elections proceeded. Voter turnout remained high, with 29,832,190 (93.4%) of the 31,926,520 registered voters casting their ballots (NEBE 2010). A total of 63 political parties and 2,188 candidates for national parliament competed in the election (NEBE 2010). The ruling party successfully conducted the elections as planned and unsurprisingly emerged victorious. However, the extent of their victory was unexpected, as they secured nearly all parliamentary seats, with only two going to the opposition and independents. The EPRDF and its allies won all but two parliamentary seats, with the remaining two being shared by an opposition party coalition and an independent candidate. Notably, even the independent candidate maintained a friendly relationship with the EPRDF (Tronvoll 2010, p. 121).

The opposition rejected the results and appealed to the NEBE. However, NEBE dismissed their complaints and declared the elections fair and peaceful. The outcome raised concerns about the future of Ethiopian politics, particularly regarding the EPRDF's actions to stifle opposition representation, which had grown in 2005 but was completely eliminated by 2010. The vast disparity between the ruling party and the opposition created an uneven playing field in Ethiopian politics under the EPRDF. The ruling party maintained a firm grip on power, bolstered by its extensive network of cadres, control over state resources, and use of coercive tactics. These factors hindered the development of a democratic system in Ethiopia. The erosion of democratization ultimately contributed to the popular uprisings of 2015-2018, which forced a change in leadership.

The 2015 General Election

This was the fifth general election in Ethiopia and the first since the death of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, the chief ideologist of the EPRDF, who led the party from 1991 until his death in 2012. The 2015 was also last election of EPRDF ruling period. The election demonstrated the similar trends of the ruling party's efforts to consolidate its power. The EPRDF viewed elections as opportunities to engage citizens in political participation through competition. The party conducted extensive training for university lecturers, students, and senior and mid-level civil servants to promote the goals of a developmental state and ensure the EPRDF's continued leadership. In 2014, the government adopted a new strategy for controlling the public through a network called "One to Five" arrangements, which significantly increased EPRDF membership. Beyond participation, this arrangement's social control and mobilization helped entrench the party's dominance. After securing 99.6% of the vote in the 2010 elections, the EPRDF controlled the entire country. Campaigning as an opposition party leader or member was exceedingly difficult during the 2015 elections. Effective election campaigns require good voter information from the media, allowing voters to ask questions, obtain information, and engage in public debate. However, this was not the case in Ethiopia before the 2015 elections (Abbink 2017, p. 311).

Electoral participation in Ethiopia is hindered by low literacy, particularly in rural areas. Despite this, the ruling party limited meetings and television debates, even in the capital city. In 2015, a few televised debates were organized between the ruling party and opposition members. The primary goal of these debates and meetings in Addis Ababa was to demonstrate to international donors, organizations, and observers from the African Union that there was room for free competition and political discussion. However, various reports from international human rights defenders, political analysts, and mainstream media indicated that public discussion of opposition party programs was virtually nonexistent, with information only available about the ruling party (Ibid).

A free press is crucial for a successful election campaign, allowing citizens to learn about the policies of different parties. However, in Ethiopia, the media were controlled by the government, private media outlets were closed, and journalists faced harassment, arrest, or were forced to flee the country. Free news and reports were impossible during the pre-election period of the 2015 elections, with all media serving the government's interests. Human Rights Watch reported that media remained firmly under government control, forcing journalists to choose between facing harassment or arrest, resorting to self-censorship, or fleeing the country altogether (Human Rights Watch 2015).

Despite the repressive political environment and challenges during the campaign and pre-election periods, political parties registered and participated in the election. Fifty-eight parties participated in the 2015 general elections, with 35 competing for regional legislatures and 23 for the national level. As in previous elections, voter turnout was high at 93.2%, with local officials intolerant of non-voters. Approximately 36.8 million people registered, and 34.3 million cast their votes.

The government invited observers from the African Union after the EU observers rejected the invitation due to previous criticisms. The EU observers had reported that the 2010 elections lacked international standards, leading to their exclusion in 2015 (Foltyn 2015). The African Union (AU) sent a 59-member team to observe the 2015 elections, but their effectiveness was questioned compared to the EU observers who had previously observed many more polling stations. The AU team reported observing 356 polling stations out of 43,795, or 0.8% of the total. They described the elections as "peaceful, calm, and credible" (Africa Union-Election Observation Mission, p. 8). On June 22, 2015, the NEBE declared that the EPRDF had won all the parliamentary seats. The then-chairman of NEBE, Merga Bekana, announced that "the election was conducted in a free, fair, peaceful, credible, and democratic manner." The EPRDF and its satellite parties took all the parliamentary seats, indicating a hegemonic electoral authoritarian rule. Freedom House reported that Ethiopia had remained under an authoritarian regime since 2011. The 2015 election results mirrored and intensified the 2010 elections.

