PARLIAMENT IN ETHIOPIA

PARTICIPATION, REPRESENTATION AND RESISTANCE

Mercy Fekadu Mulugeta

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African legislatures remain understudied, yet democratisation, development and peacebuilding all depend on these key political institutions. This book provides an in-depth analysis of Ethiopia's parliament, a country of key political and strategic importance to the whole region.

In 1931, Ethiopia's monarchical government introduced a system of parliamentary democracy with seemingly contradictory objectives; it wanted to legitimise its rule in a changing world, and also needed to provide a respectable retirement vocation (as senators and deputies) to sections of the aristocracy it ousted from power. This paradox of recognising the parliament as essential to modern governance yet deliberately seeking weak institutions that are unable or unwilling to challenge those in power continues to haunt the parliament to this day. Ethiopia continues to struggle to maintain political stability, and the separation of power between government and parliament and a system of checks and balances are yet to substantially flourish. Drawing on extensive original data gathered from interviews and surveys, this book investigates the legal and practical status of federal representative institutions in Ethiopia from 1931 up to and including 2021. It delves into the rules and routines of parliament, its contextually and historically grounded culture of representation, and the techniques of manoeuvring executive bureaucracies. The book also aims to understand the extent of civil dis/engagement and the perceptions and role of citizens in shaping parliament, and how the mandates and functions of individual MPs are also determined by cultural and socioeconomic factors such as gender, population, inequality and conflict.

This book's in-depth and original analysis will be of interest to researchers across African studies, politics, development and governance.

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To my daughter. For "He shows mercy from generation to generation," we shall share more blessings like this in the years to come.

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1   Introduction

The Ethiopian parliament is distinctively Ethiopian. It is a reflection of Ethiopian nationalities, economies, histories and political relations; through its actions and inactions, it expresses features that could not be found elsewhere (Munslow, 1983). It is an entity constituted by Ethiopians, resulting in an institution characterised by uniqueness distinguishing one country from another. It is instrumental in understanding Ethiopia's current state and history, as Crewe (2021, p. 2) put it, "if you look at who sits in parliaments, much is revealed about a nation." The constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) establishes a bicameral parliament consisting of the House of Federation and the House of Peoples' Representatives (HPR). While the House of People's Representatives (HPR) is the focus of this book when discussing post-1995 Ethiopia in the chapters to come, the book starts with an extensive historical perspective on generations of parliaments in Ethiopia, which includes the key characters of the House of Federation. There are varied views on the bicameral system. Some appreciate it as the beacon of democratic practice, which discourages a hegemonic executive (Heywood, 2002). It allows various identity groups to be represented, usually through indirect representation based on some form of collective representation instead of popular votes. Others see this second point as a drawback of the bicameral system (Riker, 1992). In Ethiopia, the constituency directly elects each member of the HPR, and members of the House of Federation are indirect representatives of the different ethnonational groups in Ethiopia; 76 ethnonational groups are currently represented in the House.

Before 1994, Ethiopia experienced a series of constitutions that did not fully commit to the principles of "trias politica" – the separation of powers. The legislative and oversight role of representative institutions began almost a century ago in Ethiopia, yet the journey has been long and still has important milestones to achieve. Kassahun (2005, p. 178), like most others, argues that all three generations of Ethiopia's parliaments share the same feature as "dependence on mainstream centres of power to which . . . [they are] inextricably linked." Ethiopia's bicameral parliament is, along with most other African countries, categorised as one that is largely dominated by the executive branch (Van Cranenburg, 2009). From this view emerges the understanding that the parliament is a mere rubber stamp. The parliaments during the period between 1931 to 1974 were referred to as a "rubber stamp" that could be "suspended or even dissolved by royal decree" (Gebru, 1991, p. 53). Subsequent

Ethiopian and foreign scholars have continued to allege the same (Shinn and Ofcansky, 2013; Kassahun, 2005). With doubts that such sweeping views of the Ethiopian parliament (or any parliament) could accurately represent nearly a century of parliamentary history, this book seeks a nuanced view of what the parliament does and, most importantly, is.

1.1 More Than a Rubber Stamp

African legislatures have been neglected by scholars in various fields including political science. And yet democratisation depends on this key political institution. To understand a national parliament both historical and comparative perspectives can be useful and both the institution and its participants – Members of Parliament (MPs) – should be captured in the analysis. This book focuses on the parliament of Africa's second most populous country: Ethiopia; a place of political and strategic importance to the Horn of Africa region. Parliament is vital to the country's democracy, development and peacebuilding, but not enough is understood about its distinctive way of operating. Very recently, scholars have started to consider African parliaments worthy of their intellectual endeavour but are yet to publish their nuanced views. To give a full account of its operation, it is important to offer attention to seemingly mundane rules and routines, their contextually and historically grounded cultural reproduction, and techniques of manoeuvring executive bureaucracies. Part of the analysis requires a study of politicians dealing with contentious politics at various levels and managing socioeconomic factors that affect their day-to-day functions and how they do this in diverse ways depending on their shared and individual backgrounds, histories and identities.

To find a comprehensive view of the Ethiopian parliament, this book establishes an understanding that captures the constituencies' perspectives, perceptions from other organs of government, and the view of the parliament towards itself. It allows us to see beyond the parliament's functions because – like most other entities – the parliament is not only meant to "'(en)act' it is meant to also 'be.'" Various views of the parliament have prevented scholars from pursuing such a study of African parliaments; these include the view that (1) democratic institutions are not priorities of the public in Africa, (2) that the parliament is a mere imported phenomenon that is out of place in Africa, and (3) that the parliament is not able to fulfil its legislative and oversight functions, thus is not worth dedicating resources to study it.

In political science, the view that people living in undemocratic countries do not know and desire democracy in similar ways as people in democratic countries due to their lack of experience, and also perhaps due to poverty, has been overpopularised (Zagrebina, 2020; Teti et al., 2019). Some would outright argue that Ethiopia and Ethiopians prefer authoritative absolutist rule by strong figures rather than institutions that encourage democratic competition such as election; or bluntly discuss, "absolutism is culturally rooted, practically a necessity, and inevitably has to be endured in order to survive" (Lefort, 2007, p. 260). Proponents of this view cite half-truths, such as the history of the tradition of absolutist monarchical rule in some regions of Ethiopia; but portraying such traditions as telling of what is a "necessity and inevitable"

perpetuates colonial narratives of inequality. Such views cannot serve as the basis to disregard democratic institutions or make generalised assumptions.

The view that the parliament is merely imported and does not belong and function well in Africa is also prominent, and to some extent like the previous points, has some 'truths' to it. The modern parliament institution with elected members is mostly a European phenomenon. However, this view has more to it than pointing out the origins of 'modern' parliaments.

> [The constitution] guarantees the empire a set of ministries to run the day-to-day affairs of the land and a parliament to make law. But ironically, at the time that the constitution established the ministries, there were not enough qualified Ethiopians to manage them or to fill the slots created for ministers. Rather than respond to a locally expressed and felt need, the document embodied an imported system of principles unfamiliar to the inhabitants of the empire. The constitution did legitimize already existing ministers, all of which had been designed and administered by Europeans from their formation. It formalized the foreign ideology that has already been implemented into the administration of the empire.
>
> (Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990, p. 186)

Nearly a century ago, in 1931, a monarchical government in Ethiopia introduced parliament into the political lives of its subjects (Fiseha, 2015). Like the majority of African states, the country adopted a model of parliamentary monarchy where the separation of power between government and parliament – and a system of checks and balances – were yet to substantially flourish (Salih, 2005b; Opalo, 2019). Holcomb and Ibssa (1990) had missed a critical point in their observation to understand Ethiopia, which is to ask about the cultural, social and economic background of Ethiopians that were in political positions. Instead, they ignored the institution of the parliament entirely and focused on the executive organs, also disregarding both organs as 'imports' filled with foreigners – which by itself was inaccurate. Their report is refuted by Shinn (1971), Norberg (1977) and Pankhurst (1968)'s accounts. Norberg (1977, p. 71) argued that "top positions in the Ethiopian administration, especially in the Ministries, were held by Ethiopians, while on the sub-ministerial level many positions, particularly the technical ones, were often held by foreigners. Many foreigners were employed in schools and hospitals." As per Norberg's compilation from 1935, Ethiopians held all Ministerial positions. There were nine advisors and technical advisors from European countries assigned to different ministries; four were in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (See also, Shinn, 1971 and Pankhurst, 1968). The Ethiopians filling these positions were initially people from the aristocracy, but this trend increasingly changed as more and more educated Ethiopians started to return from western universities.

Another reason cited to disregard the study of African parliament is the institution's weakness in properly conducting its functions. Parliaments in the Global South, when they are occasionally studied, are a subject of evaluative writing aimed at measuring their ineffectiveness. However, as the study of parliament has shown

elsewhere, it is important to seek an understanding of the parliament's nature, sus-pending judgement to some extent, and to consider parliamentary reform as an exercise that is drawn from in-depth knowledge on specific cases. Markakis and Asmelash (1967, p. 193) reject the conception that African "representative assem-blies" should fit the Montesquieu Model in the immediate aftermath of their inde-pendence from colonialism. They argued this in defense of African parliaments, which without such leeways would be "reduced to meaninglessness, for they possess neither specific functions nor significant power" in the immediate post-liberation era (Markakis and Asmelash, 1967, p. 193). The critics' approach also completely disregards the parliaments' symbolic and descriptive side, which could be equally significant in its representative role (Pitkin, 1967). In a study on a smaller identity group called the Kunama in Ethiopia, one researcher discusses what parliamentary representation means to minority groups who have had a conflictual relationship with governments during state-making processes:

> the healing process of the people is being expedited through belongingness to the state's democratic institutions and that inclusion in the federal structure is granted. Overall, the concept of representation is, therefore viewed from a collective angle rather than an individual MP's perspective; more symbolic than substantive and more structural than functional.
>
> (Mitiku, 2021, p. 192)

The role parliaments are expected to play mostly lies in their representational, leg-islative and oversight work (FDRE Constitution, 1994). Besides the legislation and oversight reports it passes, the existence of a parliament, how different branches of government and various sections of the citizenry view it, is important. Its composi-tion and structure determine how different identity groups relate to the state; it is a testimony of their existence or an expression of their will as well as distress. The discussion in this book does not totally disregard that the parliament in Ethiopia lacked strength in the area of opposition political party participation and scrutinis-ing the executive branch. However, it stresses that simply evaluating the work of the parliament risks overlooking ample knowledge about MPs and functions that are at the margins of their formal mandate.

With regards to political parties, Ethiopia has its peculiarities as well as similarities with fellow African countries. The similarity lies in how African states, including Ethiopia, have adopted the institution of the parliament with relative ease; however, the emergence of political parties was not as straightforward. When successfully established, the political parties were organised in ethnic enclaves rather than on the basis of policy agendas (Salih, 2005a). On the other hand, Ethiopian parliaments have existed apart from conventional political parties for over 30 years. Elsewhere in Africa "the emergence of political parties preceded the emergence of parliaments, assemblies, or legislatures" (Salih, 2005b, p. 5). While initially, governments become the sole owners and manipulators of power, leading to "the slide towards one-party rule" (Salih, 2005b, p. 9); this somehow changed in the 1990s with the rise of mul-tiparty systems.

Despite these developments, in many African countries there were a series of legislative amendments that made the executive branch stronger than the legislature or generally undermined democratic processes. Thompson (2000) describes this phenomenon as a global one, yet more severe in Africa. In many places, such moves were mainly in the form of a constitutional amendment that removed age limits and term limits in countries like Burundi, Rwanda, Comoros, Uganda, Egypt and Guinea. In Ethiopia this has not emerged in the form of constitutional amendments; instead, constitutional power is manipulated through adapting competing proclamations of anti-terror laws, anti-corruption laws, civil society laws and election laws (see Chapter 6 of this book). This brings in an important aspect of parliament – the parliament's relationship with the executive branch, and MPs' relationships with their political parties. While the former is mainly a role of oversight over the executive branch, the latter is one that mainly happens in the shadows of legal scrutiny, yet it is crucial in affecting all aspects of the MPs' work. Therein also lies the actions of parliamentarians that are both implicit and explicit, representing and expressing interests that might align with the government but also expressing resistance, employing means that are not always considered formal or even dignified.

This book establishes who and how MPs represent; it discusses where they acquire their mandate (constitutions, elections and beyond) and how they pursue their ends, including how they manoeuvre autocratic political systems that are repressive towards the people they represent (and therefore repressive towards them). It presents a critical view of the cultural and socioeconomic issues (gender, population, inequality and conflict) that affect individual MPs and their constituencies as it evolves over time through three distinct systems: the Imperial, the Derg[1] and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (the EPRDF). While it appreciates the existence of representative institutions outside of the precincts of 'modern' government structures, they are not the focus of this book. There are indigenous political assemblies in different communities and each had their own system of check, balance, policy formulation and implementation: for instance, the system of 'Amelkach, Tekawami and Techi' in the Imperial tradition, the Geda system of the Oromo, and the Bayto of the Kunama can be cited (Tesema, 2016; Ghirmai, 2017). While deeply fascinating and crucial to the everyday lives of the people, such systems will not be the focus of this book. A discussion in a tangential manner will not do these indigenous intuitions and their practices justice. This book relies on a mixed methods multidisciplinary approach to gathering data, including a globally innovative online platform to study the interaction between MPs and constituents. The combination of history, social science and technology involved in this research has relevance for the future of parliamentary studies.

1.2 Traveling and Evolving Concepts

The interaction between dynamic economic conditions, conflict, indigenous governance systems, non-state actors and "formal" government arrangements has resulted in a menu of concepts used to define African statehood (Mercy, 2016). How these interesting and non-standard definitions of statehood, should influence

and shape our understanding of governments and governance has not been fully discussed. Evidently, African states are undergoing a rapid state of formation and reformation and this indicates the need to employ methodologies that target "formative processes" (Doornbos, 2010; Doornbos and Van Binsbergen, 2017). The same courtesy should be forwarded to the study of African governments, specifically the parliament because the type of state we have determines the type of parliament; and parliament in turn determines the state (re)formation.

There is no country whose statehood is as debated in Africa as Ethiopia's. Constitutions and the government they create depend on the type of state. To the republican, the parliament as a representative institution presumes a republic where all its constituent units are equal. To postcolonial scholars that strive for freedom from imperialism and the idea of modern statehood in general, MPs are "agents" of a colonial institution that "were brought together in urban areas by the same colonial institutions that discriminated against them and also used them as agents" (Assefa, 1993, p. 384). To those who view the government through the lenses of the monarch, the law above all things known as the constitution, is a text aspiring to replace the Holy Book:

> The scroll is a talisman or amulet to protect the wearer . . . from the evil eye (i.e., from the discerning eyes of the critics who recognize the faults of the government in its efforts at "democratization") to be used in magic rites for exorcizing those possessed by the evil spirits (Government policies).
>
> (Vestal, 1996, p. 21)

Some scholars have acknowledged the hybrid nature of representative institutions in Africa and described them as ones that "oscillate between tradition and modernity" (Salih, 2005b, p. 4). This oscillation has had a unique manifestation in Ethiopia differentiating between African indigenous representative assemblies and the parliament. African Indigenous institutions, such as the Geda system or Bayto of the Kunama should not be subjected to the Montesquieu's tri politica. Meanwhile, the latter, although clearly a representative institution modeled after liberal democracies established through elections and drawing its power from written constitutions, there are still cases where these 'modern' institutions draw legitimacy from 'tradition' in Africa. There is evidence that at sub-national levels, especially at the *woreda* (district) and *kebele*, elected councils tend to draw their authorities from the regional constitutions; as well as the fact that MPs at this level are elected mainly due to their status as an elder or traditional leader (Mercy, 2021). When the national parliament was first established in 1931 and 1955, in some way similar to the current situation, as insights from this book show, the Ethiopian parliament drew its legitimacy mainly from tradition. An example in this case is the speech of the Minister of Finance on the appointment of the members of chambers in 1931:

> At the time, we did not want a person who could work well in the parliament and legislate good and modern laws. We wanted people to accept those laws which were to be legislated, and these laws could only get acceptance

if they were discussed by the nobility and accepted by them first. Thus, we had brought important personalities who had considerable influence in the provinces and had them appointed in both houses according to their power of influence and importance in the public eye. Thus, we used them as instruments for the achievement of our plans and goals.

(Statement by Fitawrari Teklehawariat in an
interview with Ato Mengesha Gessesse of Haile
Selassie I university in January 1963)

Many scholars agree that "change has been less abrupt in Ethiopia, and less shattering of traditional values and institutions" (Markakis and Asmelash, 1967, p. 197). Two reasons are cited for this: one is the involvement of the political leaders in the introduction of democratic institutions; i.e., the political group that the introduction of parliament should have restrained was active in the inauguration of the institution (although for less democratic reasons). The second reason is that Ethiopia was not colonised like other African countries and that its formation was affected by colonialism from the outside-in, instead of from within, like colonised nations (Markakis and Asmelash, 1967). Subsequent governments in Ethiopia have gone through different stages of evolution and have put in place various regulations (see Chapters 3 and 4) that have somehow continuously negotiated with the MPs' traditional roots. This indicates an important challenge that will be dealt with at length in the following pages, that is, the negotiated meaning of seemingly ordinary words.

Three key factors – territory, population and political parties – are ideal for displaying dynamic conditions. From 1931 to May 1936, Ethiopian territory excluded Eritrea; in 1955 with the dissolution of the federation, Eritrea was represented in the Ethiopian parliament; this ended with the referendum in 1993. In different election years in Ethiopia, there were cases where representatives from the Somali

Table 1.1 Ethiopia's population projection, author's construction based on UN, 2003; CSA, 1984; CSA, 1994; CSA, 2007 (★CSA data)

Population (thousand)	Year
< 20,000	1931
20,397	1955
22,723	1960
25,602	1965
37,747	1984★
41,473	1985
53,670	1994★
57,349	1995
65,590	2000
73,750	2007★
83,530	2010
93,845	2015
104,797	2020

region, western Oromia, and Benishangul Gumuz were missing from the parliament due to the inability to hold elections because of security concerns or ongoing conflicts. Another profound issue is population dynamics. Population estimates presented ahead show that the size of the represented population increased dramatically. The following table shows this increase in Ethiopia since the establishment of the first parliament. Currently, the HPR, as per the 1994 constitution, has 547 seats, of which 20 seats are reserved for minorities.

The representation of the population at the House of Federation, unlike the HPR, is through language groups – nations, nationalities and peoples, according to the FDRE constitution. Thus, it serves as the council where "all" nationalities and cultural groups are represented. Currently, 76 nations, nationalities and people are officially recognised. This number has been reached through a lengthy process of submission of petitions and gradual recognition. Several requests for recognition have petitions still awaiting decisions either at the region or federal parliament; examples include the Dobe in the Somali region, the Qimant in Amhara region, and the Kontoma in the Southern Nations', Nationalities' and Peoples' Region (SNNPR).

Another important dynamic is that of political parties. The largest competitive coalitions in Ethiopia such as the EPRDF and Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) were collectives of political parties whose members only appealed to certain nationalities and cultural groups in the country. These coalitions are another dynamic factor in Ethiopian politics that demonstrate frequent mergers and splits (Asnake, 2011). This is true not only for the opposition political coalitions like CUD whose expiry was normally a little over the election date; the more 'stable' looking EPRDF was the same. The EPRDF has gone through different splits in the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Oromo People Democratic Organization (OPDO) over the years, which finally led to its demise by the isolation of the TPLF by the other members of the coalition in 2019. Currently, the remaining members have been going through serious structural and political shifts since 2016. This was evident through shifts in leadership, replacing old guards with newer faces (more so in some parties than others), and making, what seemed like abrupt revisions of their names. For example, the OPDO was named the Oromo Democratic Party and the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) was named the Amhara Democratic Party in 2018. The purpose of this could range from the desire to distance themselves from the history of their formation to a desire to offer 'newer' alternatives to their constituencies. Finally, on 01 December 2019, the political parties that had gone through substantive and structural turbulence formed a political party known as the Prosperity Party, which has emerged as a united party, breaking the cycle of coalitions.

Besides these contextual local dynamics, the earlier discussion on legitimacy is a peephole that shows how the application of 'universal' concepts like participation and representation can be complex. A review of the academic literature on representation reveals various facades and typologies of representation including promissory representation, anticipatory representation, gyroscopic representation, surrogate representation, formalistic representation, descriptive representation,

symbolic representation and substantive representation, to name a few (Mansbridge, 2003). Pitkin's (1967) concept of representation is a major contribution in the study of representation, discussing formalistic, descriptive, symbolic and substantive representation. Formalistic Representation according to Pitkin is when "A representative is someone who has been authorized to act. . . . To the extent that he has been authorized, within the limits of his authority" (Pitkin, 1967, pp. 38–39). The formal institutional arrangements of the parliament and other similar constitutional/legal frames of representation allow for formal representation to take place. In modern democracies, the path one follows to assume governmental power is equal to the legitimacy of the government that is formed. This principle carries with it the trust and sovereignty of the people. If power emanates from public will and if a government assumes power based on this will, then the power assumed is an expression of the people, and it can be called public representation. The representative is placed in a position created by institutions and is able to act on behalf of those he represents through formal processes such as an election. Thus, important indicators of such formal representation include instruments of legitimacy such as elections, as well as the existence of independent electoral arrangements and enforcement mechanisms.

Descriptive representation can be summarised as a method of "substitution" (Lemi, 2022). Such representation is best defined by Adams (1776, cited in Pitkin, 1967): a representative body "should be an exact portrait, in miniature, of the people at large, as it should think, feel, reason and act like them." Pitkin describes this as "a representative body is distinguished by an accurate correspondence or resemblance to what it represents, by reflecting without distortion" (Pitkin, 1967, p. 60). Thus, the indicator of such representation would be resemblance – the degree to which a representative resembles the represented, ideological and substantive compatibility and accuracy. Similar to descriptive representation, symbolic representation is an act of substituting the other. However, it is distinct from mere description, as symbolic representation "constructs a constituency and what it stands for, that is its social identity" (Lombardo and Meier, 2019, p. 235). Meaning and acceptance are key to symbolic representation; the representative's presence "standing for" the represented should be meaningful to the represented and the represented should accept the representative as someone that would denote their existence even when they are not in fact present.

Substantive representation sees beyond the "standing for" and is centred on the "acting for" (Pitkin, 1967, p. 110). In this sense, "representation is a certain characteristic activity, defined by certain behavioral norm or certain things a representative is expected to do" (Pitkin, 1967, p. 110). Pitkin (1967) explains that substantive representation is different from formalistic representation because it focuses on the act itself going beyond the initiation and termination of the representative's status in the formal arrangement. Substantive representation entails action and policy outcomes. Instead of viewing representation as the mandate where all the institution's authority is derived from, codes of conduct and manuals in the HPR define representation narrowly as 'constituency work.' With this focus the HPR has a secretariat that has the responsibility of "facilitating the conditions for members to meet with the

electorate in their respective constituencies" (FDRE members of Rules of Procedure and Members' Code of Conduct, 2016).

Representation is one of the three basic functions of parliaments in modern democracies. Bosley (2007) defines parliament as the institution in which citizens participate in the governance of their country through their elected representatives; he also argues that parliaments, through representation functions, provide the live link between citizens and central government. Various topics are tabled for debate, ranging from local constituency developmental challenges to the country's participation and accession to international protocols and conventions. Inevitably, consultation with the citizenry is an important part of representation during the tenure of the MPs to resolve unforeseen circumstances. The world is striving to employ as well as understand the role Internet technology could play to bridge citizens and government branches, such as the executive and the legislative. Such efforts to enhance sustained public contribution in decision-making call for the scrutiny of the concept of participation. The following section will delve into the complexities relating with the concept of participation; indicating how concepts travel and evolve.

1.3 Towards a Contextual Understanding of Participation in Ethiopia

As mentioned previously, the characters of the state will reflect highly on the character of the parliament. Representation during Emperor Haile Selassie, instead of being a gateway to participation, was mainly the decentralisation of the emperor's power to lower echelons of governance; whatever the nobility in parliament approved, so did local governors and the people (Markakis and Asmelash, 1967). It is legitimacy emanating not from the people but flowing from the top down. However, in practice, it was more complex than initially imagined by the emperor due to the complex relations between various members of the nobility (see Chapter 3). Participation during the Derg was dogmatic; initially, only the military participated through its representatives in the committee (the Derg); later, with the establishment of the Shengo, an elected representation came into effect. However, the participation of political parties was more vibrant in the pre-Shengo period than it was after its establishment (see Chapter 3). This was specifically linked with the competing ideologies of the socialist and liberal camps internationally. After the establishment of the Shengo, participation was through the Workers' Party only. Participation after 1995 was linked with the concept of 'good governance' and the EPRDF's desire to check all the good governance boxes (see Chapter 4).

After 1991, participation was always discussed as part of the popular discourse of 'good governance.' The EPRDF appropriated 'good governance' as a policy metaphor to legitimise its politics by showcasing successful 'outputs' and 'justifying' its actions that do not give due regards to the process side of good governance, i.e., political participation (Doornbos, 2006, p. 73). As a result, political participation mostly took place through state-controlled elections (see Chapters 2 and 3) and sometimes though different forms of (violent) protests (see Chapter 7). However,

this did not preclude the existence of indigenous forms of local participation that indirectly influence politics, which is not the direct focus of this book.

Participation, representation and human rights are distinct from the other values of democratic governance in that they are input dimensions of good governance, whereas features such as rule of law, effectiveness and efficiency are output dimensions (Börzel et al., 2008). The former are democratically oriented and the latter, if they ignore input values, could be narrow authoritarian principles solely focusing on "effectiveness of policy outcomes" (Schmidt, 2013, p. 10). Democratic governance focus on the process through which policy responds to "citizens' concerns as a result of participation by the people" (Schmidt, 2013, p. 10).

The World Bank, the institution that popularised the term good governance, initially adopted a rather narrow understanding of governance that focused on output dimensions (Börzel and Hackenesch, 2013). Within this understanding of good governance accountability, transparency, rule of law and efficiency become the key features (Börzel et al., 2008). Several studies report that some presumably democratic countries with high input values might not necessarily enjoy effective and efficient public service, or the converse, that output-oriented good governance that ensures effective and efficient public service does not imply a consolidated democratic government (Zaidi, 2009). For example, China's discourse of good governance inclining towards outputs gives little focus to democratic values such as participation (He and Warren, 2011). However, in consolidated democracies, good governance has key features of human rights, participation and democracy consistent with the concept of input legitimacy, which means that "political decisions correspond to the preferences of affected people. Good governance must ensure that the preferences of the people are translated into political decisions" (Börzel et al., 2008, p. 7).