In the 2010 elections, the opposition had won only one seat in parliament out of 547, accounting for 0.4% of the total seats. In the 2015 general elections, the EPRDF won 501 seats, and the remaining 46 seats were taken by its affiliated regional parties. The ruling party's complete control created fear and shock among the public. The significant opposition win in the 2005 elections, with 33% of the seats, prompted the ruling party to take any means, legal or illegal, to secure all seats and establish a strict one-party rule. This was confirmed in the 2015 elections, which advanced from 67% in 2005 to 99.6% in 2010 and 100% in 2015. Abbink described the results as unprecedented, even compared to totalitarian regimes like the Soviet Union in their heyday, leading to widespread cynicism among the public (Abbink 2017, p. 314).

The 2015 election results indicated that Ethiopia's political situation had changed, consolidating a one-party authoritarian regime. Political space for opposition was virtually nonexistent, leaving people with no alternative but to support the ruling party. The results led to mass popular resistance in Oromia and the Amhara region immediately after the government claimed legitimacy through the elections. The bleak prospects for democratic consolidation and political compromise created fear and uncertainty for the future of Ethiopian politics.

Political participation is a fundamental principle of democracy. High voter turnout in national elections in Ethiopia does not necessarily indicate democratic participation. Tronvoll noted that the ruling party used coercion and intimidation to mobilize the rural population to vote (Tronvoll 2009, p. 456). Abbink attributed high voter turnout to intimidation and fear, suggesting that voters, particularly in local areas, faced intolerance from local officials (Abbink 2017, p. 312). This implies that voting in Ethiopia is not entirely free and fair; individuals might be voting out of fear of repercussions for not participating.

Participation of political parties in elections alone cannot transition authoritarian regimes to democracies (Tronvoll 2009, p. 456). However, the full participation of opposition political parties can indicate a higher level of democracy than if parties had boycotted. In Ethiopia, political party participation in elections has shown a positive trend, with opposition movements improving from a boycott in 1995 to significant participation in subsequent elections, despite repeated disruptions by the ruling party. The number of candidates and parties participating in elections has also increased, indicating a positive trend. Candidates for the House of Representatives increased threefold from 1995 to the 2015 general elections.

Political competition should provide voters with genuine alternatives. In Ethiopia, however, the ruling party has monopolized seats in past elections. A radical change occurred in the 2005 elections when the EPRDF opened political space for the opposition, resulting in the opposition winning 33% of the seats. However, the ruling party took severe actions post-elections, as detailed earlier. Subsequent elections saw the EPRDF design new laws and train cadres and civil servants, increasing its membership and closing political mobilization and discussion spaces. Access to information is crucial for the election process. Media plays a significant role in creating awareness among citizens about alternative policies. In Ethiopia, press freedom has fluctuated. In the 1995 general election, media was

under government control. In 2000 and 2005, private media reported on the campaign and electoral process, especially in the capital. However, post-2005, media became government-controlled, with private media closed and journalists arrested or fleeing the country. Until 2017, there was no free media, with state-owned media consistently reporting on the government's agenda.

Legitimate elections are a hallmark of democratic governments. In Ethiopia, all elections have lacked legitimacy, with boycotts, protests, complaints, and result rejections by political parties. Low levels of political participation and opposition representation in the HPR have characterized the election process. The EPRDF has consistently won a large majority of seats, with the opposition winning very few. Media impartiality has been questionable, especially during post-election periods. Some opposition parties have accepted election results, while others have rejected them. Additionally, peaceful election processes have been marred by violence, particularly in 2005, and boycotts in 2015 for more see table 2.

[Insert here Table 2]

Decomposing the Electoral Manipulative Strategies

Beyond the plain analysis in previous sections, the EPRDF's mechanism of swaying elections was not fundamentally different from what Zemelak (2020) detailed under the notion of the "EPRDF's 'menu of institutional manipulations'", building upon Schedler's (2002) frameworks of analysis. Nonetheless, a more comprehensible account of decomposing the EPRDF's electoral control and manipulative strategies can be drawn from Ronceray and Byiers's (2019) frameworks developed for analyzing autocrats' "election swaying strategies." All the electoral maneuvers utilized by the EPRDF throughout the election process including the pre-election period, the polling day, and post-election days were executed through three key swaying strategies: operating through legal institutions, operating through extra-legal processes, and through changing or developing favorable 'rules of the game.'