In Ethiopia, the term has been popular in the political taxonomy of the government since 2001 (Bach, 2011). After subscription to "developmental state policies" resulted in several African countries, including Ethiopia, openly criticising "liberal economic impositions"; this was followed by a period of donor leniency towards aid conditions only seeing "good enough governance" (Fritz and Menocal, 2007, p. 538). Although the normative standards of good governance, human rights and democracy were never met, the EPRDF continued to emphasise the need for good governance and even attributed reshuffles in the political party to creating "favourable conditions for development and good governance" (Bach, 2011, p. 650); while actually the internal political reshuffles were meant to crush internal party rivalries (Assefa, 2021). The country grew increasingly closer to Far Eastern countries known for outstanding economic achievements (and their 'developmental state' policies) and mediocre human rights and democratic accomplishments (Hagmann and Abbink, 2011).

The political discourse on good governance and its features especially intensified during the waves of protests from November 2015 to April 2018. Before the resignation by Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn, among the attempts to address the protesters' demands was the 'Good Governance Movement' by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and Ethiopian Institution of the Ombudsman, launched few months after the protest broke out in Oromia (Fana Broadcasting

Network, 2015). The politics of ambiguity and the narrow framing of problems and solutions that systematically circumvent meaningful participation and representation are key to the nature of communication the government had with the public. Statements such as "the only way we can achieve that [sustainable change] is through broad-based democratic processes and good governance that addresses the issue of delivery of services for the people" (Addis Fortune, 2015). The statement here defines all governance problems as 'good governance' problems and believes that by achieving it, positive change can be sustained in the country; that is, the effectiveness of delivery of services (another narrow goal that views participation as a means to an end). There was a tendency by the government to mesh participation along with other values of good governance like transparency, rule of law, effectiveness, efficiency and accountability, without clear regard to the value of participation independent of the effectiveness of a certain policy.

Many of the protesters had clear democratic and human rights demands related with land, administrative boundaries, justice and the release of political prisoners. However, instead of allowing participation or allowing the parliament to play a pivotal role in making policy reforms responding to citizens' demands, the widespread usage of the term good governance in official circles was narrowed down to increased administrative capabilities. Furthermore, subsequent 'state of emergencies' declared by the executive branch and endorsed by the HPR, were ironically crippling the HPR and its members. For example, when addressing the issue of land and administrative boundaries, a Modern Land Management System, a mere technical procedure was proposed as a solution instead of addressing the real grievances of citizens towards the Addis Ababa Master Plan (Ethiopian News Agency, 21 April 2016). The Master Plan was a contentious proposal that aimed to demarcate adjacent spaces of the Oromia region within the jurisdiction of the Addis Ababa city administration. The government was not open to policy changes that responded to "citizens' concerns as a result of participation by the people" (Schmidt, 2013, p. 10). There were no efforts to enhance participation through the engagement of Civil Society Organizations; instead, they were alienated from decision-making through the restrictive Charities and Societies proclamation (2009) (FDRE Proclamation No. 621/2009).

Protests were an expression of inefficient representative institutions and participation mechanisms; typically, the Ethiopian parliament, though physically in place, has been silent in the political realm, neither opposing nor initiating policy changes on behalf of their constituencies (Merera, 2011). Even prior to the countrywide protests that began in 2015, protests were at the core of political resistance in Ethiopia. University students, particularly students of Haile Selassie I University (later renamed Addis Ababa University), held protests against the Imperial regime (1967–1974) and demonstrated against the socialist regime (Balsvik, 1998). Notable protests post 1991 are the resistance towards the Eritrean independence referendum (1993), Addis Ababa University student protests demanding academic freedom and the removal of armed police from campus (2001), Oromo student protests in Addis Ababa University and several high schools in the region (2002), and election protests (2005) (Arriola, 2013; Abbink, 2006). Ethiopian youth, particularly secondary school and

higher education students, have been primary actors in popular protests in the last decades. This draws attention to the necessity of the prioritisation of the participation of youth in decision-making to widen the political sphere and ensure political stability. Globally and nationally, important platforms of participation for youth in the contemporary era are Internet-based e-democracy and social media platforms. The history of political protests by youth justifies the methodology adopted for the piloting of an e-democracy platform developed for the HPR through the participation of Addis Ababa University students discussed in Chapter 5.

1.4 A Multilayered View of the Parliament in Africa

In its European form, parliamentary democracy is a system where the legislative, judiciary and executive powers, once concentrated in the hands of a monarch, are replaced with the doctrine of "trias politica" (Maddicott, 2015; Lindseth, 2003). Currently, the constitution of the FDRE clearly divides power among the parliament, the executive and the judiciary branches in Articles 55, 77 and 79, adhering to the conventional definition of parliamentary democracy (FDRE Constitution, 1994). If the exercise of power and the functions, as well as the symbolic significance of the institutions, constitute the above picture, then the relations between the people, their MPs and the executive branch, could be described as a linear model. People hold their MPs accountable, and MPs hold the executive accountable through mechanisms of oversight.

   In Africa, the parliament has, among other things, been used to justify the concentration of powers in the hands of monarchs and autocrats. This view conceals a lot more than it tells. In developing democracies, it is likely that the mechanisms of participation, accountability and transparency that define the input side of democratic governance are 'underdeveloped.' Instead, other factors come in to play defining the relations between the electorate, the elected and the executive body. For example, traditional forms of legitimacy, perceptions of gender and the role of education in defining societal values and capabilities are critical factors pushing the boundaries of what seems like a linear formula into a multilinear/multilayered function. Elements of hierarchical command instead of participation might be at play, while effectiveness and efficiency might be other factors offered by the executive branch, but also demands from the public as well as the parliament.
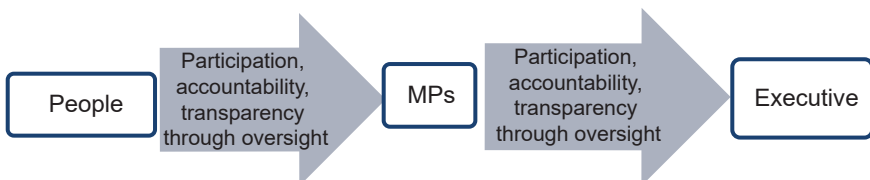
Figure 1.1 A linear representation of the relations and accountability chains between the people, MPs and the executive branch, author's construction

To capture such complexity, this book adopts a mixed method that captures various viewpoints of the parliament from different angles, mainly, from above (the executive branch), from below (the public) and a self-view. While most African parliaments have clearly been introduced as colonial institutions, such an approach brings to light often hidden features of politics, state and society in specific areas of study. The view from 'above' captures the perspective of the executives; the term 'above' indicates the executive branch's 'overdeveloped' nature because it precedes the establishment of the legislative branch and is more powerful (Opalo, 2019, p. 4). Many of the conditions that ensure a strong legislative branch, such as "the power of the purse" – where the "executive becomes accountable to legislature due to the former's dependence on the latter for material resources" – are missing in many African legislatures (Opalo, 2019, p. 4). To understand any parliament, particularly the Ethiopian parliament, it is necessary to understand the legitimising role of election rituals, how resources are accessed by MPs, and what mechanisms of control they have over the executive, as well as explore what the reversed hierarchy (executive over the legislative) mean for functions of the parliament.

A view from 'below' is one coming from the public. In the ideal of liberal democracy, the public is at the top of the chain of hierarchy, exerting its control over the executive branch indirectly and directly electing the parliament. While these mechanisms are in place, other forms of hierarchy have created a reversed impression, where the public, as in the 'pyramid of numbers' are at the bottom and the few are at the top. From this position, the public has developed its own perspectives and mechanisms of interaction with MPs. It is important to understand these contextualised responses. The book captures these views from the public, with the understanding that the public is not a homogenous group. Like the public, MPs are also
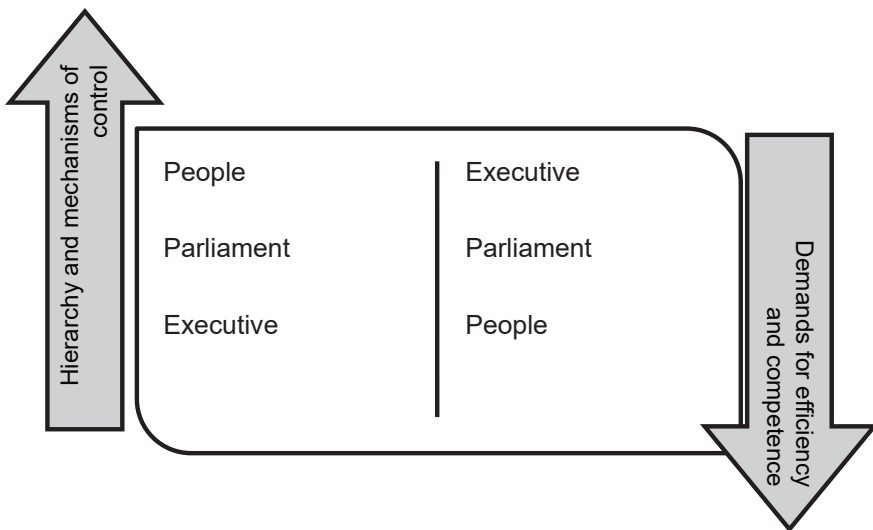
Figure 1.2 Reversed chains of hierarchy and demands for efficiency, author's construction

not a homogenous group. Some are more powerful (or weak) than others depending on their relative positions in their political party. Finally, the book captures the self-reflections of MPs. MPs are the direct recipients of the public's frustration with those in power; their constituency visit routines position them to heed these frustrations. MPs have the choice of acting in compliance with the 'system' or creating mechanisms to pressure the executive branch to deliver on their election promises; however, the one thing MPs do not have is the means to act.

1.5 Methods and Materials

The research employed a mixed-research method to understand the Ethiopian parliament. The book is a result of extensive work that incorporates an analysis of ethnographic data, structured interviews, focus group discussions, online and household quantitative surveys and an analysis of online public engagement that was part of a research project called BRIDGE. BRIDGE took place in two phases from February 2019 to November 2019, and the second phase, from May 2021 to July 2021. The collection of household survey data was initiated in April 2019 and the data collection began in May 2019. While the researcher went through an intensive period of interviewing parliament staff and civil society organizations between April 2019 and July 2019, these interviews have been complemented by follow-up interviews and new interviews, especially with former parliamentarians and HPR employees from September 2019 to November 2022. The historical sections of this book are mainly a result of extensive literature and archival work that has taken place from June 2022 to November 2022.

Interviews and focus group discussions were used as the main methods of data collection to understand the post-1995 Ethiopian parliament. These were complemented with a review of legal documents and a literature review. The qualitative research methodology involves looking in depth at non-numerical data (Mishra and Alok, 2017). As widely agreed, qualitative methods have the potential to generate rich descriptions about the participants in our study; this is why it tends to focus on the "why" question (Creswell, 2013). This methodology, as an explanatory design research, allowed the researcher to explore the phenomenon of representation in depth. It provided the necessary tools and philosophical underpinnings to explore how social actors play a role in enhancing or discouraging the culture of representative democracy in Ethiopia. Qualitative methods were also instrumental in reviewing published sources.

The interview guide has enabled the researcher to understand the attitudes, opinions and experiences of consenting participants. The method was very effective in assessing the interviewees' motivation, feelings and values behind their understanding of representation in Ethiopia. All interviews were conducted in local languages. The interviews targeted HPR members, democratic institutions, Civil Society Organization (CSO) representatives, HPR secretariat, local government officials in selected zones, political parties and traditional leaders. A total of 115 individuals have been interviewed from these categories. The interview questions were tailored differently for each group of respondents. Questions regarding the House's and the Secretariat's

roles were mainly forwarded to Members of Parliament and the Secretariat. Questions regarding factors related to oversight of the executive branch affecting the representative role of the institution were directed towards different groups but especially targeted towards CSOs and members of the executive branch. Questions on representation and social cohesion, infrastructure and social and economic factors were, on the other hand, directed to all actors but mainly community leaders. In using a mixed-methods approach, this research combined qualitative data with quantitative data collected both online and through household surveys. The following discussion is on BRIDGE, the online platform mentioned previously, followed by an extensive discussion on the qualitative data from key informant interviews.

The interviews and the household survey took place during the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, something that was strange to navigate as a researcher. The project put in place several ethical and moral standards to adhere to in doing research in sensitive situations. To safeguard the researcher and her team of data collectors from the pandemic, the research avoided long-distance travel. This meant hiring enumerators and research assistants in each of the regions covered in the quantitative study. Furthermore, household surveys were conducted in kebeles and woredas that did not have confirmed cases of the virus. In places of confirmed community transmission, such as Addis Ababa, the survey was conducted online. A method of data collection that would bring the data collectors or participants in touch with more than one person, such as a focus groups discussion, was deliberately avoided. All focus group discussions cited in this book are those conducted before the pandemic. Different protocols were prepared to address these concerns and other standard ethical issues, such as consent and anonymity.

Furthermore, important ethical and moral steps the research project considered included the following: (1) All regional coordinators and enumerators were briefed on hygienic and physical distancing standards they should follow; this was done by a trained health professional in Dabat, Ambo, Mizan Aman and Asayita; (2) Everyone involved in the data collection procedure was obliged to follow safety steps outlined in guidance notes prepared for project staff; and (3) All regional coordinators and enumerators were provided with facemasks and sanitizers. Moreover, as part of their social obligation, enumerators used their interaction to distribute facemasks, sanitizers and soap to interviewees and houses visited during household surveys. A total of 5,306 facemasks, 5,494 soap and 271 pocket sanitizers were distributed throughout the course of the household survey.

1.5.1 Building Bridge: An E-democracy Platform

The author initiated the development of an e-democracy platform, a mobile application, through a project "Bridging Research and Innovation for Democratic Governance and Enhanced Participation." It is a project supported by the programme called "Global Research Network on Parliaments and People's – Deepening Democracy in Extremely Politically Fragile Countries" (AH/R005435/1), coordinated by SOAS and supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Global Challenges Research Fund. The processes of piloting the concept on a

website, negotiating access to the HPR, the development of the mobile application, challenges faced in between, and the launch as well as the politics behind its status are used as input for this research. At its piloting stage, it brought together 11 MPs (7 women and 4 men) and 62 students (10 women and 52 men) on an interactive platform, documenting discussions and potential impact during scale-up.

1.5.2 Quantitative Survey

The household survey consisted of constituency paper-based surveys in three regions. Several electoral districts were covered through household surveys engaged in Oromia regional state (West Shoa zone), Amhara regional state (North Gondar zone, and Bahir Dar) and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' (SNNPR) Regional states (Benč-Sheko and West Omo zones). The constituency survey was conducted in 14 electoral districts in the three regions, as shown in Table 1.2. The major challenge in the sampling process was the lack of up-to-date census data disaggregated by region, zone, woreda, kebele and neighborhoods. A second quantitative questionnaire targeted MPs, as the most recent survey was from 2007. The survey targeted all MPs; completed and semi-completed questionnaires were returned from 159 MPs.

Table 1.2 MP survey respondents

HPR MPs surveys

		Region					
		Tigray	*Amhara*	*Oromia*	*SNNPR*	*Not disclosed*	*Total*
Gender	Men	8	23	16	26	5	78
	Women	3	19	31	25	1	78
	Not disclosed	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total		11	42	47	51	7	159

Table 1.3 Woreda selected for household survey

No.	*Region*	*Zone/Sub-city*	*Woredas*
1	Amhara	North Gondar Zone (2 electoral districts)	Debark town Dabat woreda
		Bahir Dar (2 electoral districts)	Bahir Dar city
2	SNNP	Benč-Sheko Zone (2 electoral districts)	Mizan Aman (town) Semien Benč woreda
		West Omo (2 electoral districts)	Jemu Town
3	Oromia	West Shoa Zone (4 electoral districts)	Ambo town Toke Kutaye woreda Dendi woreda Egersa Leffo woreda

Table 1.4 Household survey respondents, author's construction

Household survey respondents

		Region			
		Oromia	*Amhara*	*SNNPR*	
Gender	Men	693	623	445	1761
	Women	494	385	194	1073
	Not Disclosed	41	25	17	83
Total		1228	1033	656	2917

An online survey targeted residents of Addis Ababa who represent 24 electoral districts. The questions were hosted on the free collaborative platform Google Forms.[2] The survey was circulated widely through social media, mainly on Facebook through a paid promotion by the researcher. It is therefore clear that the demographic targeted through the online survey was already profiled since it mainly targeted educated respondents with Internet literacy and political interest. However, the household survey was more inclusive, as it covered three different regions with ethnic, cultural, historical and livelihood diversity; and targeted diverse age, religious and gender groups through the probability sampling of households in the woreda.

The study considered the crosscutting issue of gender dynamics. The different roles and responsibilities of men and women mean that they can be impacted differently through political and socioeconomic developments. Documenting and communicating these gendered impacts helped ensure that impacts on women, which are often ignored, are considered during analysis and subsequently by policymakers, allowing for policies tailored to women's needs. Throughout the analysis, qualitative data was used to establish relationships between variables and probe main claims and causal mechanisms. Quantitative data, analyzed using IBM SPSS, is used to confirm probabilities and test how generalisable they are.

Case Study I: Benč–Sheko and West Omo Zones, SNNPR

In April 2019, the West Omo and Benč–Sheko zones were formed under the newly inaugurated South–West Peoples' region. Prior to this, the Benč–Sheko Zone and West Omo zones were part of the former Benč–Maji Zone, located in SNNPRS. According to the Central Statistical Agency (CSA), SNNPR was a region with 56 Ethiopian nation, nationalities and peoples, this is more than 50% of the identity groups in Ethiopia (CSA, 2007). Its diverse and multicultural nature has earned it the title "The Museum of Nationalities." With regard to population, the same statistics show that the region hosts 15,042,531 people, as both urban and rural dwellers (CSA, 2007). In terms of political history, the entire post-1991 SNNPR is administrated by one of the EPRDF coalition parties named the Southern Peoples Democratic Front (SPDF), with many 'ethnic parties' until 2003, when it became the Southern Peoples Democratic Movement (SPDM). This was with the exception of the Hadiya National Democratic Organisation (HNDO), which managed to win

a majority of the votes in the Hadiya zone. The SNNPRS is located in the South and Southwest parts of Ethiopia and shares boundaries with the Oromia Regional State in the North East, the Gambella Regional State in the North West, and with the Republic of South Sudan and Kenya in the South West and South, respectively. The Region has an area of 110,931.90 square kilometers, which comprises 10% of the total area of the country.

In 1995, the SNNPRS created the Benč-Maji zone by merging the Maji Zone with Benč Zone. The zones comprises of seven large ethnic groups: Benč, Sheko, Dizi, Me'enit, Suri, Kafficho and Amhara. Economically, the zone is known for its rich agricultural produce, the practice of pastoralism and mining. It is well known for its natural resources; it yields up to 1,000 kg of gold annually to the national bank from Bero Woreda alone (Benč-Maji Zone Council, 2018). It has a vast fertile land, with coffee and sesame spice plantations. Maji national park and Omo Kuraz sugar plantation III are also found in the vicinity.

The EPRDF, Blue Party, United South Party, Forum for Democratic Dialogue in Ethiopia, MEDHIN, and Benč movement participated in the 2010 and 2015 federal elections; EPRDF won all the seats in the zone (Horne, 2015). Currently, the Benč Sheko Zone Prosperity Party (formerly the Southern Peoples Democratic Movement (SPDM) and Ethiopia Citizens for Social Justice (ECSJ) have active offices in Benč-Sheko zone, while only the Prosperity Party is actively engaged in West Omo Zone. Benč-Sheko zone is mainly constituted of the Benč ('Benč Ats') and the Sheko (Sókú). The Benč are among the Indigenous inhabitants of the extreme southwest of Ethiopia and have secured two HPR seats in the 2007 fifth general election.[3] The Sheko are also known as the Sókú Noogù. The Sheko, like the Benč, are also Omotic speakers. After the newly established Zone, a new political ethnic tension emerged in some of the woredas leading to loss of life and property. The demand for zonal and special woreda status by the identity groups has created ongoing tensions. The Benč, the Sheko and Kafficho are all agrarian societies.

West Omo and the surrounding adjacent areas of South Omo are predominantly pastoralist. The current residents of West Omo zone claimed security, resource, infrastructural and other challenges when administered under Benč-Maji Zone. The harmful practice of cattle rustling, environmental degradation, land and gold rush, sociocultural factors and armed banditry have resulted in protracted pastoral conflicts (Abbink and Aijmer, 2020). Lack of resources such as educational opportunities and discontent over the provision of services and infrastructure were among the reasons for an autonomous administration.

The West Omo Zone, established in April 2019, borders South Sudan in the south, South Omo in the west, the Gambella regional state and Benč Skeko zone in the east, and Kaffa and partially Benč Skeko zone in the north. The Zone comprises seven woredas and contains more than a half million people.[4] The Dizi, the Me'en and the Suri are the major habitants of the newly formed West Omo Zone. The Me'en have a population of 161,587, living around the area around the lower Omo and Sherma-Dancha River. The Dizi, also been known as Maji, linguistically, belong to Omotic language group (Deguchi, 1996). In terms of population number, the data from CSA (2007) shows the Dizi ethnic groups to be 34,289, both

within urban and rural settings. Unlike the Suri and the Me'en, the Dizi are sedentary agriculturalists. The Suri, also known as Surma, a term used to refer to their administrative woreda, have a population size of 25,661 as per the 2007 census of the CSA. In terms of representation within HPR, both the Dizi and the Suri are each represented by one MP. The Suri people are one of the minority ethnic groups that under Ethiopian federal electoral law have automatic representation within Ethiopian HPR, even if they do not form a unit large enough for an electoral constituency (Abbink, 2009).

Case Study II: North Gondar and Bahir Dar, Amhara Region

North Gondar Zone is one of the 12 Administrative zones in the Amhara National Regional State. The zone is among the newly formed zones previously administered as part of North Gondar Zone. North Gondar zone was restructured as three separate zonal administrations, North Gondar, Central Gondar and West Gondar Zone.[5] The new administrative arrangement was necessary to tackle challenges related with accessibility, cost and service delivery. The old North Gondar zone was one of the largest zonal administrations in Ethiopia in terms of territorial jurisdiction. The large size of the zone coupled with the limited infrastructure had created serious difficulties for the people to access essential services. The zonal capital, Gondar City, was not easily accessible to the people living in the remote woredas such as Beyeda, Janamora and Quara, Alefa. It was also too costly to deliver services due to the distance.

The decision to form three zones replacing the old North Gondar was met with significant resistance mainly from the politically active urban dwellers. On the other hand, the majority of the rural population supported the decision as they hoped it could bring the zonal capital closer and solve the problem of access. Currently, North Gondar zone has Debark town as its capital. The zone is structured in 2 City administrations, Debark and Dabat; 6 rural woredas, Debark, Dabat, AdiArkay, Telemt, Beyeda, and Janamora; and Beyeda; and 176 kebeles. The household survey was conducted in Debark and Dabat woreda. According to the 2007 Housing and population census report of the Central Statistics Agency of Ethiopia, Debark woreda has a total population of 159,193 (CSA, 2007). In terms of infrastructure, there is one main asphalt road that traverses from Gondar city to Debark. The road that is supposed to connect Debark town with Janamora and Beyeda woredas have been under construction for nearly a decade. Electric power and clean water are limited to Debark town and its three urban kebeles (with severe power blackouts and shortage of water). The rural kebeles, along with the other rural woredas of North Gondar Zone, have no such access. Currently, the town has a primary hospital and is host to Debark University.

According to the report published by the CSA in 2007, Dabat district has an estimated total population of 145,458 living in 27 rural and 3 urban Kebeles (sub-districts). Economically, much of the population is dependent on subsistence agriculture. As is the case in many of the North Gondar woredas, the regional government had classified Dabat as one of its 47 drought-prone and food-insecure

woredas (Getu and Alemayehu, 2009). Dabat, also the former capital of the Wolkait Tegede woreda, is one of the most productive areas in the country where important cash crops are harvested in a vast, largely uninhabitable, land (Kindie, 2007). As the capital of this woreda, Dabat was one of the gateways to Ethiopia through Humera that borders Sudan and Eritrean ports. As stated earlier, currently the woreda is among the poor and drought-prone areas in the Amhara region. The territorial claims related with Wolkait and Tegede remains one of the issues of contentious politics in the area. Dabat was among the hotbeds of the Amhara protests in 2016.

Bahir Dar city is the capital of Amhara national regional state, an urban area that has been taking shape since 1930 (Mekonnen, 2012). The city was legislatively structured as the capital based on statute No. 17/2004 issued by the council of the regional government. Currently, the city is arranged into nine sub-cities, nine rural kebeles, and three satellite towns: Mashenti, Zegie and Zenzelema. The city has a head municipality and city council with a separate structure of political and municipal functions (Tassie, 2018). The city is governed by a city council as a legislative body and one "leading municipality" led by a mayor, as an executive body. Since 1996, Bahir Bar city has been one of the three metropolitan cities in Amhara National Regional State. As such, it is endowed with some powers of self-administration such as powers to collect taxes, to approve urban plans and administer urban land (Tassie, 2018).

Case Study III: West Shoa Zone, Oromia

West Shoa Zone is one among the 20 zones of Oromia regional state. It borders the Oromia special zone surrounding Addis Ababa, inaugurated as Shagar city in 2023, and borders some of the most unstable zones in the Oromia region in the west and north, East Wollega and Horo Gudru, respectively. The zone has an estimated population of 2,701,287, where a majority of about 86.63% of the population are rural dwellers (West Shoa Zone Administration, 2011). Agriculture is the economic foundation of the community, and the area is known for cereal harvesting (West Shoa Zone Administration, 2011). The administration of the zone is structured in 22 woreda administrations, 1 zonal town, and 584 kebele administrations. Except for a few newly established ones, almost all woreda administrations of the zone have representatives at the HPR (at the national level) and Oromia council, "Cheffe Oromia" (at the regional level).

The household surveys took place in the Ambo, Toke Kutaye, Dendi and Egersa Leffo woredas in West Shoa zones. Ambo is the political and economic centre of the West Shoa zone of Oromia regional state. Ambo (also known as a spa town of the royal family) is among the few privileged towns to have a municipal administration since the early 1930s (UN Habitat, 2008). According to the CSA 2017 population projection, the town has a total of 77,735 people. Guder is the political and economic centre of Toke Kutaye woreda. According to the CSA (2013) population projection report for the period between 2014–2017, Guder has an estimated total population of 25,754. Ethnically, the Oromo constitute 83.79% of the town's population followed by Amhara (12.34%) and Affan Oromo is spoken predominately

by the majority of the community, followed by Amharic. The majority of about 86.96% of the inhabitants are Ethiopian Orthodox followers and the remaining practise Protestantism and other religions. Ginchi is the political and economic centre of the Dendi woreda of West Shoa zone. The town was founded in 1926. The town is structured in three urban kebele administrations, and the woreda (Dendi) consists of more than 25 rural kebele administrations. According to the CSA 2017 population projection report, it has an estimated population of 40,867 (CSA, 2017). *Orthodox* Christianity is predominately practised by the majority of the inhabitants.

Egersa Leffo is the youngest woreda administration of the West Shoa zone in an administrative establishment. Olonkomi is the political and economic centre of the Egersa Leffo woreda of West Shoa zone. Even though Olonkomi is one among the oldest towns of the zone, it became a woreda town in 2017. The woreda has an estimated population of 112,000 and the township of Olonkomi has an estimated population of 11,400 (CSA, 2017). Orthodox Christianity is predominately practised by the majority of the inhabitants and ethnic Oromos constitute the majority (94.3%). The ruling Oromia Prosperity Party (OPP) and opposition political parties such as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) are actively engaged in the zone. The zone was the epicenter of the Oromo protest that started in the country in November 2015. During the protests, brutal security responses by the government, mass arrests and Internet blockages particularly targeted the zone. The zone continues to be a crucial epicenter of contentious Oromo politics, recently fuelled by its proximity to the OLF Shene armed group in western Oromia.

Case Study IV: Addis Ababa

Addis Ababa is the largest municipality and the capital of Ethiopia. It became the capital city of the government in late 1886, during the time of Emperor Minilek II.[6] According to UN Habitat (2008), Addis Ababa has a population of more than 4 million, hosting 30% of the urban population of the country. The city hosted half the population it currently has just a decade ago; this number is expected to rise to 12 million in 2024 (UN Habitat, 2008). Some of the key characteristics of the city are its high rate of unemployment, poor housing and poor sanitary development. As per the FDRE Constitution (1994), Addis Ababa has a city administration accountable to the federal government; administratively, the city has 11 sub-cities and 116 woredas/districts.[7] The city hosts important continental institutions such as the African Union and UN Economic Commission for Africa. The city currently has 23 seats in the HPR and is led by the Prosperity Party.

1.6 Structure of the Book

The book is divided into four parts, the first forming a foundation for the whole book and the rest offering views of parliament from different perspectives: a historical and legal view, a view from below and an introspection of members of HPR. The first part of this book, constituted by the first chapter, sets firm analytical and

methodological foundations. It discusses concepts such as legitimacy, representation and participation in contextually grounded interpretations. The adoption of these terminologies without explanation would be misleading to the audience; with the aim of contesting such misinterpretation, the chapter presents a conceptual discussion that has emerged from a synthesis of the materials used in each chapter. The book also provides a concise discussion of why a book like this, on the Ethiopian parliament, has not been written until now. It refutes assumptions and half-truths that have placed discussions on African parliaments in an unescapable cage – bound by various normative frameworks. Although the chapter indicates how and why it is necessary to set the study of African parliaments free from such an approach, it does not advocate totally ignoring parliamentary legal frameworks. This is especially necessary because the parliaments under study have themselves chosen to be a part of these frameworks. Thus, the chapter provides a brief overview of international and continental protocols and conventions that subsequent Ethiopian governments have signed.

The second part of the chapter discusses the methods and materials used during the course of this study. This book is a product of ethnography, interviews, focus group discussions and household surveys in three regions, and an online survey designed for residents of Addis Ababa. Ethnography refers to the author's engagement in the HPR as a formal researcher and partly a collaborator in two research projects. One was commissioned by the Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy (NIMD) and the second is my collaboration with a tech company Golan Technologies, to develop a public App for the parliament through processes funded by the Global Research Network for Parliaments and People (GRNPP), Arts and Humanities Research Council and Global Challenges Research Fund AH/R005435/1. The first engagement lasted for seven months in 2019, in a process that allowed me not only to speak to current and former parliamentarians but also to interact with them in developing the research questions to ensure policy consumption. The findings were later presented on multiple platforms; the presentations received varied reactions – defensive, hostile, accepting and, sometimes, all at the same time. The second engagement lasted over two years, having started out as a website and later turned into an application. The researcher has worked with the Secretariat of the House closely in realising this Application, a process that is still facing challenges despite the completion of the Application. This was a way of "knowing from the inside," the very definition of participant-observation as well as ethnography (Ingold, 2013, p. 3).

The second part of the book is constituted by Chapters 2 and 3 presents a historical and legal view of the parliament. An extensive discussion on the history of parliament in Ethiopia is presented with a focus on the generation of constitutions that have caused their existence. In less than a hundred years, various communities bound by geography in Eastern Africa and pre-state interactions have become fellow citizens of the same country. In about 50 years, the monarchy was ousted, a socialist revolution has been brought about and a democratic republic has been established. The Ethiopian Parliament has gone from discussing the abolition of slavery in the 1940s to the fair distribution of financial resources among autonomous regions in

the 1990s. The parliament has had different features and functions in each of these periods, yet it has had continuities that have persisted in this short yet rich period in history. These chapters explore how constitutionally designed electoral and parliamentary systems were enacted by the participation of the people through the processes of voting and the processes of inauguration of a parliament and a government. Of course, what constitutions, elections, participation and parliament are have dramatically changed, when looking at the period from 1931 to 2018. Researches have equated election with a ritual that brings different actors together in practice and understanding and forms or renews the relationship between MPs and their constituencies (Spencer, 2007; Melnikova, 2013). Crewe (2021, p. 30) further elaborates by adding a third actor that is especially important for the discussion on the Ethiopian parliament, the political party; she describes the act of voting as "the rituals that create, renew or break the relationship between party, elected MPs and represented citizens." These chapters discuss subsequent parliaments under the Imperial regime, the military socialist government (known as the Derg), the Transitional Government and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF).

The third part of the book presents a view of the parliament from below (from the represented) in Chapter 4. Chapter 4 discusses constituency work by MPs; constituency visits are an important aspect of MPs' individual responsibilities. The chapter discusses how constituency work looks in various contexts in Ethiopia. This will include the finances, the logistics and the human resources that go into the preparation and execution of constituency visits; the objectives, the selection/identification of the target population and the format of discussion are major sections in the chapter. The chapter will also discuss an emerging mode of digital engagement. Specifically, it will draw from the piloting and adoption process of a national citizen participation Application named BRIDGE to understand the status of digital engagement and its impact on substantive representation. Furthermore, how such visits inform MPs' subsequent actions will be examined in detail; discussions on specific cases taking place especially since 2014, when violent protests and popular demands characterised Ethiopian politics are incorporated in the chapter.

Chapter 5 discusses the perceptions of the citizenry towards their representatives in the House of People's Representative (HPR); factors shaping these perceptions are thoroughly examined, as well as civil society engagement in various processes of the parliament, including legislative and oversight. The chapter discusses political, cultural and socioeconomic factors that affect the interaction between citizens and their MPs. Focusing on four locations – two of the most populous regions (Oromia and Amhara) and two zones in two different regions largely composed of numerically, geographically and economically peripheral communities (West Omo and Benč-Sheko Zone) – the chapter will analyse structural issues that affect the culture of representation.

The fourth part of the book, constituted by Chapters 6 and 7, focuses on the self-view of the parliament, adopting the philosophy that "people [including MPs] tend to be experts about their own lives" (Crewe, 2021, p. 196). MPs are forced into self-reflection by the constant demand from their constituencies, often pushing them towards a strong sense of self-reflection, where they justify past actions/

inactions through reason and law; at the same time voicing their feelings of frustration due to the many challenges their people face and the limited action that they and their financial capacities can accommodate. Chapter 6 presents the parliament as an oversight body focusing on both the institutions of the HPR and MPs as political party members, politicians, social animals and vulnerable individuals. The executive branch, which is usually composed of key political party leaders, sees MPs as key to decision-making, yet subordinate to them due to party command structures. At the federal level, the executive branch has the responsibility for leading and guiding the parliament and disciplining its members when necessary. While at the local level (especially during constituency visits), the local executive cadre has the responsibility for facilitating constituency work (somewhat acting like the local constituency office employee). Most importantly, the executive branch at the federal level has various tools at its disposal: control of local executives, distribution of limited executive positions, responses to constituency demands and the future career of the parliamentarian. The local executive, on the other hand, controls modalities of the constituency visits, and is sometimes able to sabotage these visits, controlling logistics, and the constituencies' access to information and the MP. The chapter also discusses tools and structures used by the parliament to undertake its oversight responsibilities. The interaction of the parliament with various executive bodies differs depending on the political affiliation, party membership, age and gender of the person at the receiving end of the parliament's scrutinising eyes. While parliament is mostly referred to as a toothless dog, it has informal and somewhat unusual methods of resistance to stand up to the executive branch and even challenge it at times.

In the concluding chapter, Chapter 9, MPs are placed in the circle of tension where their personal core values, socioeconomic status and identities support, counter or confuse their oversight responsibilities. Additionally, there is the strong (and constantly growing stronger, since 2014) vocalised needs of the constituency. In their circle of tension, MPs exist in a state of reflection, playing a game of manipulation, constantly tapping to the rhythms of bureaucratic demands and recurring committee meetings, general assemblies, structured speech and report formats. These are placed on them by the constitutions' provisions breathing them into existence, the executive branch's need to be legitimised by their routines and the people's demands to be embodied by their functions. The chapter also attempts to flag discussions that are most interesting and could be part of future research agendas for academics. Lastly, the same is done for policymakers. Although this book is not mainly written for a policy audience, insights that can clearly help achieve representational roles have surfaced during analysis.

Notes

1 The Derg is the Amharic word for committee, referring to the military committee that was established in 1974. It took power from the Monarchy, abolishing it and leading the country until 1991.
2 https://forms.gle/S334ppzseWc9tHj17
3 Tesfaye Mamo, NEBE; Tesfaye Gagiyab, 'Benč-Sheko Zone Communication affairs head, Interview

4 Me'enit Goldia, Me'enit Shaha, Maji, Bero, Surma, Gajet and Gore Gesha.
5 Amhara National Regional State (2020). Home. www.amhara.gov.et/home
6 www.addisababa.gov.et/ar/web/guest/about-addis-ababa
7 www.addisababa.gov.et/ar/web/guest/sub-cities

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2 Representation and Participation by Will of the Sovereign

The Imperial Parliament in Ethiopia (1931 to 1974)

This chapter discusses the parliament during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie, the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. Emperor Haile Selassie established the first parliament in Ethiopia. It was effected through the 1931 constitution that legitimised the traditional monarchy as well as established a bicameral parliament. The chapter discusses the motivations for the constitution in 1931, as well as the revision of the constitution in 1955. Parliamentarians until 1957 were appointed by the emperor from the princes and nobles; but after this point, regular elections started to take place. The evolution of political institutions reflected the social, cultural and economic changes taking place both globally and nationally in Ethiopia.

2.1 Pre-Parliament Ethiopia

The 1931 constitution, drafted by a commission organised by Emperor Haile Selassie I, comprising the palace treasurer (Bejerond) Teklehawariat Tekele Mariam, Gedamu Woldegiorgis and two expatriates in 1931, was considered a replacement of the *Fetha Negast,* a medieval 'Law of Kings' that has been in use since the 16th century, by many (Strauss, 2009).

> Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee whom the Lord thy God shall choose; one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.
>
> (Bible verse quoted in the *Fetha Negast*)

The verse quoted in the law implied that the king was an elect of God. Similar to the Fetha Negast, Kibre Negast makes it clear that the authority of the emperors emanates from God and that people should not question his absolute power (Kaleab, 2018). Kibre Negast institutionalised a royal lineage that was essentially based on the mythical history of Queen Sheba and King Solomon (Messay, 1999; Kaleab, 2018). Many believe that by binding them with characters in the bible, the emperor and the church in support of those in power legalised the establishment of a new dynasty, branded the Solomonic dynasty.

In practice, emperors that received this honour were not revered as the verse would imply, as one 'elected by God'; in fact, the history of the monarchs is full of

rivalries, jealousy, distrust and betrayal, each seeking to be the 'elect.' During the period when emperors were most effective in their control of northern territories of modern-day Ethiopia, they assigned their own children (specifically daughters in the 15th century) to lead provinces, executed those who even raised their eyes to look at them, decreed for people to strip naked when listening to the words of the emperor and used spies extensively (Pankhurst and Pankhurst, 1990, p. 24). Looking at the roots and consolidation of modern Ethiopia, some argue that the Fetha Negast's status as an imperial constitution is "mainly symbolic" – it aimed to claim continuity (Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990, p. 239). In practice, military might and the Fetha Negast were important in extending the legitimacy of the government (Jenkins, 1998; Chew, 2012; Markakis, 2011).

After the end of the wars with colonial powers occupying neighbouring states and the conclusion of boundary treaties, the Ethiopian state was stabilised around 1917. It was ready to apply for membership in the League of Nations, asserting itself as a legitimate power in the Horn of Africa. Italy appealed Ethiopia's acceptance into the League in 1923, mainly based on Slavery. The same claim was supported by other colonial powers and resulted in an arms embargo (1916–1930).

> British diplomats had long used the slavery issue to counter Addis Ababa's request for unrestricted arms import and knew that abolition would not occur over night; their argument in 1923 that the persistence of slavery in Ethiopia made her unfit for a place in the League of Nations simply disclosed British fears that as full member Ethiopia would import all the weapons she required.
>
> (Fernyhough, 1994, p. 693)

Taferi Makonnen, named Emperor Haile Selassie upon coronation, was viewed as a modernising force, while Empress Zewditu led the conservative faction. The passing of the Empress in 1930 allowed for the regent to be emperor for him to build what he considered progressive political institutions (Henze, 2000). It was in 1923, with the leadership of the regent Haile Selassie, that Ethiopia was included in the League of Nations (Bahru, 1991). Emperor Haile Selassie successfully built institutions such as the civil service and expanded modern education and health services (Bahru, 2002b). Among other things, a constitution was also at the helm of the progressive steps the emperor led.

Haile Selassie's desire for a constitution started when he first became regent to the throne. Some authors discuss that the emperor was stirred towards a modern constitution when touring through Europe in 1924; the tour exposed him to the views of the modern world towards Ethiopia and specifically Italy's justification of its interest to occupy Ethiopia, citing the need to "modernise Ethiopia" (Kaleab, 2018). According to Bahru (1999) the modern constitution was comparable to that of Minilik's move of instituting Ministerial offices; to him, they were both informing foreign spectators of Ethiopia's modernity. In this since they were not intended to be fully functional, and on the other they were targeting to resolve the question of succession.

Haile Selassie records in his autobiography that the nobility resisted his idea and "I waited patiently" (Haile Selassie, 1985, p. 148). A drafting committee of 11 members was established; it had 5 members from the nobility and 6 from the ministers. The two constitutions that the committee studied were the United Kingdom's and Japan's. The emperor wanted a constitution that did not fully resemble one – so the constitution neither surrendered power fully to parliament, leaving the king symbolic significance like in the UK, nor did it form a small council of prominent politicians to oversee the work of the parliament, making them and the king equally powerful like Japan. Then he encouraged members of the committee to seek something tailored to his needs (Kaleab, 2018). The nobles and ministers created two opposing camps that collapsed the drafting processes. Only one nobility, Ras Imiru sided with the ministers.

2.2 The 1931 Constitution

The commission organised consisting of Bejerond Teklehawariat, Gedamu Woldegiorgis and two expatriates ordered by the emperor to study other countries' constitutions and select what was relevant to the Ethiopian people to be presented to the emperor himself for comments (Marcus, 1987). Emperor Haile Selassie (1985, EC) in his autobiography explains the major point of contention between the two camps during the initial drafting of the constitution. The nobles were advocating for the continuation of the tradition where large Awraja were given to the nobility as "rist" (inheritable land or title) to be administered by them and their children. However, the ministers insisted that the nobles and feudal lords should continue to administer the awraja only if they were capable; when they die, their position should be passed to any able Ethiopian. The emperor himself proposed an idea that eventually brought the two camps together (Haile Selassie, 1985, p. 149). The emperor reserved the right to assign feudal lords *rist* (inheritable land or title) according to article 15 of the constitution, "the Emperor has the right to confer the title of prince and other honors, to establish personal estates (reste-guelt), and to instate new orders."

The constitution was not about the power of the people – rather it was about sharing power between the emperor and the people. The emperor explained during a speech, "In the past Emperors laboured alone to fulfil the difficult responsibilities of government; because now our people are modernising in many ways time has allowed us to establish a constitution that makes the people share the labour with us" (Haile Selassie, 1985, p. 151). The idea of a constitution was not only rejected but was simply unknown to some of the nobles and princes. After the constitution was approved by the emperor, Bejroned Teklehawariat was given the responsibility of explaining to the nobility and princes what a constitution is; the emperor noted that this was necessary because "few of the princes and the people knew what a constitution was" (Haile Selassie, 1985, p. 154). Much of the time taken by Bejrond Teklehawariat during his speech was praising the providence of the emperor in blessing Ethiopia with his generosity by providing a constitution (Haile Selassie, 1985). Despite this observation of the nobility's ignorance, Bejroned Teklehawariat

explained that the people were not ready to vote and so "today the Emperor, the nobilities, the feudal lords and the princes will be the caretakers of the people, leading them to progress" (Haile Selassie, 1985, p. 158).

Many researchers have claimed the comparison borders on 'copying' and concluded that most of the articles of the constitution were adopted from the 1889 constitutions of the Japanese Maji Dynasty; which in turn was reported to have been adopted from the 1884 Prussian constitution (Melaku, 2016). According to prominent historians, "Japan was decidedly the model which almost all intellectuals wanted to follow in transforming Ethiopia from the medieval to the modern age" (Bahru, 2002a, p. 110); Bahru cites evidence from the minutes of the meeting of Ethiopian ministers with the emperor in January 1932

> [instead of] having advisers from different countries we [i.e., the ministers] felt that we should follow the practices of one government. His Majesty informed us that we should seek guidance from the operation of the Japanese government since we have selected Japan as our model when we set up the constitution and since that country has a recent history [of modernization], is ruled by an emperor, and is equal to European states in its attainments. We shall therefore act accordingly.
>
> (Bahru, 2002a, p. 111)

There was an admiration of the Japanese economic development in the beginning of the 20th century among the Ethiopian elite. This same admiration continued to the following century leading Ethiopia's newest political leadership to adopt the Japanese hope of rising from the ashes on its 2001 Foreign Policy white paper (Melaku, 2016). Two books have sealed Ethiopia's vision of taking Japan's short route to prosperity "ጃፓን እንደምን ሰለጠነች" and "ሃገረ ጃፓን በ ብላቴን ጌታ ሆሩይ ወልደ ስላሴ" (Melaku, 2016).

Upon adoption on 16 July 1931, the first Ethiopian constitution bestowed largely ambiguous and autocratic claims on the empire, the emperor, ministers and budget. The constitution subjects the people of Ethiopia, referred to as "the natives of Ethiopia," to the "sacred, inviolable and indisputable" powers of the emperor (Article 1 and 5). Perham (1969, p. lvi) describes a poster at the time of the constitution-making, that shows "the Crown Prince receiving the document from an angel and inviting the members to enter the chamber while on the other side a polling booth is illustrated." It also firmly establishes the succession to the "decedents of the Emperor," claiming direct decendence from "King Solomon of Jerusalem and the Queen of Ethiopia, known as the Queen of Sheba" (Article 3). In respect to the possible case of the appointment of the regent, the constitution mentions execution in accordance with "the law of the imperial house," strangely citing a law supreme to the constitution on some aspects of government. According to Article 2 of the constitution, the Ministry of Justice worked based on the *Fetha Negast*. The designation of powers between the emperors resembled that of executive power that mainly acts based on the law and makes decrees that are subject to approval by the Chambers. However, the provisions on the election and function of the parliament

were framed in highly restrictive ways. A large section of the constitution outlined the communication channels between the parliament, emperor and the ministers. The parliament and the ministers were not to directly link through appointment or oversight. Many commentators accused the constitutions of being untimely; mainly arguing that Ethiopian society is uneducated and unaware of democratic institutions (Marcus, 1994, pp. 118–126). The constitution itself held the same discounting view of the people; Chapter 4 of the constitution alludes to the arrangement where Members of the Senate would be appointed by the emperor and the members of the Chamber of Deputies would be elected. However, Article 32 of the chapter states:

> As a temporary measure until the people are capable of electing them them-
> selves, the members of the Chamber of Deputies shall be chosen by the dig-
> nitaries (Mekuanent) and the local chiefs (Shumoch).

The constitution also discussed the functions of the ministries and their responsibility to the emperor. Markakis and Asmelash (1967) point out that the ministers were not really a "collective body" because they were each appointed by the emperor himself in a political system that did not consist of a party system. Emperor Minilik had already introduced nine ministerial positions on Justice, Internal Affairs, Labour, War, Pen/Communication, Palace, Trade and Foreign Affairs, Finance and Agriculture and Industry (Paul and Clapham, 1967, p. 77). According to Perham (1948), the Ministerial positions were abolished due to accusations of corruption upon the death of Emperor Minilik. In 1900 the government adopted a council of elders that had an advisory role to Empress Taitu. The Council of Elders were all members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and their role was to protect the crown from rumours that could hurt its reputation and form a possible conflict between the crown and the army (Mahteme Selassie, 1970, p. 715). However, the crown still viewed the council with suspicion of false and deliberately misleading information (Mahteme Selassie, 1970).

2.3 1931 Parliament

The parliament was sworn in on 04 November 1931. As per the constitution, the parliament had two houses, the House of Senate (የህግ መምርያ ምክር ቤት) and the House of Deputies (የህግ መወሰኛ ምክር ቤት), with 30 and 60 members, respectively. According to Article 31 of the constitution, the emperor appointed members of the senate from among the "Princes or Ministers; Judges or high military officers." The members of the chamber of deputies were also to be nominated by the nobility and the local chiefs; the constitution provided that this would be the case "until the people are in a position to elect them themselves" (Article 32). The legislative and oversight powers of the Chambers were highly restricted by granting the final say to the emperor providing them to seek the "confirmation of the Emperor" (Article 34) and "the Emperor consents thereto" (Article 35) on matters of legislation and agenda setting. The members of the chambers were selected from the nobility from around the country leading to a large party of noblemen and their armies who

came to Addis Ababa. The emperor decided to hire the army, leading to a situation where once again the constitutional establishment of the parliament strengthened the emperor's centralised political and military power while weakening members of the nobility (Melaku, 2016; Skinner and Skinner, 1967, p. 35). Difficult provincial leaders had the most chance of being appointed into the chambers. Markakis and Asmelash (1967, p. 202) report that the draft constitution was not popular among the nobility because, among other things "some of the great nobles, whose families had come to hold practically hereditary fiefdoms in the provinces, were rightly disturbed by the lack of recognition in the Constitution of their unique status." Twenty-five out of the thirty Senators were appointed "from the ruling houses of (mainly) Amhara and Tigray" (Kassahun, 2005, p. 163).

From 1931 to 1934, the emperor centralised his power, especially against autonomous rulers like Abba Jifar of Jimma and Ras Hailu of Gojam. Both were powerful, economically and militarily; Haile Selassie shifted the balance of power to Addis Ababa by defeating their armies, assigning a governor loyal to the emperor to accompany Abba Jifar and executing Ras Hailu (Marcus, 1994; Henze, 2000). Other important developments were the training of imperial guards by the Belgian mission and the purchase of arms.

The parliament did not remain as it originally was; various changes were made to improve it. According to Melaku (2016), the salary of parliamentarians was initially 200 but grew to up to 1,000 Ethiopian dollars. Those that came from out of Addis Ababa received 30 additional dollars for housing allowance. Another amendment was allowing the Senate to select the president from among the members. Initially, the constitution stated that the emperor would select the president, not necessarily from among the parliamentarians (Ministry of Information, 1971, p. 27). Eventually, it was also decided that all parliamentarians were to be stationed in Addis Ababa all year round.

The process of decision-making of the two chambers outlined in the 1931 constitution reduced the deputies and senators to advisors of the emperor because the emperor had the final say on all matters of government. Although the parliament did not have parliamentary groups, ad hoc committees were set up to investigate certain issues and make recommendations to the quorum (Melaku, 2016). For controversial issues, the parliament used a system of secret ballots (Melaku, 2016). The emperor was responsible for resolving disputes between the two Chambers "by selecting what he considers best in the two different conclusions" (Article 46). Furthermore, as specified in Article 35 of the constitution, when the parliament discusses and generates ideas of national importance, the pick of their legislative power grants them "the right of communicating it to the emperor through their president." Subsequent actions are reliant on the emperor's will to pursue the subject for further discussion. For this reason, the following conclusion is what most studies hold:

> The functions of Parliament as a law-making body were limited. Legislative initiative was the monopoly of the Emperor though deputies could ask his permission to deliberate on subjects suggested by them. He could veto any law proposed by the chambers. He had the right to draw up their procedure

and to dissolve them. The work of the Parliament from its creation to the time of the Italian invasion is very little; it has to its name some ten laws.

<div align="right">(Bereket, 1966, p. 74)</div>

However, as Bereket further notes, even though the establishment of the three branches of government and their relations with one another seems from the outset a purely legal decision, the functions and how these play out mostly lay in the practice rather than the articles of the constitution. The constitution was an important step towards a parliamentary democracy but what it achieved is what the emperor initially wanted; what "the Emperor wanted was an instrument for creating a national consensus, for consolidation of his power over the provinces, and as a device for the dissemination of ideas from the centre to the provinces" (Bereket, 1966, p. 77). Another motivation was seeking international acceptance, to enhance Ethiopia's status further after joining the League of Nations.

2.4 End of Italian Occupation

The parliament stayed in session from 1931 to 1935 and was disbanded due to the Italian occupation (Melaku, 2016). The emperor reaffirmed his commitment to a parliamentary system during speeches he made upon the end of the Italian occupation; he confirmed, "when our people have obtained sufficient experience the time will be ripe for them to choose their own representative" (Fere Kenafir, 1966). Upon restoration of the crown, the emperor started to strengthen his rule. On 09 March 1941 a proclamation came to effect that brought Article 32 of the 1931 constitution into effect, allowing "residents paying land tax and notables" to vote; the chamber of deputies established in this manner has a "superior [legislative] volume to that of the pre-1936 Parliament [yet] . . . most of these laws were in fact prepared by the ministries and initiated after the Emperor's approval" (Bereket, 1966, p. 78). These moves continued to erode the role of provincial nobilities.

> The first in the series of such moves was articulated by the enactment of the Imperial Ethiopian Government (IEG) Decree No. 1 of 1942 (IEG 1942) providing for the establishment of provincial administration and specifying on institutions, officials and their role, jurisdiction and competence, accountability, composition of councils and commissions, etc. The Emperor presided over all administrative jurisdictions through the Ministry of Interior empowered to supervise governors at the various levels of the provincial administrative hierarchy.
>
> <div align="right">(Kassahun, 2005, p. 165)</div>

Upon return, Emperor Haile Selassie re-established 12 ministries (Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990). In the first two years, the emperor worked with ministers to pass several proclamations. At the end of these two years, the emperor inaugurated the parliament again. The Parliament building, built in 1934, was used by the Italians as the headquarters of their air force (Henze, 2000). The paintings of the parliament

building were among the ample loot the Italians took to Rome during the brief occupation (Hall, 2003). The building was restored and continued to host the parliament after 1943; it continues to provide service as the parliament hall until 2022, except for the brief period where the Shengo (the parliament from 1987 to 1991), met in a hall inaugurated on the Derg's 10th anniversary (Melaku, 2016). The artist Emailaf Heruy initially decorated the parliament building; besides the parliament building, this artist was known for embellishing the churches of Selassie and Emperor Minilik's palace in Addis Ababa (Adejumobi, 2006).