The first and second strategies were the most entrenched aspects of the regime's electoral manipulation, though the third one is also significant. In the first case, operating through formal institutions, the regime directly staffed its members or weakened, undermined, and co-opted the state's watchdog formal institutions such as the NEBE, the media, and other social forces to control and orchestrate electoral maneuvering. The state and party structures were either merged or orchestrated to work together for the party's interest. Public institutions were not only orchestrated to function for the party's electoral strategies but also for the private material interests of public officials, resembling what literature explains as neo-patrimonialism (Lodge 2014; Kassa 2020), which is devoid of democratic norms.

In the second case, the EPRDF's extra-constitutional party politics, particularly its leftist revolutionary democracy ideology and institutional structure (Merera 2011; Semahegn 2014), were key to the party's specific electoral swaying strategies and its autocratic resilience during its 27 years of rule (see Livia 2020). The ruling party's ideological principles were more relevant in shaping the rules of electoral politics than formal constitutional democratic provisions. Despite formally endorsing liberal democracy and multi-party electoral politics, the party's ideology, namely 'Revolutionary Democracy,' which was inherently the "antithesis of liberal democracy and based on the Leninist principle of 'democratic centralism'" (Merera 2011, p.664), significantly constrained the effectiveness of true multi-party elections. Derivatives of this ideology, such as 'democratic centralism,' 'vanguard party,' and the later developmental state ideology (see Semahagn 2014), superseded state democratic institutions and were indeed extra-institutional strategies that precipitated the rise of one-party dominance and electoral authoritarianism in post-1991 Ethiopia.

Third, the EPRDF also employed electoral tricks through changing or developing favorable 'rules of the game,' including the constitutional rule of the electoral system and introducing new restrictive legislation on media, access to information, charities, CSOs, and other civil and political rights. The plurality electoral system, particularly the first-past-the-post system, has been the functional electoral rule for all elections in Ethiopia since 1995. By design, it is posited as 'constitutional engineering' installed "to ensure the EPRDF's continued dominance" (Merera 2002; Solomon 2016; Zemelak 2022). Despite debates on its actual impact on electoral outcomes (see Ishiyama 2009), there is strong concern from scholars and opposition regarding the biased favorability of the plurality electoral system toward the incumbent EPRDF, with calls for reform (Solomon 2016). It is plausible that the incumbent resorted to reform the electoral system, recognizing its monopolization of national seats while completely leaving out the opposition's public vote, moving towards a mixed electoral system constituting both the first-past-the-post

system and proportional representation. However, beyond the rhetoric promise of reforming the electoral system in 2016, it was not actualized until the final fracture of the EPRDF, including by the present incumbent Prosperity Party, for unknown reasons. In the post-2005 election period, the introduction of new restrictive rules, such as the Freedom of the Mass Media law, the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation law, and Charities and CSO laws, all favored the incumbent and significantly narrowed political spaces for multi-party elections.

Looking forward: Undoing Authoritarian's Electoral Manipulation

The difficult question is how elections should serve their inherent purpose in a country like Ethiopia, which has been persistently entrenched in 'full-blown authoritarianism' for centuries and 'electoral authoritarianism' for over a quarter of a century since 1991 (Semir 2022). While it is undoubted that Ethiopian democratic experiments can be characterized as 'electoral authoritarianism' or even 'hegemonic electoral authoritarianism,' one cannot completely dismiss the positive developments attributed to this nascent electoral experiment.

Firstly, new democratic learning, which had never before existed in the country, is being achieved. These include the formal recognition of constitutional democracy with a sufficient base for the conduct of multi-party elections, resulting in regularized elections with limited engagement of multipartyism in routine ways. Secondly, the degrees of electoral authoritarianism entrenchment throughout past electoral processes are not uniform. For instance, the historic 2005 competitive election, with significant political space opening up and considerable engagement of opposition parties, including seizing about 32% of the national parliament seats, is an illustrative manifestation of the variation in electoral authoritarianism, sometimes involving both hegemonic and competitive authoritarianism.