The parliament was established through indirect election; each of the 12 regions was asked to elect five members of the Chamber of Deputies. Only elders were able to elect. One of the first tasks of the chambers was to approve the laws developed by the emperor and ministers in the last two years (Melaku, 2016). Some of the most significant proclamations by the parliament were the ratification of the UN charter and the Ethiopian Eritrean Federation. While the Eritrean constitution was also drafted during this time, it was approved by the emperor rather than the parliament (Melaku, 2016).

Progress also started during this time in the development of a professional civil service through "the establishment of the Imperial Institute of Public Administration in 1952: this was a significant development for the administration of the country. Its objectives included the training of civil servants, consultation, and research" (Henok, 2020, p. 306). It started to replace the system where employment in government offices mainly took place "through personal acquaintance and relationships with the nobility" (Henok, 2020, p. 307). This was further consolidated by the establishment of the Central Personnel Agency in the 1960s. Another important development more pertinent to the parliament was the inauguration of the Negarit Gazette in 1942. Prior to this, proclamations were read in city squares and marketplaces. The Ministry of Pen was responsible for developing handwritten copies of the proclamations and sharing them with other ministries and government officials; in 1941, the practice of publishing the laws in small booklets started. With the establishment of the Berhan and Selam Printers and subsequently the Negarit Gazette, the dissemination of laws became more transparent and periodical (Melaku, 2016).

The process of reviewing the Ethiopian 1931 constitution also began in the early 1940s but took at least six years (Melaku, 2016). Parliament became a legislative body, having been promoted from its earlier role as a mere advisor. A Proclamation in March 1941 set up an indirect method of election for the Chamber of Deputies, and Ethiopians participated in the first-ever election. Markakis and Asmelash (1967, p. 204) report that after the election, the Chamber of Deputies had "a few signs of self-assertion . . . in the early 1940s it refused to approve a financial measure on the ground that the Government had failed to draft and submit a budget to parliament, as required by the Article 55 of the 1931 Constitution."

2.5 1955 Revised Constitution of Ethiopia

The constitution made several new provisions missing from the old constitution. These include Basic Human Rights, parliamentary immunity except for in *flagrante*

delicto and providing a salary for parliamentarians. In 1955, the emperor approved the revised constitution, making two crucial changes to it. One is the incorporation of "basic tenets of fundamental human and political rights from the United Nation Universal Declaration of Human Rights" and the second is the provision allowing the Chamber of Deputies to be partly elected through popular vote, as the federated territory of Eritrea already had a popularly elected parliament (Sileshi, 2009; Bereket, 1966). The processes emerging from the unionist's ambition (in Eritrea) affected not only the Ethiopian constitution but also Eritrea's parliament. Elections and parliamentary representation became a theatre of unionist and non-unionist contention, as each tried to gather support for their position; the emperor abolished the Act of Federation through decree in November 1962. The 1955 constitution brought two major issues that were debated but not finally accepted: question time for ministers by parliament and allowing the establishment of political parties (Kaleab, 2018). The lack of question time and mechanisms of holding the executive branch accountable cost the country immensely; according to MPs, the country was becoming increasingly indebted to western countries that offered loans to projects that were approved by parliament, but whose execution they never followed up on (Amede, 2010).

The revision of the constitution coincided with the 25th anniversary of the coronation of Emperor Haile Selassie. It more clearly defined the extent of the emperor's authority by mentioning "all territories," disregarding the autonomous status of Eritrea in the Federation since 1950. A reunion was legislated in 1962 through Imperial Order number 27, unanimously approved by parliamentarians in Eritrea and Ethiopia (Krzeczunowicz, 1963). The revised constitution included not only tradition – the decedents of the Solomonic Dynasty and the anointing – but also included the constitution to justify that the emperor is "entitled to all the honours due to Him" (Article 4). The order of succession to the throne specified men decedents of the dynasty, various other specifics and ceremonies to be based on the "Coronation Ceremonial of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church of 2nd November, 1930" (Article 7). The 1955 constitution was more strictly traditional laying out various restrictions and qualifications, mainly based on the tradition of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church more explicitly than the 1931 Constitution. This might simply be due to the detailed nature of the 1955 constitution with 131 articles as opposed to the 1931 constitution, which had 55 articles. According to the constitution, the emperor "alone has the right to ratify, on behalf of Ethiopia, treaties and other international agreements, and to determine which treaties and international agreements shall be subject to ratification before becoming binding upon the Empire" (Article 30). However, before ratification they are presented to parliament and upon approval from the parliament, "shall be submitted to the Emperor for ratification" (Article 30).

The constitution grants its subjects civil rights (Article 38), freedom of religion (Article 41) and freedom of movement (Article 46). The emperor remained the highest power in the Empire including presiding over appeals on legal matters from the subjects (Article 63). Following the recognition of these rights, a new Penal Code went into force on 05 May 1958 (referred to as The Penal Code Proclamation of 1957).

Parliament was moderately tolerant of religious diversity among its members. There were 35 Muslims out of the 210 parliamentarians. One of the Muslim MPs, Amede Lemma writes in his autobiography that there were some religious issues that became an agenda of the Muslim MPs (Amede, 2010). One of the issues was Article 3347 of the 1960 civil code; even though the Muslim members of the parliament raised concerns based on its implications on religious courts, the Article repealed "all rules whether written or customary previously in force concerning matters provided for in this Code" (Amede, 2010). All Muslim MPs walked out of this discussion because according to the autobiography, "we knew we would be outvoted" (Amede, 2010, p. 70). However, this fight did not end in the chambers of the parliament; instead, they took it to the people as well as the emperor; causing the emperor and his advisors concern of uprisings among Muslim communities (Amede, 2010). This led to a decree by the emperor ordering that a previous proclamation on Sheria courts (Proclamation 62) would remain in place despite the provision in the civil code (Amede, 2010). The emperor specifically promised to build additional schools in Muslim-inhabited areas on the 29th anniversary of his coronation. While parliamentary representation through election ideally created room for descriptive and symbolic representation of the electorate, this was not always the story (Silberman, 1960, p. 150).

The legislative duty of the parliament allowed it to endorse legislation proposed by 10 of its members or proposed by the council of ministers with the approval of the emperor (Article 86). When one of the chambers approves draft legislation, they submitted it to the second chamber. If the second chamber approves the legislation as well, then the final step of approval rests with the emperor, who might propose amendments or choose to give final approval (Article 87). However, if the second Chamber does not approve the legislation within two months, "the chambers shall meet together;" if a resolution is reached "with or without amendments" then the steps of submitting the legislation for signature to the emperor proceed. If the two chambers are not able to reach an agreement, a report of the situation is submitted to the emperor, who might provide feedback on the draft legislation or propose different legislation on the issue at hand (Article 91). When it comes to the emperor's decrees, the constitution provided that it could be overturned if rejected by both houses; but there are no records of the provision being applicable.

The constitution provided that members of the chamber of deputies were elected by the electorate residing in electoral districts of 200,000 people (Article 93). Residents above 25 years of age were able to run to be a member of the Chamber of Deputies and those above 21 to participate in the secret ballot vote (Articles 95 and 96). The chamber has a president elected by its members annually. On the other hand, members of the Senate and its president are appointed by the emperor from among the nobility, dignitaries and civil servants (Articles 101 and 103). It was clear that the emperor still preferred individuals in either of the houses, which could be instrumental in governing "all the territories." These representatives' approval of proclamations would be translated by the people as a seal of approval of correctness by tradition, the monarchy and the people.

Unlike the 1931 constitution, this constitution was not associated with any particular foreign constitution. But if one had to look for specific similarities, there were some similarities with the US constitution. Under this constitution, both houses and the emperor are able to initiate laws, with the exception of raising revenue which "as under the US Constitution (Article I, Section 7) – originate in the lower chamber (Art 86)" (Krzeczunowicz, 1963, p. 82). Another similarity was with regard to the terms of Senators; they worked in three groups and had two sessions annually. The first group consisting of 28 members was in session for four months beginning from the second month of the Ethiopian year. The second group consisting of 14 members worked for three consecutive months. There is approximately 40 days break between the two sessions. The remaining 14 members would take turns going to work during the first session in the second year (Belete, 1954). Such a system was adopted from the US constitution, which also stated that "they shall be divided as equally as may be into three Classes. The Seats of the Senators of the first Class shall be vacated at the Expiration of the second Year . . . so that one third may be chosen every second Year" (US Constitution, Art. 1, Section 3; Krzeczunowicz, 1963). Krzeczunowicz (1963, p. 82) also mentions specific US provisions, such as "procedures for overriding presidential vetos," which were missing from the Ethiopian constitution as the emperor had absolute power in all matters including legislation. Krzeczunowicz (1963, p. 82) concludes his analysis by saying:

> Apart from the Emperor's prominent emergency powers, the rights to initiate and approve or reject laws in Ethiopia are basically equal as between the elective chamber, the appointive chamber (Senate) and the Emperor. At the present stage of the country's development, and in view of its unique imperial traditions, such a system seems quite fitting and reasonable.

2.6 The Parliament After the 1955 Constitution

It took nearly two years to hold elections and set up the House of Deputies as legitimate representatives of the Ethiopian public. Two-hundred-ten deputies each represented approximately 100,000 people in rural areas; in urban spaces, one representative was assigned for urban spaces with 30,000 people and "an additional deputy for each 50,000 inhabitants above the base figure" (Hess and Loewenberg, 1964, p. 949). Markakis and Asmelash report that one of the motivations for running for a parliamentary seat was the high salary rate for the deputies, which they report was "raised from 380$ initially to 750$ per month" (p. 209). However, other commentators at the time conveyed that candidacy was for those already in high social positions and for the wealthy due to the high wealth requirement, which consisted of 2,000 Ethiopian dollars in property and half the amount in cash (Hess and Loewenberg, 1964, p. 949). On the other hand, this provision created a way of accommodating the elite and landlords, who had felt neglected by the first constitution. These groups were able to easily secure registration by fulfilling property requirements and support from key people in their communities (Yacob, 2007). The requirements for running for office were later revised in 1969 stating that candidates

should be literate and not in debt; additionally, "candidates were asked to provide 250 Ethiopian dollars as collateral" and collect 50 signatures (Melaku, 2016).

Campaigning was mostly done among traditional leaders instead of the public, who were informed of one's candidacy through pamphlets. Since the constitution only required the emperor to profess the Orthodox faith, 33 members of the Chamber of Deputies were Muslims in 1965. Furthermore, the constitution protected the rights of voters, including those that are "habitually present" due to nomadic pastoralism; and it attempted to accommodate illiterate voters (Krzeczunowicz, 1963, p. 79). These constitutional rights were further ensured though the electoral law of August 27, 1956, clearly enshrining that "such persons (meaning the illiterate) must not be disqualified from voting" (Krzeczunowicz, 1963, pp. 79–80). Further accounts of the rules and procedures of the parliament are difficult to analyse, as such documents did not publicly exist (Krzeczunowicz, 1963).

The revised constitution not only disregarded the federation, it gave 'modern' looking features of government to Ethiopia, putting it in the same rank as Eritrea – who, ahead of Ethiopia, had an elected parliament (Krzeczunowicz, 1963). This image of modernity was not only important to the international community and Eritrea but also to the growing urban intelligentsia. In 1957, Ethiopia's first National Board of Election conducted voter education, registration and election. The first parliamentarians, who were in office since 1931, were replaced with new ones through this election. After the election in 1957, elections became periodic.

During the first election in 1957, 210 deputies were elected from 491 candidates (Yohannes, 1991). To some extent, the position of senators was seen as relatively powerless, thus nobles and provincial governors who challenged the emperor's plans would be placed there. Another such position was an ambassadorial position, a situation that persists still (Paulos, 2011). Regular sessions of the Senate took place every Monday from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.; Fridays were reserved for MPs that presented unique ideas (Melaku, 2016). There were seven standing committees in both chambers. Ethiopian parliamentarians became members of the international parliamentary union in 1970 (Melanku, 2016).

Table 2.1 Election turnout from 1957 to 1961, author's construction based on Markakis and Asmelash (1967)

Election year	Ethiopian population	Registered	Voted	Number of parliamentary seats	Number of candidates
1957	20.8 million	3.5 million	2.5 million	210	597 (this number is significantly lower according to Hess and Loewenberg [1964, p. 949], who report 491 qualified candidates)
1961		4.5 million	4 million	210	940
1965	27.8 million	5 million	3.2 million	248	1,308

The composition of the parliament was a manifestation of the emperor's skilful politics; the young and educated with "humble background [became] president and vice president of the senate" and in the meantime, he was "careful to avoid bruising the sense of the traditional elite," yet was not hesitant to oust the most determined opposition (Henze, 2000, pp. 207–208). The monarch's desire to consolidate power, the monarch's desire for modernity and the monarch's desire for international acceptance continued to play out key roles in the life of the parliament. These desires were not always in harmony with one another. From most commentators of the constitutions, the key to the motivation lies in the 'Monarch's desire' as opposed to the people's. They argue that the 1931 constitution was not demanded by the people but instead granted by the emperor (Markakis and Asmelash, 1967). Nevertheless, what they listed as desires of the Monarch required continuous negotiation amongst one another. The desire of sealing the achievements of the past century to effectively seal the future of the territories and people who had just been included in the Empire would have to work in tandem with the desire to use the constitution to combat the age-old rivalry of power between provincial leaders. There is also what is referred to as "progressive inclination of the monarch," discussed previously (Markakis and Asmelash, 1967, p. 200). On the other hand, there is the desire to use the parliament, particularly the senate, as a place where provincial chiefs appointed by Minilik would retire (Holcomb and Ibssa, 1990). Women were also candidates during the election in 1957 (Melaku, 2016). Senedu Gebru was the only woman candidate who joined the parliament during this election. She was educated in Switzerland from a very young age since the 1920s. She was vice president of the House of Representatives for about two years and occupied various political offices in the 1960s (Molvaer, 1997). MP Fitawrari Amede wrote in his autobiography that he advocated for Mrs Sinedu to become deputy president of the Chamber of Deputies, impressed with her education abroad. The MP records that only younger MPs were on board with the idea of a woman deputy president; older members of the Chamber resisted her appointment (Amede, 2010).

Basing his account on an interview with Senedu Gebru herself, Molvaer (1997, pp. 69–70) wrote

> She did all in her power to accelerate progress and modernisation in Ethiopia, and people took note of her efforts and achievements. The inhabitants of Gullelé in Addis Abeba therefore elected her to be their representative as a member of parliament in 1948 E.C. (1955/6 G.C.). In this capacity, she worked particularly to raise the social position of women, so that they could achieve equality with men – in rights, freedoms, employment opportunities, and religious life. Flogging was common as a punishment of criminals in those days, but she found this inhuman and worked for its abolition; however, her wishes met with much resistance.

Senedu's married life resembled that of 18th- and 19th-century women from prominent families, with multiple marriages with prominent members of the political community. She was the daughter of Gebru Desta**,** the mayor of Addis Ababa and a

long-standing vice president of the Senate serving until his death (Molvaer, 1997). Haile Selassie still understood the importance of traditional forms of legitimacy, including marriages. The royal marriages that were in the 18th century confined to different royal houses in Gojam, Gondar, Tigray and sometimes Wollo and Shoa, extended to Wollega and Jimma towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century (Heran, 2005). In many cases, the marriages were short-lived (accounts show how frequently marriages broke) and sometimes the marriages were amidst miscalculations of who could possibly come to power. One of the most challenging and rebellious regional governors towards the emperor was Ras Hailu of Gojjam. Ras Hailu had miscalculated and had married his daughter, Seblawongel Hailu to Lij Iyasu, seeking access to the centre of power. This indicates the significance of traditional legitimacy in the midst of modernising efforts, especially pursued by the emperor himself, sometimes in the face of resistance from a 'conservative' parliament. Heran (2005, p. 76) points out

> On the one hand, such marriages could mark accord between regional powers or the acceptance of central control. Alternately, they held no binding power on their own, nor did they guarantee loyalty. Nonetheless, such intermarriages provided a critical thread of continuity and a measure of stability, even at the height of contestations.

Senedu Gebru was married first to the governor of Harar, who was also a diplomat, Lorenzo Taezaz. Upon separation from her, Lorenzo married the daughter of Ras Imiru's daughter, Yemissrach Imiru. Sinidu Gebru's second marriage was to Dejjazmach Amde Wolde, a third marriage to a prominent diplomat that worked in Aden and Germany (Molvaer, 2009). The marriage ended when Sinidu decided to stay in Ethiopia while her husband, Aseffa Lemma, decided to move to the US with his children following the ousting of Emperor Haile Selassie. It is not clear if Senedu's marriages only had a social significance or if they also carried a political significance, resembling that of the era of Emperors Yohannes and Minilik.

Since 1941, in most 'southern' provinces,[1] the role of appointed provisional officials increased and was matched by the decreasing role of the landlord class. In these positions, mainly people from central and northern Ethiopia would be appointed but still, there were some representatives of the local community in the salaried positions. This was also true for parliament. For example, in Bale, some Muslim Oromo were appointed to government positions in the province as well as in parliament. In some places like the Somali region, more and more Somali speakers were coming into office due to popular resistance. Initially, local administrators in such places were all Amharic speakers instead of Somalis (Silberman, 1960). The educated youth made this one of their agendas for progress, "Somalization of District Governors in the Ogaden has not gone far. In some places the Amhara District Governors have Somali assistants, and more and quicker advance is needed" (Silberman, 1960, p. 150).

Baxter (1978, p. 294) attributes the suppression of votes and candidates in 1969 among the Oromo community in Arssi to an effort to ensure that one of the two

seats allocated to the district was occupied by a "Christian Northerner." The Governor repeated the election overriding the first polling that bought two Oromo candidates into the Chamber of Deputies, to bring an outcome suitable to him. This process was critical in raising awareness about parliament among people contemplating that "the Parliament must have some importance if the Governor was so anxious to cheat Arssi out of a representative" (Baxter, 1978, p. 295). There was growing a consciousness of 'southern' parliamentarians and the elite in Addis Ababa. The Macha Tulama Self-help Association (MTSA) was established by the Oromo elite mainly from Shoa and Wollega in 1963, many of whose founders after a decade established the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). The association also had ties with groups from various parts of Oromia including the Bale insurgency. Østebø (2011) names individuals that were instrumental in linking the two groups; their role went as far as buying and distributing arms among the insurgents. Among those widely known figures is Qenazmach Abdulkadir Ahmed Imama, a member of parliament (Østebø, 2011, p. 301). In the late 1960s, there was an increase in local rebellion in various districts. Contrary to Markakis and Asmelash (1967), who reported that there were no signs of parliamentary group formations based on ideology or identity, Baxter (1978, p. 290) argued that in the 1960s "a new pan-oromo consciousness was generated in the army, the university and the parliament itself."

During successive terms, legislation initiated by the emperor was fully successful, always gaining the approval of the parliament. No one anticipated what disapproval would mean, as the universally understood and accepted the words of the emperor held that: "laws proposed to you have been prepared by experts, reviewed by the responsible Minister and the Council of Ministers as a whole and approved by Us. Only when they have been found to serve the interest of the nation are they submitted to you" (02 November 1964, published in *Ethiopia Observer*, VIII, 4, 1965, p. 275). Besides the failed attempts to initiate laws, there were several critical moments where the parliament and the emperor stood on different sides of a debate; and as always, the parliament subtly resisting yet publicly approving. Some issues were less harmful than others to the political cohesion of the emperor and the nobility. For example, the parliament was vocal in opposing the treaty that allowed the British presence after the period of Italian occupation in Eritrea after 1954 (Silberman, 1960, p. 149). There were also occasions of the parliament making critical changes to drafts. For example, the Civil Code drafted by Rene David had provisions of collective utility, which was completely rejected by the parliament, thus mainly advocating for individual ownership (Brietzke, 1974, p. 160). The initial proposal that was drafted based on the Soviet Agrarian Code had more socialist values than what the nobility and landowners in the two chambers could tolerate.

The end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s are known for the increasing dissatisfaction of the educated youth, who apparently did not possess the political poise required to manoeuvre the bureaucracy or have the determination to play a significant role in the coup d'etat attempt of 1960 and the successful coup of 1974 (Clapham, 1969; Hess and Loewenberg, 1964). The coup attempt in 1960 was a manifestation of the increasing embarrassment of the "Oxford, Cambridge, or Harvard"-educated young Ethiopians about "an emperor whose authority derived

from Solomonic Legend" (Henz, 1984, p. 117). The coup was led by a graduate of Columbia University, Germame Neyaw, who was only able to mobilise the Imperial Bodyguard while the emperor was on a foreign visit but failed to gain the support of other army divisions, which were able to reverse the coup immediately (Henz, 1984). The traditional political elite were not fond of the newly educated young population, for example: "The ministers . . . find the young man half-baked and devoid of political sense" (Silberman, 1960 p. 151). Silberman (1960, p. 151) also reports that foreign visitors of the Empire did not prefer to work with the young intelligentsia but instead the old political class they believed was "more aware of the political possibilities."

Political tensions were normal in the monarchy. Sometimes tensions were stacked, because democratic processes such as open political debates and elections do not function well; these mechanisms provide non–violent platforms of exchange between contending groups and their agendas. In a situation where such political processes and actors (political parties) do not exist, tensions are manifested in latent or more openly violent encounters. Such a situation was the coup attempt of 1960 in Ethiopia. After the coup failed, the emperor established a Committee on Constitutional Revision, but its suggestions for reform were not accepted – except for one, which stated that the Prime Minister could select ministers. The prime minister first exercised this authority in 1966 after resignations of ministers from office following growing unrest and dissatisfaction (Berhanu, 2021; Rosenfeld et al., 1982). Another constitutional revision committee was established in 1966.

2.7 Conclusion

The first Ethiopian parliament, sworn in on 04 November 1931, was a testament to the desire to modernise; to move from a traditional monarchy to a democratic republic. However, the processes through which the seats in the House of Senate and the House of Deputies were filled indicated that there was also a desire to hold onto the past; allowing the emperor and the nobles to be regents to the people "until the people are in a position to elect them themselves" (Ethiopian Constitution, 1931, Article 32). The position of a parliamentarian was revered by the people, as the MP positions initially occupied by dignitaries came with a prestigious salary of 1,000 Ethiopian dollars. The parliament, tied with the constitution, helped the emperor consolidate his power together in the eyes of the public and political rivalries. This progress was somehow broken by the Italian Occupation; this break resulted in several new factors internally and globally. The world became more committed to the principles of the universality of human rights and the self-determination of the African nations (Markakis et al., 2021); while internally, a critical mass of citizens was emerging in different areas. This resulted in a more liberal constitution in 1955 that gave more power to the people and acknowledged human rights. The first election took place in 1957 and a gradual change to parliament and its traditions started to emerge. After 1957, even though there were no parliamentary interest groups or political parties that allowed for the formation of political camps, the tension between the 'conservatives' and the 'progressives' became more and more evident.

Note

1 This is to refer to non-Tigre and non-Amhara provinces

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3 Parliament, Land Reform and Taxation in Ethiopia

A Break From Tradition Through a Socialist Revolution

This chapter seeks to understand the parliament from 1931 to 1991, by mainly looking at critical reforming proclamations on land and taxation, and responses to the reforms. It covers land reform in 1967 and the period leading up to the Military coup against Emperor Haile Selassie. The chapter discusses the coming to power of the Derg[1] and agricultural land reform. Although the Ethiopian economy was dependent on agriculture and land is central to political debates to this day, the political elite for the most part disregard it as an inferior sector; appointment as the Minister of Agriculture was seen as a demotion. Ethiopia was an exporter of agricultural goods, "beginning in the second half of the 1950s, the situation was reversed: cereal exports steadily declined, good imports steadily grew in importance" (Dessalegn, 2009, p. 41). According to Dessalegn (2009), later in the 1960s and 70s, there was a steady increase in food imports. Land and taxation of agricultural products became policy reform agendas, especially by progressive urban elite in universities and ministerial posts that were against the traditionalist elements in parliament and provincial administrators.

3.1 Agricultural Land and Reform in the 1960s and 70s

Gebru (1991) reports that the parliament was becoming more powerful in the 1960s. However, it mainly used it power to protect the interest of, what through his socialist interpretation Gebru (1991, p. 53) referred to as the "dominant class" or the "ruling class." This class, according to Gebru (1991, pp. 50–51), was a multi-ethnic group full of contradictions and competition; yet together "increasingly conscious of its existence, defending its basic interests against the peasantry and the emerging classes. Its national venue was the parliament." The emperor's centralisation targeted the country's economy as well. Tax and tithe were collected in kind by the emperor until this point. According to Pankhurst (1961, p. 179)

> Theoretically the sovereign was entitled to all such tribute, but in practice this right was waived in certain areas in favour of local governors who were allowed to appropriate the revenue in whole or in part for their own use and that of their families and followers.

Even though the powers of the emperor overshadowed the parliament, decisions such as the Agricultural Income Tax Proclamation No. 255/1967 were favoured by 'southern' parliamentarians. This was mainly because the officeholders and the landlords became two different groups in the South, and the 1960s land reforms had resulted in the privatisation of land by the landlords. In 1942, a similar land tax proclamation was issued, yet it was not realistic to implement it, as all the most influential provincial leaders and nobles were standing to lose from such reform. They instigated peasant uprisings in places like Gojam and Gondar leading to the retracting of the decision (Mulatu and Yohannis, 1988). Similar revolts also took place in Tigray but they had a much wider agenda than taxation and were more intertwined with feelings of nationalism:

> The rebellion, known as the Weyane revolt, was against administrative inefficiency and corruption, the appointment of non-Tigray officials in provincial administration, government taxation, and restitution of services associated with gult (fief), which the Italians had abolished.
>
> (Mulatu and Yohannis, 1988, p. 29)

To some extent, the laws benefiting society other than the aristocrats and the balabats were all proposed by the emperor and his respective ministers. The emperor had emphasised to the deputies their "direct and personal responsibility not only to us (the emperor) but also to those who have put confidence in you and your abilities by electing you to the parliament" (Yohannes, 1991, p. 142). Still, the deputies were not concerned about the public, especially the peasantry. In fact, in some places like Gojam, they were instigating peasant revolts to attain their causes – at the cost of the peasants (who, of course, were ill-informed).

In 1967, the 'northern' parliamentarians were unhappy with the taxation proclamation that affected the interests of the landlords, even though ultimately the legislation proposed by the emperor passed. The proclamation, the Agricultural Income Tax Proclamation No. 255, replaced in kind tithe to the government. Previously, landlords or *gult*[2] holders would collect tax from poor peasants while the landlords themselves would mainly pay based on the size and quality of the land and not income. For the first time, a serious rift occurred between these landlords and the Monarchy as a result of this law. The government collected 4% of its revenue from land tax and tithe (Schwab, 1985). Gilkes (1975, p. 644), having observed the centrality of land in Ethiopian politics argued that:

> Democratization remains impossible while the conjecture of land and power remains as impossible while the conjecture of land and power remains in the fundamental basis of control in the country, and while the system is geared to perpetuating the rights of the landowners.

The new proclamation would make the state the only tax authority, besides the church, and they would collect tax from landlords based on their incomes; however, peasants would only pay 1.50 Ethiopian Dollars because their incomes were unlikely

to exceed the minimum 300 Ethiopian Dollars (Gebru, 1991). However, when it comes to implementation, the parliamentarians and landlords would effectively prevent the implementation of laws that went against their interests. These laws especially affected landlords and nobles in Northern Ethiopia, mainly the Tigray and Amhara regions. The protests and revolts in Gojam were especially prominent, as they involved more than 4,000 armed peasants; among those that led the revolution was a former parliamentarian (Gebru, 1991).

> Landlordism had been sufficiently crystallized as a class to challenge the state's hegemony. Having lost the battle in parliament, landlords intimidated, harassed, and even assassinated tax assessors, succeeding in many places in preventing their income from being assessed. They would not dare incite the peasantry, however, because they themselves would have become the principal target. In the north, the disenfranchised nobles could have challenged the state only by inciting the peasants.
>
> (Gebru, 1991, p. 83)

In response to these developments in 1967, the parliament adopted an anti-demonstration proclamation (Elleni, 2019). In most cases, what benefited the central government benefited local lords and governors but in the case of the tax proclamation "the expansion of the modern state came at the expense of the local powers, and it was resented and resisted" (Dessalegn, 2009, p. 120). According to Dessalegn, many rural uprisings were not actually uprisings of the poor peasant but instead "for the most part were gentry initiated" (Dessalegn, 2009). The gentry, according to Dessalegn, were not only governors and administrators with feudal titles; it includes untitled men serving as deputies and a large number of local soldiers (mainly consisting of the group known as *nech lebash*). These soldiers were allocated lands as free holding since 1966, by decree of the emperor. While this diverse gentry group were the main culprits of the uprisings, the peasants also participated. Dessalegn (2009) argues that the peasants were not properly informed of the terms and implications of the proclamation. They were simply opposed to land measurement campaigns for the new tax regime; everyone including the peasants perceived "that land measurement would inevitably lead to higher taxes" (Dessalegn, 2009, p. 129).

Different groups resisting the land measurement as well as the tax proclamation submitted petitions to the ministers and the emperor. Dessalegn (2009) records that the petitioners were also able to get the attention of the MPs:

> The protest was infectious, and it soon aroused the concern of Wollo representatives in Parliament in the capital. In the course of 1969, these MPs added their voice to those of the delegations, bombarding the Ministry of Interior, and the Prime Minister's office as well as Parliament with impassioned petitions of their own. The MPs went on to actively campaign on behalf of their constituencies, in Addis Ababa as well as Wollo, for several years.
>
> (Dessalegn, 2009, p. 132)

The government made some efforts to reform the practice of tenancy. Bahru (2002, p. 195) explains how the efforts were crushed by the landlords:

> It was Parliament, the declared spokesman of the people, which thwarted government initiatives in this regard. Given the high representation of the landlords in the institution, the outcome is not surprising. A tenancy bill was first presented to Parliament in 1964. The obstruction it faces in Parliament formed the background for the student demonstrations in 1965, under the banner of "Land to the Tiller" – a political act that augured the radical phase of the Ethiopian Student Movement.

Besides the widespread protests in northern Ethiopia, the administration also had to deal with the Eritrean status. Although the Eritrean parliament had voted to dissolve itself and become a part of Ethiopia in 1962, this was followed by the rise of an armed secessionist group, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF). According to Spencer (1984), this was not the first time the parliament decided to be united with Ethiopia; however, the Ethiopian government did not act based on the decisions in 1955 and 1957 for fear of the international community that actively participated in granting Eritrea its independent status. In 1970, a Marxist faction that emerged from the ELF, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), became the strongest armed secessionist group through the decades leading to total independence in the early 1990s (Mulatu and Yohannis, 1988).

The independence of the Somali state in 1960 triggered other challenges for Ethiopia. The newly independent state questioned Ethiopia's territorial integrity by seeking to unite Ogaden with the rest of Somalia. Periodic demonstrations by university students began in 1965. The student protesters requested that the 1967 land tax proclamation should be more drastic; it demanded the allocation of "land to the tiller" (Mulatu and Yohannis, 1988). The parliament clearly embedded in it elements of Imperial conservatism while also accommodating progressive members as well as rebels. The majority of the MPs still held on to the foundations and values of the monarchy, making the ministers the most progressive group in government.

3.2 Tradition vs. Modernity

Since 1931, the emperor was the advocate of some of the critical areas of modernisation, sometimes clashing with the princes and nobility. During the Derg's time, a Military government pioneered the socialist revolution desired and advocated by the eastern educated scholars. The elite found this to be ironic as well. Haile Fida, a French-educated young revolutionary reflected on the leaders of movements in Eritrea in *Addis Fana Magazine* in 1968:

> they could have taught the oppressed class of this province to form a revolutionary unity with fellow oppressed classes in other parts of Ethiopia. It is a historical coincidence that today this type of call is coming not from a united Ethiopian workers party but a Military government.
>
> (Amare, 2010, p. 7)

The emperor was stuck between sustaining tradition and introducing modernisation. The emperor was a product of a feudal dynasty based on long histories and myths that he needed to sustain to stay in power. To this end, he initiated and disguised the emperor's position and his succession plan in modern constitutions. Concurrently, the emperor wanted to champion processes of modernisation, advocating for education and educated Ethiopians. This created somewhat of an ambiguous personality and pattern of events. This was reflected in institutions he championed such as the parliament – clearly what seemed like a modern institution, and filled with mainly nobility. The ambiguity was manifested in the people he brought to power and was recognised by them. Zewde (2007, p. 606) records the complaints of the nobles:

> Teferi Mekonnen's main objective is to play with power by disturbing and acting as an arbitrator between the nobilities and children of the poor. By claiming that he is leading Ethiopia to the Fereji's modernity, he causes the two to become enemies to one another, and shrewd to one another, bite each other.

Those referred to as "children of the poor" are educated individuals such as Mekonnen Habtewold and Wolde Giorgis Wolde Yohannes who were not traditionally entitled to positions of power. The educated elite at first assumed positions of secretary, secretary-general, director and director-general; however, after 1941, the emperor started appointing them as ministers (Bahru, 2002). Zewde (2007) quotes one of the famous sayings of the emperor "Claiming to be born from the 'prominent' is not a skill. Studying diligently and bringing one's self to a position of prominence is a greater and more reputable skill than all." These educated "children of the poor" were aware that if the emperor was to pass away, their place in government would be fragile as it would be up to the conservative nobility and princes. Nevertheless, as the public accepted the value of education and the power to vote was in the hands of the public, the nobility's ability to influence the country's political future was becoming weaker and weaker.

The educated camp was also placed in an ambiguous position, receiving favour from a traditional emperor and living among an uneducated populace that stood in contrast to everything they witnessed among European nations when they travelled for official visits and to further their education. Thus, doubting the people's capacity to elect and delaying voting practices until the people could 'mature' was not only the emperor's position but was also shared by most of the emerging new class of educated young people, who had no interest in preserving the nobility and the feudal lords. Some of them, such as Fitawrari Wolde Giorgis Wolde Yohannes, came up with reform ideas without advocating for popular suffrage. Fitawrari Wolde Giorgis proposed that the capacity and experience of the deputies appointed in the chambers should be better than those already appointed by the emperor; he believed that some form of educational induction was necessary before committing the appointees to office. Another reform proposed by the elite was question time for ministers. The elite knew their reform ideas had limits. Aklilu Habtewold, speaking of the elephant in the room (Zewde, 2007, p. 634), said "the Emperor (janhoy) asked you

to conduct a study on administrative reform. I don't think you will propose an idea that will address the Emperor's own powers." The mandates of the executive and legislative branches were not properly separated. This was acknowledged by people such as Yilma Deressa and Aklilu Habtewold. Yilma Deressa, for example, said, "if the power of the legislative parliament and executive was properly distinguished then we could say our country is on the road to democratic governance" (Zewde, 2007, p. 634).

Once the public started to vote, members of communities appointed educated young people who were not conventional candidates for power, such as Amede Lema (later Fitawrari Amede Lema), who was Muslim and a businessman. Despite the nonexistence of political parties, elections allowed for people with different views to be represented in parliament. However, the lack of political party robed the elections of countrywide campaigns; for this reason, Bahru (2002, p. 207) observed that it was mainly "individual competition . . . Parliament thus became a vehicle for self-promotion rather than a forum of popular representation." Nevertheless, this was not entirely the case. Although there was no political party affiliation at the time, there were political camps; for example, the prime minister and the nobility were on different sides of politics. There was a time when around seven MPs were banned from attending meetings because of vocally criticising the government. One of the seven, Fitawrari Amede (2010), reports in his autobiography that although it was the young non-nobility who were vocal in criticising government, the nobility were silently happy at times when the criticism was targeted at the prime minister and ministers in his camp.

The capacity of the public continued to be a concern of the 'educated' even after 1955, after popular elections materialised. The concerns were to some extent valid. For example, Fitawrari Amede (2003 EC) reports that in one parliamentary session where parliaments were discussing a draft proclamation on forest protection, the Minister Balambaras Mahteme Selassie explained how forest protection was necessary to prevent climate crises and drought. An MP (identified as Ato Abera Abebe) protested the proclamation saying, "and today have you forgotten about God and are you claiming that rain comes from trees?" (Amede, 2010, p. 112).

3.3 The Coup d'état: A Break From Tradition

At the time leading up to the 1974 coup, there were kidnappings of higher officials by lower-ranking soldiers and acts of rebellion: capturing banks and radio stations in certain localities was rampant (Berhanu, 2021). Thus, it was clear to the emperor that the end of Imperial Ethiopia was sneaking up on the Monarchy (Berhanu, 2021, pp. 167 to p. 168). The emperor, known for his love of image, was putting the poor and beggars in camps following severe famine in some regions of Ethiopia. One of the slogans of the recurring student protests was the question "is poverty a crime?" (Berhanu, 2021). Students marched to the Chamber of Senate; the president General Abiy Abebe responded to the students "Ethiopians are one, don't make distinctions calling them rich and poor." The student protesters felt that he was asking them "not to divide an already

divided people" (Berhanu, 2021, p. 169). International political economy added to the pressure already building among the urban poor and the educated power-less elite. Henze (1984, p. 119) provides a global political economic context to the situation:

> Burdened by Vietnam and Watergate, US influence declined, and with it the prestige of Ethiopia's US-educated elite and of Haile Selassie himself. The outbreak of the Arab–Israeli War led to the December 1973 oil price hike by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. During February 1974, taxi drivers protesting higher fuel prices were joined by teachers and others demanding better wages in a strike that crippled Addis Ababa.

The strike by the Confederation of Ethiopian Labour Union (CELU), with 80,000 members, was one of the most destabilising developments; the CELU was established in 1963, at the height of resistance and confusion following the failed coup attempt by the Imperial guard (Paulos, 2011). These strikes were regarded as the "first successful strike by CELU" because the government gave in to the demands of the union and increased salaries (Mulatu and Yohannis, 1988). The right to association was guaranteed by the constitution, yet:

> Labour union activity received official sanction only in 1962 with the issuing of the Labour Relations Decree, which was approved a promulgated by Parliament in 1963. . . . Strikes were rare prior to 1960, the exception being a strike in 1947 by workers of the Franco-Ethiopian Railway against the company's discriminatory wage and employee retention policy and a general strike in Asmera in 1958, which led to the disbanding of the Eritrean labour movement by the government.
>
> (Mulatu and Yohannis, 1988, p. 41)

The behaviour of workers, students and other members of the CELU was clearly contagious; "The mutiny immediately spread to the air force, the Fourth Infantry Division, and other special units in Addis Ababa" (Mulatu and Yohannis, 1988, p. 44). While initially, the demands of the military did not go beyond pay raises, with the criticism and support they received from the Ethiopian Teachers Association and CELU, they were able to articulate demands wide-ranging in content and support (Mulatu and Yohannis, 1988).

In addition to these political tensions, economic difficulties were mounting; inflation rates were rising, destabilising the urban elite especially. The inflation caused by the halting of export business due to the closure of the Suez Canal during the Arab-Israel war and the economically and politically taxing task of countering insurgencies all over the country, draught in Wollo and Tigray was severe and the insurgency in Eritrea was growing, all crushing the support from the urban elite (Marcus, 1994). During the famine in Wollo in 1973, the parliament demanded that the Ministry of Interior replace all provincial governors, accusing them of corruption, murder and the like; Markakis and Nega (1977, p. 96) report that "Answering it, the new

Minister of Interior took a philosophical line. 'We cannot change Ethiopia over-night,' he declared, 'nor can we dismiss all officials on short notice.'"

On 27 February 1974, the cabinet resigned, leading to the appointment of Endalkachew Mekonnen as the new prime minister and the establishment of a new cabinet and a commission that would revise the constitution. The new prime minister was promised more autonomy and was allowed to appoint his new cabinet. Markakis and Nega (1977, p. 97) write "the same promise concerning the prime minister's responsibility to parliament had been made in 1966 in an imperial speech over the radio, and was subsequently retracted as a slip of the tongue." Following this action, the prime minister for the first time directly appeared and addressed the parliament on 05 May 1974.

During the time of these instabilities and ministerial resignations, the armed forces collectively also established a committee that would represent their inter-est, with very loose objectives. The military and the police elected the committee (Brietzke, 1975; Clapham, 1988). Soon it would start to take bold moves against the aristocracy and later the urban elite. On 22 July 1974, Endalkachew Mekonen saw an end to his short-lived career as prime minister. He was replaced by the Minister of Commerce and Industry, Michael Imiru:

> This choice was further indication of the confusion on the part of the military, who considered it necessary still to look for leadership among the ruling class. . . . The Derg's statement asserted that though born of the aristocracy, Mikael Imru's social outlook put him closer to the people than to the ruling class.
>
> (p. 107)

However, this explanation was not accepted by the intelligentsia, especially the All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement (Amharic acronym Me'ison), who were filling the ideological and programmatic gaps the Derg had; they published on their popular periodical *Democracia:* "The Derg tries to make people believe that its enemies are individuals, as if there are no classes in Ethiopia."[3]

A series of arrests were done by the Derg including "eight Members of Parliament, who appeared at the headquarters of the 4th Division, on 26 June, to ask for the release of the detained former ministers," provoking additional aggression (Markakis and Nega, 1977, p. 105). It was clear that the parliament, although still in power until this point, did not have the capacity to step in and fill the power vacuum at this crucial moment in history. Instead, the military coordinating com-mittee then led the formation of a smaller committee with three people from each of the units – including Hararge, whom Col. Mengistu Hailemariam represented. On 12 September 1974, this committee, popularly known as the Derg, the Amharic word for committee, rejected the newly drafted constitution, detained 300 members of the aristocracy and military, detained the emperor and took power of the Provin-cial Military Administrative Council (PMAC). It assumed legislative power as per Proclamation No. 1 of 1974. Michael Imiru was then replaced by a popular figure from the military and an early retiree who had already joined the Senate, General Aman Andom.

3.4 The Committee

Although the Derg clearly wanted reform of the administration of the army, including salary increments, its objectives ranged from recovering the allegedly mismanaged funds of the Congo soldiers to ousting the emperor from power completely (Berhanu, 2021). A member of the committee records that one of the discussions among the committee members was the possibility of acting in place of the parliament. To respond to the demands of the committee a new ministerial cabinet and salary increments were approved and replaced some regional administrators with former feudal lords and local residents, as well as established a committee to address famine in Northern Ethiopia.

A new constitution establishing a constitutional monarchy was presented to the Derg by the newly appointed Prime Minister, Michael Imru. The document was drafted by the Constitutional Revision Committee established in February 1974 (Schwab, 1985). The draft of this constitution was circulated for discussion widely among the public; following the discussion, the Derg concluded that the discussion confirmed its own assumption that the monarchy was rejected by the people in any possible form (Berhanu, 2021). The Derg in its own internal discussion had doubts about whether the reform would be undermined by the constitution, such that it was even reluctant to allow the commission to circulate the draft (Berhanu, 2021).

On 12 September 1974, the emperor was ousted from power by the Military coup d'état and on 19 October 1974, the parliament was officially dissolved (Melaku, 2016). The Derg agreed to establish an advisory body that would work in place of the parliament but was eventually dissolved. The advisory group consisted of some of the members of the two houses; a prominent member that was also proposed to hold the office of the Prime Minister was Haddis Alemayehu. Haddis Alemayehu was a former diplomat, Foreign Minister and member of the Senate from 1968 to 1974. Haddis Alemayehu declined the position and decided to retire into a life of writing political novels.

The Derg launched a government with the "Ethiopia Tikdem"[4] slogan based on the Ethiopian take on socialism, Hibretesebawinet.[5] The military committee ousted the emperor and executed 60 of the highest public and military officials of the Imperial Regime (Brietzke, 1976). On 04 March 1975, the Derg had already made the most important proclamation of its reign in Ethiopia on rural lands; on 26 July of the same year, a proclamation on urban land was also enacted. The proclamation stated that peasants "may be liberated from age-old feudal operation, injustice, poverty and disease, and in order to lay the basis upon which all Ethiopians maybe henceforth live in equality, freedom, and fraternity" (Proclamation No. 31 of 1975).

This proclamation was completely against the interest of the former parliament, particularly the appointees from the nobility and feudal lords especially found in the Senate. The revolution did not only oust them from politics but fully from social and economic prominence. The hierarchy in society was reflected in the hierarchy of parliament. And only when the hierarchy in society was dismantled was the parliament made even. The 1975 land reform abolished tenancy and landlordism.

Dessalegn (2009) reports that the sternest oppositions took place in Wollo, South and West Shoa, Sidamo, Arsi, Bale, Wollega and Keffa provinces.

> It was the land reform which was at the end responsible for the collapse of the force [i.e., nech lebash]: officers as well as men lost the land they had held as payment for their services, much of which they had earlier converted to freehold with the blessing of the emperor. . . . Naturally, the nech lebash were opposed to the Revolution, so too, in large part, were the local police, but the latter, as agents of law enforcements, were caught in a difficult, frequently hazardous position . . . they were the prime targets of armed opposition . . . many policemen lost their lives, and for causes they did not believe in.
>
> (Dessalegn, 2009, p. 154)

But unlike the rebellion in 1966 against the tax proclamation, the involvement of the peasantry was not linked to its anticipated loss. Instead, Dessalegn (2009, p. 154) argues that the famine in 1974 had impacted the majority of the peasantry, creating large sections of the population in search of "means of sustenance, including unlawful activity"; as a result, the protestors "attracted large crowds of unarmed or ill-armed peasants who followed them for a chance at looting and robbery." Among others, two former parliamentarians led revolts against the newly inaugurated military government. Fitawrari Simieneh Desta and Fitawrari Awdew Abesha, along with other allies, initiated an uprising in Eastern Gojjam; the government eventually crushed the revolts (Gebru, 1991). Perhaps this should serve as an indication that the democratisation of the people will begin with the democratisation of the parliament.

In a way that unintentionally alludes to the 1931 constitution, the military rule promised an elected parliament but set up a 'temporary' military rule "until a legally constituted people's assembly approves a new constitution" (Mulatu and Yohannis, 1988, p. 51). While Me'ison, an offshoot of the student movement, looked down on the military member of the committee, it still chose to work with the Derg, unlike other political groups like the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP). Me'ison was known as the Europe-educated camp while the EPRP was the American-educated intelligentsia. "Since ME'ISON stood forthrightly for Ethiopian unity, the military decided to use its ideas for its own purposes. Me'ison members, therefore, had a crucial role in developing the rural and urban land reforms, provided reliable men for important government posts" (Marcus, 1994, p. 193).

While the period from 1974 to 1987 was one where the Ethiopian people were not represented by a parliament, elected or otherwise, it was critical in the subsequent parliament's political development by forming a foundation of the culture of political organization in the form of political parties. Political parties have less than 50 years of history in Ethiopia. Underground political mobilisations that resulted from the Ethiopian Student Movement led to the emergence of political parties, such as the incumbent Workers' Party of Ethiopia, Me'ison and EPRP (Dessalgn, 1987). Unfortunately, most of the members of these groups were killed in a wave of devastating killings by the military known as the "Red Terror" (Aaron, 2005). While the estimates vary between accounts, excluding the White Terror response,

the bloody Red Terror caused the death of an estimated 250,000 people in large cities, causing a generation of young, educated Ethiopians to lose their lives; others fled to neighbouring countries and eventually to the west forming a large segment of the Ethiopian diaspora (Babile, 1997; Gebru, 2008).

There were many political parties mushrooming around the socialist ideology in the 1970s. In many cases, they were short-lived and urban-based. They had differences in their class analysis of Ethiopian society, understanding of democracy and the means they chose to pursue their goals. Almost all sympathised with the socialist ideology and outright proclaimed it in their manifesto.[6] These include Me'ison and EPRP; both lost many of its members through the Red Terror, which first targeted EPRP and later, once the alliance with the Derg ended, Me'ison. Others were alliances or political parties that emerged out of mergers; examples being, Kittet Ethiopia[7] and an alliance formed by the Derg known as The United Front of Ethiopian Marxist Leninist Organizations (Emaldedeh) in 1977 by bringing together Me'ison, Echat, Malred, Seded and Woz League; later dissolved by Degue in 1978.[8] Two socialist parties that were known for their exclusive ties with single nations were the Marxist Leninist League of Tigray (1985)[9] and the Ethiopian Oppressed People's Struggle (ECHAT) (1975 merger with Emaldeh). ECHAT's members were mainly Oromos who believed the 'nationalities question' had a class dimension; the party "was a member of EMALEDEH, but was accused of narrow nationalism and expelled from the United Front" (Yohannes, 1991, p. 154). There were also a few parties that were least known for their socialist agenda; an example is the Ethiopian Democratic Union (Ehedeh), formed in 1975 by "remnants of the aristocracy" – the party pursued military means in Gondar and had two splinter parties formed by its members (Yohannes, 1991, p. 157).

After this process that was mainly marked by the death of thousands of Ethiopian youth through the Red and the White Terrors, "the Derg claimed to have managed to form a monolithic party of a Leninist type, namely, the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (WPE), in 1985" (Kassahun, 2005, p. 168). The Workers' Party of Ethiopia launched in 1984 (although foundational work started in 1977), became the only actively participating party and joined the Shengo in 1987 (Yohannes, 1991).

3.5 The Constitution of the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Several activities preceded the constitution and the parliament (Kaleab, 2018); these included the establishment of the Institute for the Study of Ethiopian Nationalities (Proclamation No. 236 in 1983), the Workers' Party of Ethiopia (1984), the Constitution Drafting Commission (Proclamation No. 291 in 1986) and the Commission for Referendum on the Constitution (Proclamation No. 305, 1986). The former Vice President Col. Fideha Desta proudly remembers, "we translated the document into 15 [local] languages and made over 25,000 consultations all over Ethiopia and with the diaspora. It is an irony that the EPRDF accuses us of ignoring the rights of nationalities."[10]

In stark contrast to the former two constitutions that made the object of power the emperor, the constitution approved though a referendum on 01 February 1987 had a more 'state'-centred tone. It began by attempting to situate the county in history, geopolitics and the world economy by professing socialism and framing the country and its major milestones such as the victory of Adwa (1896) as a victory over the capitalists and imperialists. Replacing the power of the emperor, the sovereign state of Ethiopia and its territory adopted indivisibility and inviolability (Article 1.2). The constitution declared that "power belongs to the working people . . . exercised though the National Shengo and local Shengos which they establish by election . . . [and] referendum" (Article 3).

> Members of the Constitution Drafting Commission (CDC) appointed by the Derg in 1986 included the experts who produced the draft document, Central Committee members of WPE, high-ranking government officials, leaders of client mass-organizations and professional associations closely associated with WPE, and widely known public figures and religious leaders. Most of the 354 members of the CDC did not possess the knowledge and experience for deliberating and debating on a constitutional document, nor did they have the mandate from their respective "constituencies" to undertake such a task.
>
> (Kassahun, 2005, p. 169)

According to an official document (PDRE 1987), the draft was translated and published in 14 local languages and two million copies were distributed across the different parts of the country. It was claimed that over 14 million eligible citizens of voting age took part in the public discussions facilitated by 1,250,000 coordinators in 25,000 forums. The Central Committee endorsed the final version of the Constitution at its 5th Plenary Session of September 7, 1986, and decided that this be ratified by a popular referendum, which was expedited by a Referendum Commission comprising 61 members headed by the Secretary General of WPE and the military Head of State, Col. Mengistu Hailemariam. In the different parts of the country, Referendum Committees spearheaded by the henchmen of the regime were set up at regional, provincial, district and polling station levels to monitor and coordinate the exercise. The Referendum was held in February 1987 in 25,000 polling stations. It was reported that 14,035,718 people or 96% of the registered voters went to the polls.

> Of these 81 percent were reported as having voted in support of the Draft Constitution. The electorate was mobilized to perform the ritual of electing the already selected candidates. Out of the 15,166,463 registered, 87.7 percent cast their votes.[19] On June 14, 1987, national elections were held from dawn to dusk in 812 constituencies throughout the country, and the same number of representatives was endorsed/elected.
>
> (Kassahun, 2005, pp. 169–170)

Articles 4 and 5 mention the principle of democratic centralism and socialist legality, loosely defined as the processes through which all levels of government are elected that the "state power shall exercise centralism and local initiative. Decisions of higher organs shall be executed by lower organs. Lower organs are accountable to higher organs" (Article 5). In terms of economy, the socialist constitution explicitly promulgated the Marxist slogan in Article 18 "from each according to his ability, to each according to his work."

Article 50 of the constitution provided that all Ethiopians above 18 years old have the right to elect and Ethiopians above 21 have the right to be elected. The National Parliament, referred to as the Shengo, established through popular election is "the supreme organ of state power in the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia" (Article 62). The Shengo was given the responsibilities of legislating (Article 63) and overseeing the executive branch (Article 76). The national Shengo met once a year (Proclamation No. 110/1969 Art. 5, 6 and 19). The Council of State had many powers and duties that allowed it to make critical decisions on behalf of the Shengo, including coordinating the commissions the Shengo establishes and oversight over the executive branch (Article 82). This eliminates a separation of power between the executive and the legislative branches since the organs in the executive were represented in the Council of State. The Council of State, besides the members of the Shengo, had several other bodies as its members, including "the Council of Ministers, the Supreme Court, the Procurator General, shengos of higher administrative and autonomous regions, and mass organizations through their national organs have the right to initiate legislation" (Article 71). According to Article 81, "the president of the People's Democratic republic of Ethiopia is the President of the Council of state." The authority of Constitutional interpretation was assigned to the Council of State, as per Article 83. It was responsible for calling regular and special sessions of the Shengo and had the powers to revoke regulations and directives by other state institutions as well as the power to decree to implement its responsibilities or issue Special Decrees and state of emergencies between National Shengo sessions (Articles 82 and 83). These decrees are subject to approval by the Shengo in the following session (Article 83 sub-article 3).