However, as a country new to democratic ideals and precepts, the expected positive path of transformation, at least from competitive authoritarianism towards consolidated electoral democracy and, in the long run, to a full-fledged liberal democracy, remains dwarfed and frequently obstructed by the incumbent's grip on power, using elections as manipulative maneuvers (Zemelak 2015). The EPRDF's experiment with electoral democracy saw its final failure in 2018, immediately after its ironic 99.6% and 100% election wins in the 2010 and 2015 polls, respectively. The total rupture of the regime by public protest from 2015 to 2018, immediately after the announcement of a 100% win at the fifth national election, was a clear indication of how elections were merely used as a façade of democratic formalities.

The quest for democratic transition and the answers to questions about the frequent relapses after hopeful moments of political liberalization remain both an 'uphill struggle' and the most perplexing issues of scholarship in Ethiopia (Semir 2022). The popular quest for democracy can be traced back to the 1960s Ethiopian student movement, which was unfortunately sabotaged by the militarist Derg after the 1974 revolution. Nearly two decades of rule by the Military Socialist Derg saw the resurgence of an ever-strengthening autocratic hegemon state. A totally new moment of transition to democracy began in 1991 when the TPLF-led rebel coalition forces of the EPRDF ousted the Derg and promised democratization through the official promulgation of constitutional democracy. Nonetheless, this was a democratic experiment in formality only, while a more pervasive authoritarian regime prevailed, ironically conducting regularized election tricks.

In the scholarship endeavor to address one of the most puzzling issues of Ethiopia's democratic transition impediments, the existing literature associates the persistence of electoral authoritarianism with factors such as inherited authoritarian political culture (Kassa 2020; Getachew 2022), ideological imperatives, and extra-constitutional party politics (Merera 2011; Semahegn 2014; Livia 2020), ethnicity and elite politics-oriented ethnic division (Vestal 2019; Mesay 2019). In broader African contexts, explanations like the colonial and neo-colonial thesis, though not directly relevant to the Ethiopian case (see Kassa 2020), play key roles in literature that expound on the democratic deficit of post-colonial African states. Similarly, the modernization thesis, which posits economic development as a precondition for democratic transition, remains problematic in its failure to explain a few African states' experiments in consolidated electoral democracy and liberal democratic states like Comoros, Niger, Tanzania, Cape Verde, Ghana, and South Africa (see Stuppert 2020:12).

The purpose here is not to review these explanations, as it is beyond our scope. Instead, drawing on literature that provides the most relevant factors to explain Ethiopia's democratic transition impediments, this paper could implicate the prospective ways to undo perpetual authoritarianism in the name of façade electoral political strategies.

Following Semir's (2022, p.2) proposition in explaining the predicaments to democratic transition, which he conceptualizes as "state-society power asymmetry and the nature of their interaction," is fundamental in relation to other important factors applauded by literature in explaining Ethiopia's democratic transition failures. Basing his analysis on state-society contestation and interaction with a relative balance of power between the two, Semir contends that "authoritarian regimes democratize when they are forced to do so" (Semir 2022, p.41). However, the historical, structural, and security factors that create unequal power relations between the more autocratic and hegemon Ethiopian state and the structurally weak social forces whether social movements, public protesters, rebellions, insurgencies, or civilian actors including opposition political parties and CSOs are fundamental factors of democratic predicaments in Ethiopia.

In comparison with the Western capitalist democracies, which structurally benefited from the emergence of a strong bourgeoisie and urban middle classes as powerful contesters with state power, the Ethiopian modern state lacks considerable strong non-state forces to compel the state to democratize. Nonetheless, our intent is not to fully subscribe to Semir's explanations. Instead, we accept his proposition as a fundamental explanation and treat other factors such as the EPRDF's ideological imperatives, extra-constitutional party institutions, inherited autocratic political culture, notions of ethnicity, and elite contradictions with broader structural factors of state-society asymmetric relations. Interestingly, Semir also brings forth an 'incentivizing' mechanism for both state elites and social forces, believing that the emergence of a contestable state-society relationship is logically unworkable stemming from the structural factors. Instead, the arrangement of incentivizing mechanisms, which centrally arrive at broader public and elite negotiation like the national dialogue, in its outcome will bring incentivizing structures for both state elites and opposition to de-authoritize the state and establish compromising arrangements for a new social contract of democratic dispensation.