The Shengo was responsible for electing the president and vice president and was responsible for establishing the Council of Ministers (Article 63). Article 64 provided that the candidates for the national Shengo were to be "nominated by organs of the Workers' Party of Ethiopia, mass organizations, military units and other bodies so entitled by law." Unlike previous constitutions, the electorate was equipped with the power to elect and also recall its representative from the National Shengo (Article 66). The national Shengo, on the other hand, was given the power to extend its five-year term in case of "war or other emergency" (Article 70). Like the previous two constitutions, the number of deputies and session schedule of the Shengo were not specified in the constitution, as there was to be another law specifying this (Markakis and Asmelash, 1967, p. 199).

The highest executive organ of the Council of Ministers was "composed of the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Ministers and other members as determined by law" (Article 89). The National Shengo is responsible for electing the

Council of Ministers. It is responsible for preparing national plans for approval by the National Shengo and implementation of policies (Article 92). In 1987, there was a proclamation to establish a National Election Commission accountable to the Derg (Melaku, 2016). Besides age, the election proclamation introduced another qualification for running for office: only a limited number of institutions and associations such as the Workers' Party and military commanders were able to nominate candidates (Melaku, 2016).

3.6 The Shengo

The Shengo was a far more ethnically representative institution than its predecessors. Members of the military committee and the party ran for election mainly in their places of origin and there are records that peripheral regions were largely represented by Indigenous groups; for instance, only Nuer and Anuak candidates were selected to represent Gambella (Clapham, 1988). Other than that, the processes of election lacked a competitive element and the results were as predictable as the list of candidates – all candidates from the 835 constituencies were approved by the Derg. Each election station had a maximum of three candidates running for election. Each of the three candidates in the constituencies were ranked in order of the Derg's preference. "In all but fifteen of the 702 contested seats for which voting figures are available, the first-placed candidate won, usually by a wide margin, and no prominent party figures were defeated" (Clapham, 1988, p. 95). Such election practices already existed since 1975 during local government (kebele) elections. During the elections

> former landlords were prohibited from standing, the social networks which they had dominated remained in existence, and kebele offices were often taken over by clients of the old elite, or indeed by the young intellectuals from fairly prosperous urban families who were to provide much of the leadership of the EPRP.
>
> (Clapham, 1998, p. 132)

However, this trend had already faded by 1981 during the third kebele elections and it was completely destroyed by 1986 (Clapham, 1998). By 1987, their networks had largely been shattered, the Workers' Party entrenched itself and the Derg mainly dominated the election, although prominent personalities that were not members of the Shengo often attended Shengo meetings.

> Accordingly, the profile of deputies in terms of occupation was peasants (36.5 percent), workers in the industrial, manufacturing, and service sectors (12 percent), service members from different army units (12.9 percent), full-time party activists (8.5 percent), and party members and supporters in the civil service (27.3 percent). Women comprised 6.4 percent of the total number of the elected deputies.
>
> (Kassahun, 2005, p. 170)

Furthermore, the election stations were hosted by neighbourhood associations and farmers associations. Their associations were a central part of the socialist party; this kind of election practice limited elections between the Workers' Party and friends of the Workers' Party (PDRE Proclamation 314/1987).

> Party-affiliated mass organizations like the Revolutionary Ethiopian Women Association (REWA), Ethiopian Peasants' Association (EPA), Revolutionary Ethiopia Youth Association (REYA), Ethiopian Teachers' Association (ETA), and Ethiopian Trade Union were all represented in the Council of State by their respective top leaderships.
>
> (Kassahun, 2005, p. 172)

According to the election committee, over 15.5 million people registered to vote and 85.4% of them voted (*Addis Zemen*, June 29, 1987). According to the *Addis Zemen* newspaper at the time of the election, the two candidates running in the same ward as Col. Mengistu Hailemariam decided to withdraw from the election . . . just days before the election. The military government approved the MPs power in the third regular meeting on 27 June 1987. On 12 September 1987, after 13 years proclamation 01, 1974 was replaced by a new constitution. Eight-hundred-thirty-eight members of the Shengo were to be removed from position due to their inability to execute duties due to personal reasons, death or withdrawal of representation by the electorate (Melaku, 2016). In 1988, a government council was established to work on behalf of the Shengo because the Shengo only met once a year. Ministers were accountable to the Shengo but when the Shengo was not in session they were accountable to the president and government council, as specified in the constitution.

A new election proclamation that was never implemented came into force in September 1988. It allowed all Ethiopians despite political affiliation to elect and be elected and it also placed accountability of the commission to the government council and its members were appointed by the Shengo instead of the president (Melaku, 2016). While there were efforts to facelift an already dying system, the professionalisation of politicians and the politicisation of professional civil servants had made simple reforms meaningless.

> It (the Derg) also encouraged the proliferation of parallel structures by appointing party functionaries to key decision-making civil service positions. . . . Hence duplication and fragmentation of public functions and the downplaying of merit and professionalism became the order of the day.
>
> (Henok, 2020, p. 308)

The Derg faced various challenges towards the end of its reign – challenges very similar to those faced by Emperor Haile Selassie. These included economic challenges emanating from the global condition and internal insurgencies, especially in Eritrea, Tigray and the Ogaden/Somali. Economic and military challenges intensified after 1989; as the Eastern block was weakened, their military assistance and

the Derg's ability to resist northern insurgents declined. Mediation efforts with the EPLF were futile and less than a decade from the Ogaden War, the army was now fighting the EPLF. Similar to the situation in 1974, the elites were frustrated (Henz, 2000; Hall, 2003).

On 05 March 1990, Mengistu Hailemariam delivered his famous speech, contents crafted by the Central Planning Commission, proclaiming a mixed economy as the answer to the economic turmoil (Henz, 2000, p. 316). During the third Special Session of Shengo held on 22 April 1991, the Shengo had an intense discussion with 561 members in attendance. Prominent people who were not members of the Shengo also attended the meeting (Berhanu, 2021). Berhanu Bayeh remembers that the discussion was full of uncertainty and courage. Members of the Shengo and prominent personalities were challenging the president, displaying unusual courage, some openly arguing for democratic rights, national reconciliation, opposing war and due processes of law (Berhanu, 2021).

Such discussions were unheard of in the initial years of the Shengo because of the Derg's reputation for the extrajudicial killing of the members of the nobility and its own members, including the first chair of the Derg and protesters. During the meeting, Dr Hailu Araya, a member of the Shengo, accused the president "Why do you get angry and threaten MPs when they ask questions? We are here representing the people. You should moderate the discussion you shouldn't respond to each MP" (Berhanu, 2021, p. 649). Berhanu interprets the courage with which the Shengo members spoke as hopelessness. The parliamentarians simply had a feeling that there was nothing more to lose because all had already been lost. Hopelessness, like hope, can result in courage.

3.7 Conclusion

The parliament in 1931 reflected that of the political and socioeconomic stature of Imperial Ethiopia in 1931 and the one in 1965 was a reflection of the political and socioeconomic changes recorded in Ethiopia from 1931 to 1965. The parliament in the 1960s and 70s reflected what Opalo (2019, p. 8) described as the "sharing of political power and governance rent" in different African contexts. Similarly, during this period in Ethiopia the constitution and the parliament, besides the legitimisation of the monarchy, allowed the emperor to create mechanisms of power and rent-sharing alternatives to the feudal economic system at play at the time. The method of administration of the civil service, the military, land and taxation in 1931 were no longer fit to that of the Ethiopian society and government in the 1960s. Tensions were growing in all different arenas and parliament was central to this. The Shengo to some extent mirrored the political culture that existed under the Imperial regime, but it also shattered the 'progress' that was made in cultivating open discussions and debates in parliament. While in the beginning parliamentary seats were granted to aristocracy the emperor wanted to push out of the feudal and monarchical power circles, later the parliament served as a mechanism that allowed newer groups and faces to be brought closer to power. Again, concurrent with Opalo's analysis of some postcolonial legislatures, "legislatures enabled postcolonial regimes to institutionalise

ascriptive representation at the center (whether ethnic, religious, or geographic) and recruitment of new members into the governing class" (Opalo, 2019, p. 9).

Essentially parliament was nonexistent for the majority of the Derg's rule, which constitutes the longest period without a parliament since 1931. After its establishment, fear gripped the parliament just as it had every other government institution. Still, a vibrant resistance was organised by different political parties, against the Mengistu Hailemariam and his regime. However, the opposition political parties' role in electoral politics and exerting meaningful political pressure on MPs remained marginal. As various MPs admit, the fear towards Mengistu Hailemariam and his close circle was stronger among those within government – either due to the amount of information/experience they possessed or due to the amount of risk they might incur. High military and political officials[11] within the Derg have explicitly admitted that none of them and their comrades were bold enough to speak against decisions by the president. A mixture of fear, risk and information/experience was critical in shaping the behaviours of MPs and their relations with the electorate. The last days of Emperor Haile Selassie and the Derg show that elite frustration played a critical role in ending the cycle of fear and finally revealing the crack between the parliament and the executive branch. The parliament became bolder and more vocal, but in both cases, it was not possible to prevent the collapse of the system in its entirety.

Notes

1 The Derg is the Amharic word for committee, referring to the military committee that was established in 1974. It took power from the Monarchy, abolishing it and leading the country until 1991.
2 Land grant received by churches, nobles, or provincial governors from the emperor.
3 Democracia, No. 4, 8 August 1974, fromMarkakis and Nega (1977).
4 An Amharic word for 'Ethiopia First.'
5 Could literally be translated as Society-ness or Community-ness.
6 Such parties are the Ethiopian Marxist-Leninst Party (MaLRED) (1976–), the Ethiopian National Liberation Front (1971–76), the Me'ison (1976 to August 1977, persecuted when it stopped alliance with Derg), the Ethiopian Communist Party (ECOPA) (1975), the Woz League (1976- joined Emaldeh), the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (1975 – merged with EDU in 1981 after many of its members were executed and exiled) and the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (EHEDN) (formed in 1981 by a faction of EPRP, worked with TPLF and Me'ison).
7 Formed by EPDA and NAMLEP.
8 The short-lived political parties initiated by the Derg was Abiyitawi Seded, formed in 1976 by Col Mengistu and his military comrades.
9 The Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray had members from different nationalities but later created regional offices and sent their members to their respective homelands to be part of the regional offices.
10 Interview, Col. Fiseha Desta.
11 Cf. accounts by Fasika Sidelel and accounts by Dr Hailu Araya.

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4 The Council of Representatives and House of Peoples' Representatives in Post–1991 Ethiopia

The global situation in post–1991 Ethiopia is significantly different from the previous regimes. Constitutions, elections and parliamentary assemblies are no longer something that can easily be taken at the will of the sovereign due to the supervisory role the liberal world has bestowed on itself as the guardian of democracy and democratic practices. It is difficult to find African countries without constitutions, periodic elections and regular parliamentary assemblies. These institutions and functions exist at least symbolically if not genuinely. It is therefore important to establish the legal and institutional frameworks that exist internationally besides conducting an analysis of the 1994 constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE).

After Mengistu Hailemariam fled Ethiopia on 21 May 1991, seeking refuge in Zimbabwe, the Tigrayan People Liberation Front (TPLF), along with its Amhara, Oromo and Southern Nations counterparts in the EPRDF (established in 1989), controlled Addis Ababa within seven days. This chapter analyses the EPRDF-led transitional period from 1991 to 1995 with a focus on representative institutions and processes; it continues to discuss the parliament post-1995. The chapter discusses elections in detail as a critical component of legitimate representative institutions, and examines critical legislations that defined relations of the parliament with the electorate as well as the executive branch.

4.1 Transitional Period and the Council of Representatives

Many pro–EPRDF authors argue that from the beginning, the TPLF/EPRDF possessed so few of the characteristics of a rebel movement that its transition from an armed group to a government was smooth (Mulugeta, 2017; Young, 1998b; Clapham, 1998). They overlook the fact that most of the members of the group were children upon recruitment and that the strictness of leadership, among other things, was to be a trait of the government it would form. While the international community was happy with the democratic promise of the period, others called it a process where "the EPRDF got to choose the players and make up the rules of the TGE" (Vestal, 1996, p. 22). Over five years it held three elections for the constitutional assembly and the federal and local governments; this laid the foundation for the EPRDF to establish itself as a legitimate government for the following 27 years.

The transitional charter was signed in the presence of over 500 participants and 22 foreign observers (paraphrase). The charter provided that there was going to be a council made up of 87 seats. A total of 32 political parties and coalitions were represented in the council. Three of them – OPDO, TPLF and OLF – each had 10 representatives, while there were 12 various worker groups representatives. The remaining 28 political parties and movements each had three or fewer representatives. This process from 1991 to 1995 promised the participation of representatives of various identity groups in the country; however, the processes lacked in terms of inclusivity of political groups. The first manifestation was that surviving members of ME'ISON and EPRP organised themselves under the Coalition of Ethiopian Democratic Forces (COEDF); however, the Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) rejected their participation in the transitional period because it believed they "collaborated with the previous military regime" (National Democratic Institute, 1992, p. 14). But the main reason might have been that most of their members were opposed to the secession of Eritrea (Aaron, 2005). The EPRDF, appreciating its own experience, recognised that most of the political parties in 1991 emerged from ethnic-based liberation fronts that had flourished during the Derg's operative leadership. However, key groups like the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) were replaced by Oromo- and Somali-based organizations within the EPRDF umbrella, that is, the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), the Ethiopian Somali People's Democratic Party (ESPDP) and the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM). Furthermore, many liberation fronts had their own armies. A commission that would demobilise the Derg army was already in motion; "the EPRDF functioning as the State Defence Army" was the next step (Vestal, 1999, p. 9). The EPRDF saw the continued counter-insurgency from OLF as an "early test" to the new government and its defense forces.

> The security reform decisions of the new regime were validated by the new defence force's success in confronting several threats. First, the new defence force carried out a successful counter-insurgency campaign against the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which walked out of the transitional arrangement and ordered its army to abandon its camps and renew the insurgency war in 1993–5.
>
> (Mulugeta, 2017, p. 172)

Asefa (1993, p. 27) describes the process of representing the OPDO in government rather than the OLF as a process deprived of "genuine Oromo representation;" even though this view is based on the factual concern over the exclusion of the OLF; it does not equate the total exclusion of the Oromo. The argument does not distinguish between the symbolic and descriptive representation the Oromo had, as opposed to the substantive representation of the views of the OLF. Such arguments later augmented into concerns over the "genuineness" of the Oromo identity of the members of the OPDO. Rumours claiming that key leaders were in fact Tigrayans disguised as Oromo were widespread among the public; similar debates also existed

regarding the Amhara and other ethnic constituting parties of the EPRDF. There is likely no factual basis to these rumours but it was indicative of the public's opinion towards the government causing tensions in the years to come on issues of 'genuine' representation of identities.

The Transitional Charter of 1991 was a concise proclamation of 20 articles that discussed democratic rights, foreign policy, the structure of the transitional government and its political and rehabilitation programmes. According to the Charter, the Council of Ministers and the Council of Representatives together formed the Government. The Council of Representatives was "composed of representative of national liberation movements, other political organizations and prominent individuals, to make-up a total of no more than 87 members" (Transitional Period Charter of Ethiopia, 22 July 1991, Article 7). It had standing committees on various issues including transitional council, transitional council membership requests and on Eritrea (Melaku, 2016). Vestal (1996) criticises the charter as lacking democracy, mainly focused on shielding the transitional government from critics.

In June 1992, local elections were conducted at Zonal and District levels. In 1994 there were elections for the Constitutional Assembly where 15.1 million people registered to vote. The OLF, Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Coalition (SEPDC) and the ONLF were the three parties that boycotted the Constitutional Assembly (CA). There are two extreme views on the Transitional government. While the more optimistic view stated that three successful elections took place during the period with little or no problem; the less optimistic argued that the "Coalition government has collapsed" (Tecola, 1995). Tecola (1995, p. 10) argues this point, citing that "There were twenty-one ethnic political organizations that formed the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE). As of October 1993, there were not more than seven of the liberation movement's founding members of the Charter." Fourteen of them had left.

The first political party formed in 1991 by politicians composed of the Oromo, Amhara and Tigrians outside of the EPRDF was the National Democratic Union. Among other things, the Union was against the formation of federal regions along identity lines, including the pending referendum on Eritrea. Vestal (1999, p. 24) explains the response of the EPRDF to this union, referred by him as the UDN (United Democratic Nationals):

> In September 1991 the UDN began holding weekly public meetings that were attended by 8,000 or more . . . EPRDF cadres attempted to disrupt meetings of the UDN and to harass those attending . . . TGE-controlled mass media, especially radio, carried on a campaign vilifying the multiethnic UDN as a chauvinistic Amhara organization harbouring many former members of the Derg . . . an estimated 150,000 UDN supporters held a peaceful mass demonstration in Addis Ababa."

After the demonstrations, members of the Union were charged with inciting rebellious acts and making false statements against the TGE. The imprisoned did not appear in court until intervention by the US embassy, which led to their release

(Vestal, 1999). A weaker version of the union continued to function after its members were exiled and its offices were taken over by the EPRDF (Vestal, 1999). In the 1992 election, Vestal (1999) argues that the method that destroyed the National Democratic Union was applied to other political groups. Almost every step of the election was contested: selection of the National Election Commission members (NEC), access to resources, media and freedom to campaign. The two opposition political parties, the OLF and All Amhara People's Organisation (AAPO), faced intimidation during their campaigns.

A few days before the scheduled elections, EPRDF security forces raided the Addis Ababa offices of the AAPO and terrorised party workers. Finally, on June 17, the OLF, AAPO, and three smaller parties, the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia, the Ethiopian Democratic Alliance Group and the Gedeo People's Democratic Organization, withdrew from the elections (and from the TGE) – hounded out by EPRDF harassment (Vestal, 1999, p. 31). After the elections and harsh criticism of the election processes by international observers, the TGE established an Election Review Board. The parties that had withdrawn from the election insisted on annulling the results and starting anew, which went unheeded.

4.2 The 1994 Ethiopian Constitution

The Council of Representatives established a commission responsible for drafting the constitution. The commission had 29 members and was organised into four panels (Vestal, 1996). The Commission participated in various discussions with local and international experts; the process culminated by closing government offices for two days to hold public discussion on the constitution at various levels including the kebele. However, like most forms of 'public participation' following this period, some reported that "Citizen participation was encouraged by threats to the recalcitrant of cessation of sales of sugar, edible oils, soap, and salt at kebele shops – an especially effective inducement in the countryside. Similar subtle persuasions discouraged the hesitant in urban areas" (Vastel, 1996, p. 24). On 08 April 1994, the Commission handed a draft to the Council and it was approved on 28 October 1994 by a Constitutional Assembly of 547 members that was elected on 05 June 1992; 484 seats were won by the EPRDF. While the international community widely praised the election; as indicated above, some attributed the encouraging turnover to "hostility and fear propagated participation" (Vastel, 1966, p. 25).

Unlike the previous ones, this constitution takes Montesquieu's "trias politica" into account, clearly dividing power among the parliament and the executive and the judiciary branches in Articles 55, 77 and 79 of the constitution (FDRE Constitution, 1994). As among various international and continental legal frameworks, the House of Peoples' Representatives (HPR) provides the opportunity for citizens to exercise their human rights, particularly their civil and political rights. The FDRE Constitution (1994) is the primary legal grantor of the sovereignty of the nations, nationalities and people "expressed through their representatives elected . . . through their direct democratic participation" (FDRE Constitution, 1994, Article 8). According to Article 50 (3) "The House of Peoples' Representatives is the

highest authority of the Federal Government. The House is responsible to the People. The State Council is the highest organ of State authority. It is responsible to the People of the State." Furthermore, "The State Council has the power of legislation on matters falling under State jurisdiction. Consistent with the provisions of this Constitution, the Council has power to draft, adopt and amend the state constitution" (FDRE Constitution, 1994, Article 50 [5]). Constitutions of the federal states also ensure the rights of the people through representative systems at the regional, woreda and kebele levels, with some variations in the administrative structures. In all cases, the regional council is the legislative organ of the states and is elected for a term of five years.[1]

In line with the provisions of the UDHR and ICCPR regarding people's rights to participate in government "through freely chosen representatives," Article 54 of the FDRE constitution specifies that up to 550 members of the HPR "shall be elected by the People for a term of five years on the basis of universal suffrage and by direct, free and fair elections held by secret ballot" (UDHR, 1948, Article 21; FDRE Constitution, 1994, Article 54). As recognised in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981) and implied in other conventions, the FDRE constitution Article 54 puts in place a special mechanism to ensure the representation of minority groups. It recommends the reservation of at least 20 of the 550 seats to be reserved for "special representation for minority Nationalities and Peoples" – a right reserved for nationalities and peoples, not Nations.

The HPR is endowed with many responsibilities including the election of the Head of the executive branch (the prime minister), who must be a member of the House, and approving the members of his/her cabinet (Article 73 [1, 2] and Article 56). The HPR is also responsible to approve the appointment of "Federal judges, members of the Council of Ministers, commissioners, the Auditor General" (Article 55). All of these institutions, including the Prime Minister, are accountable to the HPR (Article 72 [2]). As per Article 74 (2,7) of the FDRE constitution, the prime minister nominates and presents for the approval to the HPR members of the Council of Ministers, Commissioners, the president and vice president of the Federal Supreme Court and the Auditor General; who might or might not be a member of the HPR or the House of Federation. The HPR elects a speaker and deputy speaker and establishes standing and ad hoc committees to help facilitate its work (Article 55 [19]).

The oversight, monitoring and evaluation role of the HPR is enshrined in Article 55 (7, 16, 17, 18 and 19) of the constitution. While regional authorities are responsible for addressing human rights violations in their jurisdiction, the HPR can request a joint session with the House of the Federation "to take appropriate measures" (Article 55 [16]). The HPR also has

> the power to call and to question the Prime Minister and other Federal officials and to investigate the Executive's conduct and discharge of its responsibilities. It shall, at the request of one-third of its members, discuss any matter pertaining to the powers of the executive. It has, in such cases, the power to take decisions or measures it deems necessary.

The HPR is not only responsible for national defense, public security and a national police force but also must "carry out investigations and take necessary measures," lest "the conduct of these forces infringes upon human rights and the nation's security" (Article 55 [7]).

One of the key powers of the HPR is legislation on matters under Federal jurisdiction, which include governance of natural resources, transport and trade crossing international borders and/or the boundaries of regional states, the realisation of electoral laws and procedures, the enactment of labour, as well as commercial and penal codes (Article 55). The HPR is responsible for the organization of the national defense, the national police force, and the declaration and resolution of states of emergency; proclamation of a state of war, "general policies and strategies of economic, social and development, and fiscal and monetary policy of the country," local currency, the National Bank, foreign exchange, and ratifying the Federal budget as well as international agreements. Furthermore, the HPR is responsible for the establishment of the Human Rights Commission, the institution of the Ombudsman and, with the recommendation of the prime minister; the HPR appoints the members of the election board and National Census Commission (Article 55, Article 102 [2] and Article 103 [2]). The HPR is also empowered to play a key role in the initiation and execution of a constitutional amendment (Articles 104 and 105). The constitution also provides the procedures where the House may be dissolved and an election is held within a period of six months (Article 60).

According to the international conventions, states should put in place a 'Code of Conduct' that will guide the performance of public officials during their term in office.[2] Such a 'Code of Conduct' should be developed in tandem with national laws and appropriate international and national initiatives. Accordingly, as per Article 59 (2) of the FDRE constitution, the HPR has adopted Regulation No 3/2006 Rules of Procedure and Members' Code of Conduct for the house members. The document outlines various aspects of the House including, the powers, duties, organizational structures, opening ceremony, House sittings, agenda setting, motion, decision-making, legislation, budget approval and the like.

It also gave extensive recognition to rights enshrined in international human rights instruments. The constitution referred to the people of Ethiopia as "nations, nationalities and peoples," which was criticised by several constituencies ever since the constitution was publicised. Some believed that the transitional government should have noted that in the first half of the 1990s, the horrific events in Rwanda and Bosnia–Herzegovina took place. But the direct link between the recognition of multiple nationalities and genocide has not really been established either by academics or politicians. Article 39 is one of the articles that was hotly contested not only by the public but also by the Council of Representatives, which consequently worked on two versions until final approval. The article stated that besides self-determination, the nations, nationalities and peoples have a right to "secession." The article was criticised for the lack of commitment it displayed to state- and nation-building. Furthermore, "[i]n a liberal democracy, allegiance to the state need not conflict with, but can, on the contrary, accommodate subordinate loyalties to sub-national

communities – whether those communities are defined in terms of ethnicity, language, or territory" (Vastel, 1996, p. 33).

The newly inaugurated constitution created a federal form of government. Article 47 discussed the federal structure of government. The transitional government had already set up a federalist system that allowed for the larger nationalities such as Oromo and Amhara and other smaller nations like the Somali, Tigre, Sidama, Afar and even the Harari to have federal regions named after them. The rest, over 60 nationalities, were divided among four other regional states, namely, Gambella, Benishangul Gumuz, and the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) (Vestal, 1999). Ethiopian federalism continued the trend, although with some alterations. It was immediately labelled as "ethnic federalism"; a term not found in the constitution yet popularised by scholars (Mulugeta and Fiseha, 2015). What many refer to as ethnic federalism becomes inaccurate and incoherent as one questions the usage of the word 'ethnic' in postcolonial Africa and empirically sees the diversity in SNNPR, Benishangul-Gumuz and Gambella and the Amhara and the Oromo, who identify themselves as nations rather than an ethnic group. The border-making process was also to become deadly due to a process that wrongly supposed the existence of neat 'ethnic lines' between groups. In some cases, the attempt to align ethnic borders with administrative borders justifies the use of the terminology "ethnic federalism." This resulted in conflict in places such as Harar, adjacent areas of the Oromo and Somali, the Afar and Somali and Southern Wollo, where borders are not easy to make (Rock, 1996). Historical and cultural boundaries did exist but how to accommodate them with the idea of drawing administrative boundaries was not clearly outlined. The right to self-determination was constitutionally granted to all nations, nationalities and peoples in Ethiopia. This was partly expressed through the formation of some ethno-national regions during the TGE. At the same time, a merger between five regions – the Guraghe/Hadiya region, the Sidama region, the Wolaita region, the Omo region and the Kefa region – took place forming the SNNPR (Engedayehu, 1993). However, suspicions over EPRDF's commitment to the rights of these groups grew when it refused to accommodate the desire by groups to form independent regions; an example is the resistance towards the formation of the Sidama region.

Another feature of the EPRDF that persisted for 27 years, affecting its commitment to minority groups, is the political party structure. The EPRDF remained a coalition of four political parties: the TPLF, the OPDO, ANDM and the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM). Other political parties that formed in line with the EPRDF ideology gained the title 'affiliate' parties but never graduated into becoming full members. These were the Afar National Democratic Party (ANDP), Argoba People's Democratic Organization (APDO), Harari National League (HNL), Gambela People's Democratic Movement (GPDM), Ethiopian Somali People's Democratic Party (ESPDP) and the Benishangul-Gumuz People's Democratic Unity Front (BGPDUF).

Another article that continues to face scrutiny is the independence of the Judiciary. To most, the establishment of a Constitutional Interpretation Council is one way the party controls the Judiciary. As per Article 62 of the federal constitution and

proclamation 250, 2001, Constitutional Adjudication is organised into two tiers, at the federal and state level. The institutions responsible for constitutional control are the House of Federation (the final authority in the interpretation of the federal constitution), the Council of Constitutional Inquiry and the organs of the regional states that assume similar functions. As per these articles, the Council of Constitutional Inquiry "has the power to investigate constitutional disputes and submit recommendations to the House of Federation" for consideration (Getahun, 2007, p. 79). In these processes, the court is not part of the constitutional adjudication but one house of the parliament; the House of Federation is given extensive power. The House of Federation is formed through indirect representation, although the constitution provides for both direct and indirect representation. The regional state constitutions granted the power of constitutional adjudication to the Council of Nationalities (in the SNNPR, a region that mirrored the federal structure) and to a Commission for Constitutional Interpretation in the states of Afar, Tigray, Amhara, Oromyia, Harari, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella and Somali. This system has both advocates and opponents. Advocates argue that:

> emanating from and consistent with the overriding supremacy of the nations, nationalities and peoples whose sovereignty the constitution expresses. . . . Thus the ultimate interpreter of the constitution is made, not the highest court of law, but the House of Federation.
>
> (Fasil, 1997, p. 59)

Its critics go into the details to point out flaws of the processes to show how the executive branch overrides both the judiciary and the parliament through this setup. Both technical and representative capacities are part of the criteria set for membership in the Council of Constitutional Inquiry. In 1996, the federal government established a Council composed of 11 members appointed by the HPR. It is composed of six legal experts, three members of the House of Federation and two ex-officio members – the president and vice president of the federal supreme court.

While Ethiopia is a civil law country without a 'precedent system,' the function and practice of the House of Federation has resulted in its ability to adjudicate in the form of decisions, publishing them in "a special issue, but not in the Negarit Gazzette;" this has created a situation where another body other than the HPR is legislating (Getahun, 2007, p. 89). Another critique comes from the nature of the House of Federation as a mainly representative institution of nations, nationalities and peoples; and how that affects its constitutional interpretation on issues of minority rights. A milestone case that has showcased this dilemma is the issues of non-indigenous groups, like the Amhara, Tigre and Oromo, residing in Benishangul-Gumuz regional state. The election proclamation stated that candidates running for office should speak the language of the electoral district, restricting members of the non-indigenous groups that do not speak the local languages from participating as candidates (FDRE Proclamation no 111/1994). They argued that this provision was in contradiction to the constitutional right to vote and be elected, especially because the working language of the region (like most other

multinational regions) is Amharic (Asnake, 2009). Based on recommendations of the Council of Constitutional Interpretation, the House of Federation ruled the provision unconstitutional. Contending arguments claimed that the provision does not refer to ethnicity but language; opposing what many, including Asnake (2009, pp. 168–169), claimed that the provision "emanated from the core policy of the ruling party that considers ethnicity as the most important instrument of state organization and representation." Minority rights advocates argued that the decision by the House of Federation overlooked the right to self-rule of the minority Indigenous communities in parliament. Especially in Benishangul-Gumuz the minority rights advocates assert that "this provision has not prohibited someone from running for election because of his membership of a certain language group; it merely requires him or her to know the language of that group he or she is intending to represent" (Getahun, 2007, p. 89).

Since 1991, the parliament has become the only federal institution that seals the relationship between communities residing in regional states with the federal government. This was also true for the parliament since 1957; prior to that, the regional nobility served as a link based on their belonging to the same royal genre as the emperor. However, since then the parliament has become a significant entity due to what it represents:

> Almost nothing was put in their [regional nobility's] place, save for a hierarchical administrative structure, often manned by central appointees from Shoa rather than by natives of the region itself, and largely directed to the basic functions of security and public order. The one partial exception was the House of Representatives, the lower house of the Parliament (balanced by an imperially appointed Senate) which, under the Revised Constitution of 1955, was from 1957 elected at four-yearly intervals by adult suffrage.
>
> (Clapham, 1988, p. 35)

Much is at stake in the legitimacy of the HPR currently, and the credibility of election processes plays an important role in laying the foundation for its legitimacy. Free and fair elections are the basis for successful representative institutions. In all the zones covered in this research, there were several election-related controversies, eroding the legitimacy of the representative system. Cases similar to the one in Benishangul-Gumuz are appearing in various locations. The former Benč Maji zone hosted a half dozen Indigenous ethnic groups, each numeric minorities of populations less than 100,000. Given this circumstance, the government has institutionalised four 'special' electoral constituencies in the area to ensure minority representation. The 'special' electoral zones allow the minorities to occupy some of the 20 seats reserved in the HPR for them. But due to the high number of minorities, a controversial system (majet medebegna) is set in place, where four minority groups (Dizi, Suri, Me'en and Zelmamu) take turns during different electoral years. This leaves room for different minority groups that do not get represented since there are only 20 minority seats reserved in the HPR.[3] Furthermore, while they can run for non-minority seats, 'non-indigenous' residents of the zone like the Amhara and the

Guraghe, with large and continuously growing population size, feel disenfranchised by the arrangement.[4] Evidently, the representatives of the Oromo, Amhara and Tigre in the House of Federation could also outnumber the voices of the minority groups.

Van der Beken (2007) examines the provisions of Article 61 (2) of the FDRE constitution that stipulates the right of each identity group to get at least one seat in the House of Federation and an additional seat for each one million in population. He does so with the backdrop that the second house should counterweight the underrepresentation of minorities in the first house in bicameral parliamentary systems. He argues:

> Because of this, large ethnic groups such as the Oromo and Amhara have 20 and 14 representatives respectively whereas smaller ethnic groups such as the Harari and the Silte have just one representative each in the House. Consequently, the House of the Federation offers an insufficient counterweight to the preponderance of the larger ethnic groups in the first chamber of the parliament.
>
> (Van der Beken, 2007, p. 111)

4.3 Attempts to Align With International Legal Standards on Parliamentary Representation

The discussion in this book is delimited within the constitutional and parliamentary processes of Ethiopia. In this chapter, the book discusses currently existing national frameworks for representation and also offers broader normative discussions to provide some context on international and continental frameworks to which Ethiopia is a party. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948, Art. 21, 1) is the primary document recognising that "[e]veryone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives." It affirms that "[t]he will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government" made possible through a legitimate periodic election where all citizens are free to participate (UDHR, 1948, Art. 21, 3). This is echoed by the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) that recognises the right to participate and be represented in political institutions as an inviolable human right (1981, Article 4). Particularly, Article 13 (1) of the Charter states that "[e]very citizen shall have the right to participate freely in the government of his country, either directly or through freely chosen representatives in accordance with the provision of the law."

By establishing the right to be a part of one's government either directly or through representatives as a human right, the Declaration has set it as an inalienable right. Besides the UDHR, Ethiopia is a party to various subsequent conventions that echo this. An example of such a treaty is the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) that entered into force on 23 March 1976 (ICCPR, 1976). Article 25 of the Covenant states that all citizens have the right

> (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives; (b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections

which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret bal-
lot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors; (c) To have
access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.

<div align="right">(ICCPR, 1976, Article 25)</div>

Such rights are recognised for individuals but especially emphasised for women, chil-
dren, the aged, the disabled and all people, including those colonised and oppressed
(ACHPR, 1981, Articles 18–20). The charter specifies that all people "shall enjoy
the same respect and shall have the same rights . . . they shall freely determine their
political status and shall pursue their economic and social development according
to the policy they have freely chosen" (ACHPR, 1981, Articles 19–20). In most
modern states, the mechanism for people to choose economic and social policy and
exercise their right to self-determination is through freely elected representatives.

As per the aforementioned articles, while all citizens have the right to be voted
into public service, the United Nations Convention against Corruption is one of
the few international conventions that attempt to put in place some requirements
for candidates and their conduct during their term of office, stressing the need that
such representative institutions should be transparent. Under the convention, States
are encouraged to develop criteria with regard to corruption for candidacy (UNCC,
2004). Furthermore, States should also put in place transparency mechanisms for
funding of candidates and political parties and develop a 'Rules of Procedure and
Members' Code of Conduct' that will guide the performance of public officials dur-
ing their term in office (UNCC, 2004, Article 7, 3). As the convention notes, the
'Rules of Procedure and Members' Code of Conduct' should put into consideration
national laws and appropriate international and national initiatives such as the Inter-
national Code of Conduct for Public Officials contained in the annex to the General
Assembly resolution 51/59 of 12 December 1996. All the above are legislative meas-
ures against corruption and other related issues that will facilitate the prosecution
of corrupt practices. To ensure this, the African Union Convention on Preventing
and Combating Corruption provides that all public officials should "declare their
assets at the time of assumption of office during and after their term of office" and
establish institutions and Rules of Procedure and Members' Code of Conducts to
prevent, investigate and take disciplinary measures (African Union Convention on
Preventing and Combating Corruption, Art. 7 sub-art. 13).

Both the UDHR and the ICCPR specifically recognise the equal rights of both
men and women to take part in government "directly or through freely chosen
representatives." In addition, there are specific conventions that address nondiscrimi-
nation against women and minority groups. Article 7 (a and b) of the Convention
on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) urges
state parties to take necessary steps to establish women's rights in the area of politics
and public life. It specifically mentions their obligation to ensure the right

(a) To vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election
to all publicly elected bodies; (b) To participate in the formulation of govern-
ment policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and
perform all public functions at all levels of government.

CEDAW (1979, Article 8) also mentions the rights of women for equal "opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level." Linking the representation of women in national institutions including parliament with the representation of women in peace processes and conflict resolution, the UNSC resolutions on Women, Peace and Security urge member states to increase the representation of women in national decision-making institutions (UNSCR 1325, 2000).

The Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, adopted on the second ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union in Maputo on 11 July 2003, advocates that the principle of equality between the two genders should be reflected in national constitutions and any other legislations thereon. With regards to mechanisms of participation and representation, the protocol (2003, Article 9) encourages states to guarantee "increased and effective representation and participation of women at all levels of decision-making." It also explicitly recommends taking legislative measures that will ensure:

(a) women participate without any discrimination in all elections; (b) women are represented equally at all levels with men in all electoral processes [and] (c) women are equal partners with men at all levels of development and implementation of State policies and development programmes.

(2003, Article 9)

The African Youth Charter (AYC) (2006) recognises that "Africa's greatest resource is its youthful population" and that only through their meaningful participation will Africa exceed in the face of its many challenges, parallel to the fight against slavery and colonialism in the past. Among the many rights acknowledged by the parties of the charter is that State parties will promote active youth participation in society. One of the very first ways states are expected to achieve this is "(a) guarantee the participation of youth in parliament and other decision-making bodies in accordance with the prescribed laws; (b) facilitate the creation or strengthening of platforms for youth participation in decision-making at local, national, regional and continental levels of governance" (AYC, 2006, Article 11). States are then expected to develop a comprehensive national youth policy through participatory means that include these provisions along with the other rights in the charter to be "adopted by parliament and enacted into law" (AYC, 2006, Article 12). Similar to the provisions for girls and young women, the African youth charter also advocates for mentally and physically challenged youth (AYC, 2006, Article 24). The African Youth Charter specifically mentions both young men and young women in most of its provisions; Article 23 of the charter is specifically dedicated to the rights of girls and young women. In this case, the role of the parliament is twofold; through enacting laws that end discrimination and human rights violations and through ensuring the participation of girls and women in "political, cultural, civic life and leadership," which includes participation in parliament (AYC, 2006, Article 23).

The UN Youth 2030 policy focuses on the needs and rights of youth with implications on representative institutions at the national level; it is referred under its first

and fourth priorities on 'Engagement, Participation and Advocacy' and 'Youth and human rights,' respectively. These two priority areas advocate for making the voices of youth heard and encourage the political engagement of young people. At national levels, specifically, the Youth Policy promotes "meaningful and sustainable youth participation" and "young people's right to participate in public affairs, including in political and civic processes, platforms and institutions at all levels, such as elections, constitution-making processes, political parties and parliaments" (United Nations, 2018).

The Kampala Convention, the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Africa, entered into force on 06 December 2012, making special provisions for the political rights of IDPs. Article IX (2 [1]) obliges state parties to "Take necessary measures to ensure that internally displaced persons who are citizens in their country of nationality can enjoy their civic and political rights, particularly public participation, the right to vote and to be elected to public office" (African Union Commission, 2012).

The relevance of parliamentary institutions goes beyond national political processes; it is also endowed with responsibilities in international platforms and agendas. A typical example is the Cotonou agreement; as a financial agreement first signed in 2000 between African, Caribbean and Pacific States (ACP) and the European Union (EU), it recognises that the ACP-EU cooperation is not limited to the executive branch but extends to ACP parliaments and local decentralised authorities as well (Cotonou Agreement, 2000, Article 2). The cooperation agreement recognises that national parliaments might be involved in political dialogue and might hold joint parliamentary sessions with other states with common agendas (Cotonou Agreement, 2000, Article 8). It mentions the establishment of a joint parliamentary assembly between the parties of the agreement; it also provides that, with "the prior approval of the Joint Parliamentary Assembly," a representative designated by the parliament might attend if a member of the parliament fails to be present (Cotonou Agreement, Article 17).

4.4 Parliamentary Elections and the HPR in Post–1995 Ethiopia

In the 1990s and 2000s, the political parties and liberation fronts that emerged during the Derg were flourishing into parties, forming coalitions that would increase their prospect of winning elections and fighting with the continuous meddling of the EPRDF. Some constituencies dissatisfied by the EPRDF would actively seek to support alternatives; others were more pragmatic and questioned the capacity of the opposition to lead seeking evidence of previous leadership experience and smaller groups realised there was no point in working against a giant. Traditional leaders would go as far as 'cursing' individuals who would join opposition political parties. It is rational for less powerful members of society to avoid risk by voting for the MP who is affiliated with the strongest, most experienced and likely to win political party.

In the last election the EPRDF participated in 2015, it occupied 100% of the parliament seats (Arriola and Lyons, 2016). The EPRDF had a system where

Table 4.1 Results of national elections in Ethiopia under the EPRDF (1995–2010)

No.	Election year	Parliamentary seats won by the EPRDF and Affiliates	Parliamentary seats won by the opposition political parties and independent candidates	Percent of seats won by the ruling party
1.	1995	496	50	89
2.	2000	481	66	87.9
3.	2005	367	172	66.9
4.	2010	545	2	99.6
5.	2015	546	0	100

Source: Meheret et al. (2019, p. 22)

centrally-made decisions are difficult or impossible to oppose, disapproving of "internal factionalism" (Bach, 2011, p. 641). A characteristic feature of Ethiopian politics during this time is the 'executive bias/dominance,' where major decisions were made in the party's central committee, which extends into the government's key executive positions. Members of the House admit that the House "has severely underutilised its constitutionally mandated power"[5] and that it performs neither its legislative nor oversight responsibilities properly. The executive branch initiates almost all laws eventually approved by the parliament.[6] However, there existed pockets of resistance and autonomy that are explored in this chapter.

The EPRDF has established a "de facto one-party state," reversing the promises of the Charter for the Transitional Period and constitutional spirit (Merera, 2011, p. 664; Ottaway, 1995). The end of the transitional period was quickly followed by much disappointment and critique towards the EPRDF through claims of corruption and unequal relation of the parties (what is referred to by many as the "dominance of TPLF") forming the EPRDF, as well as false decentralisation of government structures (Aalen, 2000). Already in 1997, the belief that the TPLF had existed long enough to achieve its intended objectives and that it had grown entrenched in corruption led to suggestions that it should be dissolved by many, among who was Meles Zenawi (Paulos, 2003). This idea circulated until it was eventually pushed out of the arena by popular protests starting in 2014 and when the TPLF made an official statement telling its members to withdraw themselves from all political offices in September 2020 through its spokesperson.

The 1992 transitional period election was the first to establish the rule of the EPRDF, followed by the 1995 and 2000 elections – where the EPRDF won close to 90% of parliamentary seats (see Table 4.1). The 1995 election was conducted in a situation where a total consensus of the process was lacking. The 1995 election laid the foundation for the electoral controversy to follow in the consecutive four elections. Four political parties – the OLF, SEPDC, Western Somali Democratic Front (WSLF) and the AAPO – boycotted the election, while ONLF became one political

party that boycotted the Constitutional Assembly that decided to participate in the election. The processes were clouded by intimidation and the arrest of political party leaders (Rock, 1996). The EPRDF, on the other hand, claimed that the political parties were boycotting for other reasons; the public became all too familiar with these reasons, as cited during the consecutive election by explanations for why the political parties dropped out at the last minute or boycotted. The reasons were that "they know they don't have the level of support they claim for themselves. Yet, the reason they don't have this support is because they have no political programme, other than the achievement of individual power" (Rock, 1996, p. 97). Thus, in three ways the 1995 election set the tone for successive elections under the EPRDF: the (non)participation of major opposition political parties, the EPRDF's accusation of the opposition as a group of power-thirsty people without a clear political programme and the overwhelming participation of the public in elections mainly due to fear.

The 1995 election saw the EPRDF take 496 parliamentary seats out of 546 that were occupied. The EPRDF thus formed a new government; although the coalition had existed for six years at the point, it marked the official office power, "at its core the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)" (Rock, 1996, p. 92). The results were widely accepted by the international community only reporting minor glitches (Rock, 1996); these reports disregarded observations by the Norwegian Observer Group that described intimidation towards both political parties (leading to the boycott) and towards the public, forcing them to respond to the call to vote by the EPRDF out of fear (Tronvoll and Aadland, 1995). This trend, although disregarded by many international commentators, was becoming characteristic of elections under the EPRDF in the following elections.

Logistics (to be discussed further in Chapter 5) is one of the recurrent challenges of elections and subsequent parliamentary work such as constituency visits. During the 1995 election, Rock (1996) reports that special constraints existed, especially in pastoralist areas. In Afar, Somali and Harar, registration and election were postponed by up to 30 days. There were 32,000 polling stations that covered the whole country in 1995; the increase of the polling stations to 49,407 in the following election might be an indicator of the somewhat-improving infrastructure in the country. There were also challenges related to the lack of accurate information of the number of eligible voters. This is also a challenge given some populations are disproportionately represented due to a lack of accurate information on constituency size; there has not been a census for the last 15 years, so the election in 2021 had to rely on projections made from the 2007 census (CSA, 2007).

From 1998 to 2000, the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea claimed the lives of nearly 100,000 people (Dias, 2011). A widening rift between the EPRDF and the public emerged with the Eritrean war, the high cost of living and dissatisfaction with the processes of democratisation. In the election that took place in 2000, the number of opposition political parties increased dramatically. Unlike the 1995 election that was boycotted by major opposition, reports indicated that in 2000 17 political parties participated in the election. These included the All-Amhara People's Organization and Oromo National Congress (Sansculotte-Greenidge, 2010). While

these political parties did not get significant numbers of seats, it was reported that the opposition participating in the capital city council received 30% of the votes. A stringent electoral governance from the side of the EPRDF through the Election Commission only allowed political parties to participate in elections if they had a minimum of 60 candidates. This effectively discouraged smaller political parties from running (Vaughan, 2015). While the post-election period was somewhat peaceful and less controversial, still, reports of lack of press freedom and detention of opposition political parties existed. The Hadiya zone in the SNNPR was one of the locations that was critical in demonstrating persistent resistance in the face of contention in the 1995 as well as 2000 elections. Dr Beyene Petros, chairperson of the Hadiya National Democratic Organisation (HNDO), explained the situation:

> We are in a catch 22 situation; we cannot withdraw from the election, then we will registration. But if we continue with the campaign we will end candidates in detention. We are thinking of legal action but resources to hire lawyers. We are powerless to follow this up system. It is a very frustrating and depressing situation we are put in.
>
> (Tronvoll, 2001, p. 700)

Despite such frustration, the political party and their candidates persisted and won the election in the Hadiya zone. The growing reports of intimidation and detainment, not only by HNDO but by other political parties as well, led to a growing international demand for better democratic spaces during the 2005 election; shaping into the most competitive democratic exercise (Sansculotte-Greenidge, 2010; Asnake, 2011). The election was characterised by strong coalitions among political parties. However, many of them collapsed only months after the election; partly because of "differences between the leaders and, more importantly, due to differences in their visions of how to move forward politically" (Sansculotte-Greenidge, 2010, p. 121) and partly because of the context actively created by the EPRDF. The largest coalitions were the CUD, the United Ethiopia Democratic Forces (UEDF) and the Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement, led by Eng. Hailu Shawel, Merera Gudina and Bulcha Demeksa, respectively. The freedom of the press and the formation of these coalitions with specific political agendas led to the situation of the most competitive election in 2005 in the history of the EPRDF. The opposition won 172 seats out of the 547 in federal parliament. In the pre-election period, the public witnessed vibrant debates between the incumbent and several opposition political parties and participated in mass rallies in support of their chosen political party.

However, the row between the incumbent and opposition political parties began even before the results were announced; the CUD, which had won a significant number of seats in urban areas, including the whole of Addis Ababa, claimed that the government had tampered with vote counting and a majority of its members refused to take their parliamentary seats (Merera, 2011; Paulos, 2011). Some attributed the boycott to the CUD's large support in the diaspora and a pressure from this lucrative diaspora community (Vaughan, 2015). This perspective opened doors to new policy

agendas such as restricting international funding to political parties and civil society organizations (FDRE, 2009).

It is also important to note that boycotts had become a common trend across Africa; political parties with less than desired number of seats would decline playing the role of the opposition in parliament. For instance, in Angola,

> multi-party elections were held in 1992 after 17 years of civil war. The [Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola] MPLA government defeated [União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola] UNITA in free and fair elections, yet UNITA's response was not to form a loyal opposition, but to return to the bush and carry on its insurgency campaign.
>
> (Thomson, 2000, p. 243)

Besides the vote tampering allegations, the CUD might also be more motivated to leave due to the revision of the member's code of conduct (FDRE Proclamation No. 470, 2005) and the Addis Ababa city government proclamation on housing administration (Proclamation No. 19/2005). Article 19 of the proclamation stated, "Consistent with other compulsory provisions, the House shall vote on each of the agendas designed by the speaker; the agenda supported by majority vote of the House shall be deliberated up on." This was in sharp contrast to the previous code of conduct that allowed 20 MPs to present an agenda; with Article 19 in place, opposition political parties, who obviously did not hold 50-plus seats, would never be able to set an agenda in parliament.

In the election for Addis Ababa city council, CUD had clearly won. However, instead of allowing CUD to form the Addis Ababa city government because it had won the seats of the city council and taken its positions in the federal parliament, the HPR declared the seats unoccupied. It asked the former occupants of the seats to rerun for the positions from 2005 to 2008; in 2008 an election was held to fill these positions and CUD lost its seats in an ambiguous process (Smith, 2007). In the HPR, the elected representatives were denied parliamentary immunity (Smith, 2007). After the CUD boycotted the parliament, the government accused them of instigating post-election violence, treason and genocide; over 120 members of CUD were detained and charged. Among those arrested for treason and genocide was Professor Mesfin Woldermarriam, a person dedicated to Ethiopian public life since the Imperial regime. Merera (2011) an opposition political party leader, argued that the 2005 election was a step backwards. Abbink (2006, p. 173) also argues that the Ethiopian political system "has stagnated and slid backwards;" he further went on to characterise the outcome of the aftermath of the election as a 'reinvention' of authoritarianism reminiscing the Imperial and the Derg periods.

The 2005 election was followed by a period of political control by the EPRDF where opposition political parties were imprisoned and exiled, and media freedom was inexistent (CPJ press release, New York, 17 June 2010; Merera, 2011). A critical characterisation of the EPRDF at this time has been its philosophy of 'revolutionary democracy' and the 'developmental state' that Merera (2011, p. 665) describes as the "anti-thesis of liberal democracy, its modus operandi based on the Leninist principle

of 'democratic centralism'" (Merera, 2011, p. 665). Mainly after 2001 the narrative that portrayed "liberalism . . . as a cause to economic and political problems" became more pronounced (Bach, 2011, p. 650).

The election was organised in the shadows of the 2005 post-election violence that resulted in the death of more than 200 protesters and dozens of arrests of political party leaders. Some argue the factors making the 2010 election problematic were not necessarily only "the backdrop of the 2005 election" (Sansculotte-Greenidge, 2010, p. 121). An important factor here is that democratic processes such as parliamentary election and political party participation are 'democratic activities' that take place in the backdrop of the overall respect for human rights – especially freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. In all these areas, Ethiopia registered a low record of accomplishment. Furthermore, three critical laws that prevented opposition political parties, the media and Civil Society organizations working on democratisation from accessing donor funding were enacted; these are the anti-terror (Proclamation No. 652/2009), Proclamation on Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information (Proclamation No. 590/2008) and the Charities and Societies Proclamations (Proclamation No. 621/2009), respectively. Furthermore, in 2005, besides the new Member's Code of Conduct, there was a proclamation (471/2005) on Definition of Powers and Duties of the Executive Organs that enhanced the powers of the executive branch; it "gave the government all power to dismiss, dissolve or reorganise all federal organs and offices in the country, without scrutiny by parliament" (Abink, 2017, p. 89). This totally invalidated the 26 million USD invested by the donor community in support of the democratisation processes and the election in 2005 (Fikreyesus, 2007).

Given the circumstances, the EPRDF was expected to win the 2010 and 2015 elections, and it did so, taking more than 99% of the parliamentary seats. In the 2010 election, various political parties were arrested on the accusation of "plotting against the state" before the election (Sansculotte-Greenidge, 2010, p. 121). There were still some that tried to participate. One of the key opposition groups was the party formed by the former CUD vice president Birtukan Mideksa, Unity for Democracy and Justice (UDJ) in 2008. However, basing the action on the 2008 anti-terrorism Law, Birtukan Mideksa was rearrested, reversing the pardon given to CUD leaders in 2007. The name CUD was also appropriated by a smaller faction of the party, thus emerging as one of the smaller oppositions without its former leaders. Other important opposition groups were the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC), another coalition again led by Merera Gudina, and the All Ethiopian Unity Party (AEUP), led by the former chair of the CUD, Hailu Shawel (Sansculotte-Greenidge, 2010). Commentators argue that the agendas of debates were not as clear as the 2005 election among the political groups; even though they still seem to focus on federalism (Sansculotte-Greenidge, 2010). In 2005, less than 15% of the eligible community did not register to vote. According to Paulos' (2011, p. 232) compilation,

The total number of candidates running for the House of Peoples' Representatives was 1,847, and another 3,762 candidates competed for regional councils. Female candidates who competed for the House of Peoples' Representatives numbered 253, whereas those competing for regional councils numbered 700.