Conclusion

Despite growing protests, grievances, and complaints from the opposition, the EPRDF leadership has remained firmly in power, showing few signs of democratic inclination beyond rhetoric. The party has moved from a semi-authoritarian regime to a fully authoritarian one, as demonstrated by the 2015 election, which established a dominant ruling party and limited peaceful participation. The EPRDF's handling of the democratization process in Ethiopia, which includes free, fair, and competitive elections, has been marked by a lack of consensus-building and a failure to communicate a bright future to followers. The EPRDF leadership's actions, such as establishing a dominant party and suppressing opposition, have only polarized the political landscape further and undermined the democratic process. This is not only damaging to the prospects of free and fair elections in the country but also to the long-term stability and prosperity of Ethiopia. In conclusion, the EPRDF leadership's handling of the democratization process in Ethiopia has been marked by a lack of democratic inclination and a failure to build consensus.

Irregularities, intimidation, and suppression of dissenting voices marred the five political elections held in 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, and 2015. The election as an instrument to build democracy in Ethiopia has not achieved its goal. Instead, it builds an authoritarian leadership that consolidates power in one party, and the election was conducted to legitimize the authority of the EPRDF leadership. However, the elections held in Ethiopia have contributed to building democracy and widening political participation in terms of voter turnout. Of those five multiparty elections conducted in the country, the 2005 elections, in particular, are evidence of competition and political participation. The EPRDF's authoritarian tendencies, exemplified by its "divide and rule" strategy based on ethnicity, transformed elections into tools for legitimizing its power rather than fostering a genuine democratic culture. The lack of solid institutions, independent media, and accountable leadership contributed to the stalling of Ethiopia's democratic transition. To revive the promise of a democratic transition, Ethiopia must recommit to genuine democratic principles and electoral democracy. This requires strengthening institutions such as electoral commission, opposition parties, promoting national unity, and ensuring fair elections. By fostering an inclusive political participation and maintaining a steadfast commitment to these principles, Ethiopia can pave the way for a democratic future and fulfill the aspirations of its people. The prosperity party, which took power after the internal faction, should learn from past mistakes and take a bold step toward the practice of democratic election, which Ethiopian citizens have demanded for more than half a century.

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The datasets generated during and/or analyzed in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Ethical declaration:

Informed consent: This article gets oral consents from the study participants' particularly key informant interviewee during interview period. No ethical clearance and board approval since the study is personal.

Tables

Table 1. Composition of Parliament in 1995 General Election

EPRDF and its allied parties	Seats
Tigray People's Liberation Front	38
Amhara National Democratic Movement	133
Oromo People's Democratic Organization	176
Afar People's Democratic Organization	3
Gurage People's Revolutionary Democratic Movement	14
Hadya People's Organization	9
Kembata People's Democratic Organization	4
Tembaro Pople's Democratic Organization	1
Alaba People's Democratic Organization	2
Yem People's Democratic Front	1
Keficho People's Revolutionary Democratic Organization	6
Bench People's Revolutionary Democratic Organization	1
Sidama People's Democratic Organization	19
Wolayta People's Democratic Organization	13
Gideo People's Unity Democratic Movement	7
Konso People's Revolutionary Democratic Organization	1
Gamo and Gofa People's Democratic Organization	15
Kore Nationality Unity Democratic Organization	1
Dawro People's Democratic Organization	4
Gambella People's Liberation Party	2
EPRDF	21
Total Seats out of 548	471
Total won by percentage	86.1%

Source: Source: Nohlen, D., Krennerich, M., & Thibaut, B. (1999). Elections in Africa: A Data Handbook. Oxford University Press, p. 383.

Table 2: Summary of Electoral Process in Ethiopia 1995-2015

	Election Process	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Political Participation	Turnout	94%	89.90%	N/A	93.40%	93.20%
	Opposition party involvement	Boycott	Participation	Participation	Participation	Participation
	No. Of Political Parties contested	47	49	70	63	58
	No. Of Candidates Registered	987	1,077	1,847	2,188	3,991
Competition	EPRDF seats in HPR	(99%)	90%	67%	99.60%	100%
	Opposition share of seats in HPR	0.20%	1.50%	33%	0.40%	0.00%
	Turnover of power	No	No	No	No	No
Media Impartiality	In Pre-election Period	No	No	Yes	No	No
	In post-election Period	No	No	No	No	No
Legitimacy	Loser's acceptance of results	Boycott	Some	Some	Some	Rejected
	Peaceful Process	Yes	Partly	No	No	No

Sources: Author combination

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