His numbers did not include woreda and kebele councils. Abbink (2017) compiled the number of candidates running for the HPR, regional, woreda and kebele councils for the 2010 election. He recorded that "the EPRDF fielded 3.6 m of the 4.5 m candidates (1 out of 20 Ethiopians)" (Abink, 2017, p. 91). Abink (2017) argued that this was because the government wanted to control local government with stronger representation, due to the donor community deciding to hand funding directly to local governments after the 2005 election. The government was also increasingly infringing on the rights of media houses and journalists. Being a journalist was referred to as "the most dangerous job in Ethiopia" and the number of journalists in prisons was increasingly ranking Ethiopia at the top among countries who restrict the freedom of press.[7]

During the 2005 election campaign for the election, the EPRDF targeted people through its revolutionary democracy "re-ideologisation campaign;" however, during the 2010 campaign it targeted Civil Society Organizations and opposition political parties by weakening "their capacity as voices of dissent and criticism" (Tronvoll, 2011, p. 124). The EPRDF was accused of using state resources to strengthen its power while it directly and indirectly embedded destabilising infiltrators inside opposition political parties, deliberately weakening them from within (Asnake, 2011). This indicates that the EPRDF clearly did not trust in the "mutual security" democracy provides; that democratic processes would finally lead to a better national outcome, suitable even to the EPRDF itself (Diamond, 1990). For example, before elections, the EPRDF would actively infiltrate, provide monetary incentives to members of opposition political parties to weaken the groups, threaten facility owners not to rent offices to the political parties and coordinate refusals to rent meeting venues. This trend had started in the period of the TGE. After the dismantling of the National Democratic Union there were reports showing that some of the highest leadership of the party were in fact EPRDF members that joined to "to bring into the open those opposed to ethnic federalism and the one-party rule of the EPRDF" (Vestal, 1999, p. 26). A similar trend has continued against the political parties such as the Oromo Federalist Congress and CUD, where EPRDF members would infiltrate meetings or offer incentives to the members of these groups to walkout.[8]

Little has been said by academics and institutions about the 2015 election – understandably; similarity of results with the one before it did not encourage new analysis. The overall propensity to authoritarian one-party rule was established in Ethiopia. Besides historical and structural dynamics, "electoral dynamics," were important in perpetrating this; the incumbent faces favourable conditions and the opposition is 'sailing against the wind' with little resource and experience to illustrate its potential to lead (Tronvoll, 2011, p. 134). The historical factors, already outlined in the last chapter, were the undemocratic and bloody politics that set negative precedence (Clapham, 2004). Structural factors include restrictive legislations, "omnipresent party structures" and "soft co-optation tactics" by the government and economic conditions (Tronvoll, 2011, p. 132; Clapham, 2004). Despite all the democratic deficiencies, each election led to the establishment of federal and regional parliaments; however, most important political and

economic decisions were made "outside the cabinet of Ministers and the parliament" (Abbink, 2006, p. 174).

After the elections in May 2015, popular protests and waves of violence by heavy-handed government security forces changed the course of politics – laying the foundations of the conclusion of the EPRDF coalition. Popular protests first erupted in the largest populous region, Oromia, due to the launching of the Addis Ababa Master Plan, which prompted the sounding of already existing grievances against land and resource distribution (Mebratu, 2021). The protests resulted in the eventual resignation of the then Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn in 2018, making room for the formation of new alliances within the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), bringing a new prime minister, Abiy Ahmed, to position (Weber, 2018; Fisher and Meressa, 2019). In 2020, the EPRDF coalition become a unified party (excluding TPLF), the Prosperity Party (PP).

4.5 Conclusion

The parliaments of post-1995 Ethiopia, being largely dominated by the EPRDF, were somewhat monotonous in composition. However, despite its composition, interestingly the parliament reflected major political trends nationally as well as power reconfigurations within the EPRDF. In the beginning, the parliament during this period was marked with 'interesting viewpoints' and 'debates' but through time, as the grip on power by the incumbent strengthened, the 'overdevelopment' of the executive branch became apparent, the debates were silenced and resistance became more subtle. Many discuss the 2005 election as the exception to multi-party democracy in Ethiopia. However, a closer look at the parliament reveals that pluralism within the EPRDF was more tolerated in the two election periods prior to 2005. In 2005, while the election welcomed competition from various opposition groups (Solomon, 2018); the parliament was less ready to welcome pluralism in any way.

Notes

1 Constitution of the Amhara regional state, 2001, (Art 54 (3)); Constitution of the Afar regional state, 2001, (Art 46); Constitution of the Oromia Regional State, 2001 (Art 48)
2 United Nations Convention against Corruption (2004).
3 Since Article 54 (3) of the constitution used the phrase "*at least* 20," there could be more than 20 seats.
4 Tesfaye Mamo, an expert who served from Kebe, Woreda and Zone Election executive committee within Benc' Maji Zone from 1987–2007 E.C Mizan-Aman, July 20, 2020.
5 Personal communication, National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE); 03 August 2020; Addis Ababa.
6 Personal communication, School of Federalism, Addis Ababa University; 03 August 2020; Addis Ababa.
7 Les Neuhaus. 10th December 2013. "Most Dangerous Job in Ethiopia: Journalism" Tadias Magazine. Accessed 16 July 2022. www.tadias.com/12/10/2013/in-ethiopia-journalists-critical-of-government-can-fall-prey-to-an-anti-terrorism-law/
8 Personal communication, a former EPRDF cadre who participated in the act of executing such plans, 2022.

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5 How Do MPs Reach the Electorate?

MPs are likely to use communication tools available at their disposal to reach their constituencies. While in the contemporary digital age social media is part of this means, in the pre-digital era, the means included traditional social networks such as Idir. In the 1950s, Idir, an informal neighbourhood social and financial institution that helped mobilise resources to support households during times of difficulty,[1] was "used by candidates in parliamentary and municipal council elections as a means of organizing support" (Clapham, 1988, p. 131). MPs' interactions with their constituency serve a specific purpose; that is, an obligation that focuses on sharing their plans with the electorate and serving as the means of travel and communication for their constituency's wants and needs from the power peripheries to the nuclei of power in capital cities (Abélès, 1991). Others view this process as something beyond a parliamentary role; instead as more relational and performative (Crewe, 2021). Crewe argues that case studies in Myanmar and Bangladesh were relational, while the case of the Ethiopian parliament is more based on the idea of representation as a 'role.' Drawing from discussions with the HPR secretariat and project officers, representation is not seen as 'a state of being' by parliamentarians; it is not defined as something that entrenches them in all their functions. Instead, representation is reduced to constituency visits taking place twice a year, as provided by the Member's Code of Conduct.

In 2018 the HPR Secretariat commissioned four studies on the different functions of MPs; these were a study on the legislative processes; a study on public engagement in legislation, a study on oversight and the final one (that is, the one the author of this book participated in) was a study on representation. The terms of reference for the study on representation excluded objectives on legislation, public engagement and oversight. The researchers were mainly expected to focus on the 'effectiveness' of constituency visits. Such an approach reduced the challenges of representation to mere logistics. While the logistical challenges are crucial and are outlined to follow based on responses by the public and MPs, it is done with caution with the understanding that there is more to the picture than just that. As one means of informing the public, constituency visits are critical for democratic processes; information is a critical part of participation in decision-making.

5.1 Routine MP Functions

Ethiopian MPs' work engagement can simply be divided between their time in Addis Ababa and the designated time among their constituency units. Parliamentarians are required to visit their constituency as per Article 102 (2) of the House of Peoples' Representatives regulation on rules, procedures and members' Rules of Procedure and Members' Code of Conduct No. 3/1998: "members shall meet the people that elected them, when they are in recess in accordance with Article 24 of this regulation." According to Article 24, "The House shall go for recess in the month of Yekatit (mid-February to Mid-March) as well as Hamle (1) up to the last Sunday of Meskerem each year (Mid-July to mid-October)." Article 102 (1) also states that parliamentarians can go to their electorate whenever 'necessary.'

Even if the schedule binds all MPs, different approaches are applied by MPs belonging to the same parliament. Reflecting this, an MP from the Afar region agreed that the challenges listed by the public in the Afambo area were accurate for the sampled locations, but firmly argued that his constituency feels differently about representation because of the 'close ties' regular visits, traditional festivities and regular meals he shares with them. While this could simply be an MP trying to portray an acceptable image to the researcher, it is consistent with the practice embraced by different MPs belonging to other countries (Crewe, 2021). The relational element in Ethiopia is principally dependent on the MP's experience, history of relation with the public and individual temperament, since it is not an element encouraged institutionally through financial and logistical support. MPs at the HPR do not get the funding, the facilities or the staffing to pursue individualised constituency work, apart from the twice-a-year schedule specified in the Member's Code of Conduct. This, at least from the face value, is not based on reservations against frequent constituency visits; rather, the excuses provided are lack of budget and human resources. And so, the provision in Article 102 (1) stating that parliamentarians can go to their electorate whenever 'necessary' is in practice not applicable, at least not to all MPs.

Constituency visits are naturally followed by the preparation of reports and constituency work – addressing the concerns of the electorate. In the west, the effectiveness or even the necessity of constituency work by MPs is currently under question in many developed democracies (Hardman, 2018). This is primarily because MPs are solving individual cases created by a systemic problem instead of focusing on making structural changes to avoid the situation in the first place (Crewe, 2021). In the UK, Crewe (2021) observes that women MPs are more likely to deal with such individualised constituency work directly than men counterparts, who tend to delegate. However, even without ample resources, there are some Ethiopian MPs involved in cases that they believe are crucial to their communities. Recurring cases are electric power cuts and delays in road construction. A woman parliamentarian explained that the Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation takes its time to replace or repair malfunctioning transformers (a common cause of power cuts), leaving constituencies of an entire woreda disconnected for weeks. The parliamentarian would have to go to the headquarters to complain in person on behalf of the community

and pay multiple visits, if necessary, until the problem gets the corporation's attention (challenges of mobilising executive action are discussed in Chapter 7).

In Addis Ababa, whenever the parliament is in session the parliamentarians are occupied by regular meetings taking place on Tuesdays and Thursdays, standing committee tasks and extraordinary and special meetings called by the speaker. The regular meetings attended by the Prime Minister are broadcast directly to the public; this is when MPs look their best, being required to wear either suits or traditional attire. The easiest and most convenient way for any Ethiopian citizen to access information would be to watch parliamentary proceedings directly broadcast two days a week, both live and repeated later the same day. But the meetings are reputed as being 'boring.' Abay Tsehaye, a prominent politician who is also one of the founders of TPLF, in October 2012 displayed a similar sentiment, "Parliament's program on Ethiopian Television is the least attractive" (Asefa, 2015, p. 239).

Such a description of parliament is not peculiar to the Ethiopian parliament or the parliament after 1995. The Internal regulations of the Chamber of Senate in 1931 described different yet equally ritualised processes and dress codes for the Speaker of the House and guards of the parliament, distinguishing them from other members of the military (Articles 78 and 79). The first day of Senate began with an oath taken by the members, "stating their loyalty to the Emperor in front of the Emperor or with the consent of the Emperor in front of the president of the Senate (Article 5). Each senate meeting taking place from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. throughout the week, except on weekends and holidays, began and closed with prayer (Articles 11 and 15). Emperor Haile Selassie made the opening speeches of the two chambers of the parliament. MPs had to stand through the speech; but the speeches were long and some MPs would faint and fall in the midst of their delivery. This ritual quickly changed when Prince Asrate Kassa advised the emperor that MPs were fainting during these speeches (Amede, 2003 EC). While the time of individual speeches and questions are not properly determined, Article 21 of the regulation specifies that "a member who wants to speak shall stand and apply of the president. He may not speak until the president follows him to do so." Once the speech is in motion, "the President shall stop the speech of a member when it becomes no longer relevant to the subject being discussed" (Article 20). The regulation describes further details on the voting, meetings and president's/vice president's communication with the emperor.

Every year since 1995, the House of People's Representatives and the House of Federation hold a joint opening ceremony. During this ceremony, all men members dress in black suits or traditional attire and women dress in traditional attire, often in a similar design to ensure standardisation. The ceremony begins with the playing of the national anthem (Article 11, 1a); a swearing-in ceremony of members with an oath as specified in the constitution (Article 11, 1d) and an opening speech by the President of the Federal Democratic of Ethiopia (Article 11, 1c). Once in five years this ceremony will be followed by the election of the speaker, deputy speaker and the 'naming' of the prime minister (Article 11). Such ceremonies take place on the first Monday of the first month of the year in the Ethiopian calendar, which is September (Meskerem). While there are various types of parliamentary sittings, the

dress code, meeting halls and the seating placements are all predetermined, leaving nothing to the imagination. Regular sittings always take place on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 09:00 to 12:00 a.m. and if the agenda is not concluded, from 2:30 to 5:00 p.m. (Article 24).

What goes on during these meetings is also fairly predictable. Members who would make interventions, speeches or ask questions during these sittings should submit their questions to the speaker and the names of members who shall ask questions are presented to the Speaker through the party whip. MPs must "begin his speech by saying 'thank you Honourable Speaker'" and "shall use the term 'Honourable' when referring to another member, and the terms 'Her/His Excellency,' as the case may be, to a high government official." The content of the speech itself has a strict time limit, similar to most parliaments around the world, and therefore it is in the favour of the MP to be on point. While doing so, a member "may not make any noise or unnecessary bodily movements, gesture or behaviour, except to raise his hand in such a way that the Speaker, can recognize him" (Article 28).

On the other hand, there is an extensive time of engagement women MPs spend on accessing resources from the buyers' associations. These association shops normally provide basic consumption items such as sugar, oil, wheat flour and *teff* to residents of Addis Ababa, as part of efforts to counter the growing living costs in Addis Ababa. People become members of these associations usually in their neighbourhoods and sometimes through their institutions, in this case, the parliament. A staff member in the parliament's secretariat reports that most internal meetings between the secretariat and the MPs were consumed by discussions on the maintenance of their home and the consumables they access from the buyer's association. This was reportedly before the Secretariat decided to split the responsibility of managing the operational and the technical side of the HPR between two deputy secretary-generals in 2020. Still, MPs' homes are not properly maintained and the emphasis on the consumables could only be a reflection of the low living standards they experience in Addis Ababa.

5.2 Indicators of MP-Constituency Relations

Based on responses from constituencies in the Oromia, Amhara and SNNPR, where household surveys were conducted (see Chapter 1 for details on sampling), an analysis of 'constituency–MP' relations was conducted based on three indicators. These three indicators can be used to understand MP-constituency relations deeper that the functional aspect of constituency visits. The first is the frequency of MP constituency visits, not based on the actual reports from the HPR, but as perceived by the constituency; the second factor is the constituencies' ability to name their MPs. Without knowing the identity of the MP, it is unlikely that the electorate can establish effective accountability of the individual MP (François and Navarro, 2020). It is also important to consider that whether a respondent recalls an MP's name is not only dependent on the respondent's social, economic and educational features but also on the extent of the MP's relational visits/approach. Studies in different parts of the world show that "[t]he large proportion of respondents who are able to identify their MP by their name testifies to the existence

of a personal connection between MPs and their voters" (François and Navarro, 2020, p. 118). This personal connection could be a result of a MP's response to a voter's letter or phone call. Ironically, even voters that have cast their voices in support of the MP might not remember the name of the person, just because of the election campaign and result. Lastly, a third indicator of the MP-constituency relations could be an attempt from the side of the constituency to participate in politics by contacting an MP. While participation will be probed further in the following chapters, it will be discussed in light of MP-constituency relations.

Exploring the data on the first factor reveals that most respondents believed that their MPs did not visit them, with the exception of Benč-Sheko Zone and West Omo Zone, where a majority of the respondents believed that their MPs visited them at least once in their five-year term in office as parliamentarians. The results of constituency surveys on constituency visits in the Amhara and Oromia regions were opposite to that of the Benč-Sheko Zone and West Omo Zone. However, in the Amhara region, local government officials report that the representatives have been regularly visiting their constituencies and holding dialogues and discussions with the community.[2] But local government officials in Oromia agreed with household survey respondents. Interviews in the West Shoa zone suggest that constituency visits are a rare phenomenon. They usually take place once a year, mostly during the summer, from June to August. During these meetings, the MPs conduct superficial meetings with key local government authorities and return to Addis Ababa without holding public forums.[3] One member of the community recounted:

> As of today, we do not remember the time when our HPR representative vis-
> ited our town. After he joined the parliament, he has not returned here to visit
> and discuss with the community even *once* in the last five years. Actually, he was
> not in Ethiopia for years and after his return from abroad, he invested most of
> his time in his business. We do not know if he is attending regular meetings of
> the House representing our interest. We are not only alienated from enjoying
> the frequent parliamentary visits but totally from representation in the House.[4]

Local government representatives confirming the public's claim report that the Oromo protest has been one of the key factors during this period. Some MPs report that they could not reach their constituencies because of the protests in some locations due to violent conflicts. Sometimes conflicts in regions hamper the representational role of the parliamentarians; other times, the constituency refuses to accept its representatives because of unmet demands. In many places, people pointed out the parliamentarians that voted for the state of emergency in 2016 and 17 from Television broadcasts and warned their representatives that they will be 'banished'/'destroyed' if they visited the areas. Interviews with community leaders and MPs revealed that several MPs have especially not visited their constituencies in 2018 and 2019 mostly in Oromia but also in some areas in the Amhara region.

Over 50% of the respondents in the household surveys in Oromia and Amhara regions, and a similar percentage of respondents of the Online Survey respondents residing in Addis Ababa have reported not knowing anything about constituency

Figure 5.1 below shows the chart and table.

	At least twice a year	At least once a year	At least once every other year	Once in the last five years	Never	I don't know
Oromia (1185)	125	47	41	64	280	628
Amhara (1011)	14	26	24	21	387	539
SNNPR (540)	62	91	79	145	163	0
Addis Ababa (606, online survey)	3	0	0	6	260	337
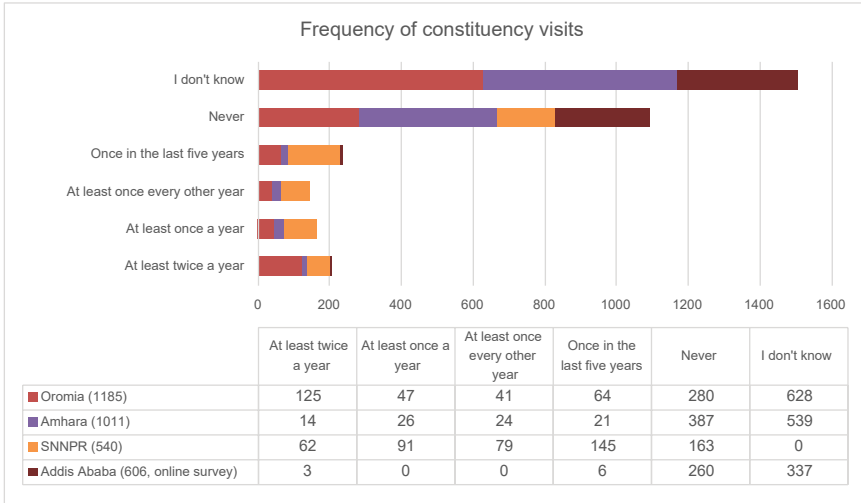
Figure 5.1 Constituency survey response on frequency of MP constituency visits (Oromia, Amhara, SNNPR and Addis Ababa)

visits. The remaining half in these three locations that had claimed knowledge of the frequency of constituency visits conveyed that they believe that their representatives never visited the locations. However, the distribution of the other quarter of the respondents varies across regions. The highest number of respondents in Oromia – 125 (10%) respondents – claimed that their representatives visited their area of residence at least twice a year. On the other hand, the Amhara region (only 14 responses) and the online survey respondents from Addis Ababa (only 3 responses) had the least number of respondents that have acknowledged MP constituency visits twice a year. The story is different in the Benč-Sheko Zone and the West Omo Zone of SNNPR. None of the respondents gave the response "I don't know" and 11% reported bi-annual visits and nearly 17% reported annual visits.

Increased awareness of MPs' constituency visits and identities in Benč Maji zone could be attributed to the relatively small populations the MPs represent. Based on the fifth general election, there are seven MPs representing Benč-Sheko Zone at the HPR. Zonal and woreda officials report that some HPR members visit the area once a year, while others do so at least twice a year.[5] A former administrator of South Benč Woreda reported: "I have seen our MP visiting her constituency, twice a year, at least. She came with a checklist during her visit. She arranged meetings with various social groups, especially representatives of youths, women, community and religious leaders." The speaker of Benč-Sheko zone council also agrees:

When our MPs come for their official visit . . . they meet with selected representatives of the community from various social and economic groups. Community delegates will raise the prevailing *public* good governance matters and

development claims within their respective *Woreda*. . . . Issues within the capacity of Zone administration are forwarded to the Zone whereas issues within the capacity of the Regional government will be given to regional stakeholders. The MPs will take with them the issues that fall within the jurisdiction of the federal government such as access to electricity and federal road development.[6]

The model in Figure 5.1 examined the determinants of knowledge about the elected representative (Do you know the name of your representative?). The result of the descriptive statistics presented in Figure 5.2 while the result of the probit estimation presented in Table 5.1. Probit model is also known as probit regression; the model
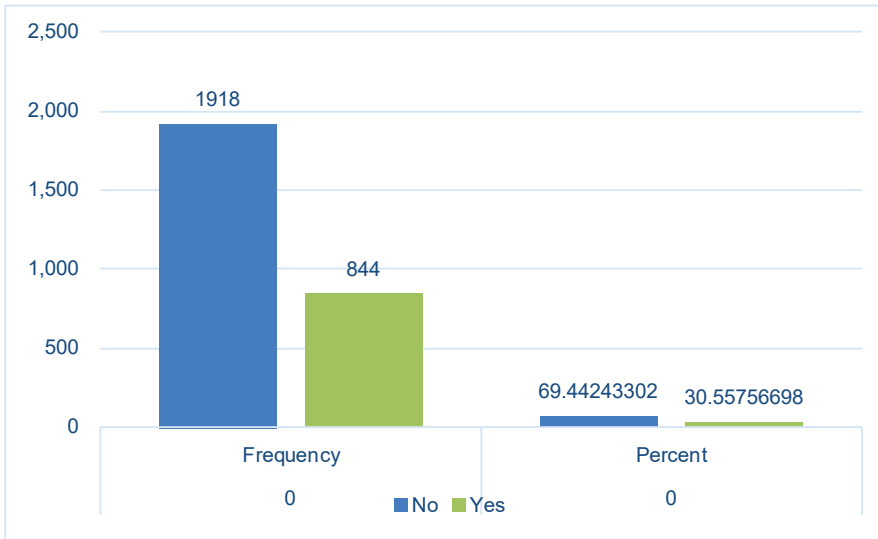
Figure 5.2 Do you know the name of your representative?
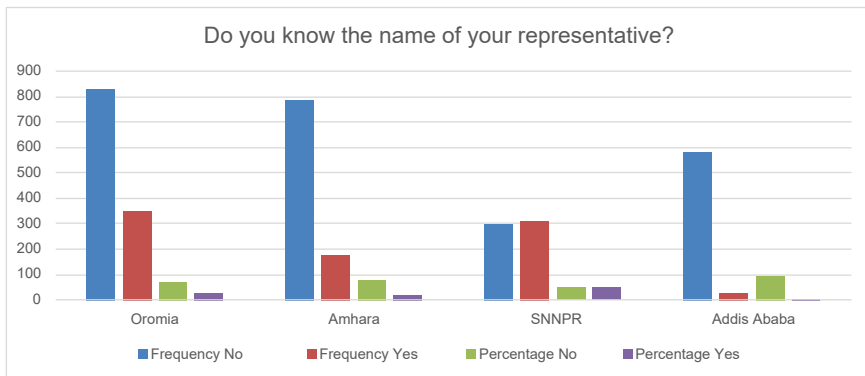
Figure 5.3 Do you know the name of your representative?

Table 5.1 Probit model examining "Do you know the name of your representative?"

Dependent variable: Do you know who is elected to represent your electoral district in the House of People's Representatives?	Coefficient	St. error
(Intercept)	1.00★★★	0.35
Region (Comparison group: SNNPR)		
Oromia	−1.13★★★	0.22
Amhara	−1.29★★★	0.21
Marital Status (comparison group: Widowed)		
Single	−0.29	0.22
Married	−0.09	0.21
Divorced	0.23	0.29
Number of children, if any	0.04★★	0.02
Identity group, cultural, language or clan (comparison group: Sheko)		
Do not think of self in those terms	0.65	0.4
Afar	0.15	0.85
Amhara	0.50★	0.28
Benč	−0.84★★★	0.24
Dizi	−0.05	0.77
Guraghe	0.55	0.50
Kafficho	−0.02	0.29
Me'en	0.61★★★	0.23
Oromo	0.27	0.30
Qemant	1.39	0.96
Silte	0.56	0.85
Somali	−6.17	10742
Suri	−0.86	0.68
Wolaita	−6.51	18745
Education (comparison group: College/University Educated)		
No education	−0.44★★★	0.12
Adult literacy education	−0.12	0.19
Primary school	−0.48★★★	0.10
Secondary school	−0.33★★★	0.09
Vocational school	0.08	0.18
Number of languages you speak	0.19★★★	0.06
Feeling of belonging in local community	−0.30★★★	0.05
Awareness of the meaning of parliamentary democracy	0.10★★★	0.02
Do you speak Amharic?	−0.39★★★	0.10

b. Fixed at the displayed value. ★★★ p<0.01, ★★ p<0.05, ★ p<0.1

The probit model shows that respondents from all regions that knew the names of their HPR representatives were also aware of the names of their regional council representatives (88.47%). It might be that this indicates that the knowledge is highly dependent on the socioeconomic and political context of the respondents, rather than on the personal actions of the parliamentarians. Based on the model, the most significant explainers are marriage, number of children, education, identity and awareness of parliamentary democracy. Awareness of parliamentary democracy was measured through six true or false statements to which respondents were asked to respond on a four-point Likert Scale. These statements include "We should be able to join any organization, whether or not the government approves of it" and "the House of Peoples' Representatives should ensure that the Prime Minister explains to it on a regular basis how his government spends taxpayers' money."[7]

tests the relationship between two variable, in cases where the dependent variable is binary and the independent variables are continuous variable. While there is no correlation indicated between the number of visits and knowledge of the probit model (to be explored further subsequently), it is worth noting that the sampled zones in the Benč-Sheko Zone and West Omo Zone were also those that reported the highest number of knowing the name of their MPs, which is the second indicator.

Clearly, a large majority (69.44 % of the respondents) did not know the names of their representatives at the HPR. The data is further disaggregated by region subsequently. As indicated in Figure 5.2, a significant number (51%) of respondents from SNNPR (Benč Sheko) were aware of the name of their representative at the regional council; this is the highest proportion compared to all other regions covered by the survey. In Oromia and Amhara regions, a far smaller number of respondents, 30% and 19%, respectively, reported that they knew who their HPR representative was. The same question was asked through an online survey targeting residents of Addis Ababa through Google Forms. As per the same figure, more than 95% of the respondents do not know who their representative at the HPR is.

In search of explanatory factors, the following probit model in Table 5.1 outlines various social, economic and political factors that could explain this indicator.

Other factors that are marginally significant are religion and income. According to this data collected from the West Shoa zone in Oromia, North Gondar and Bahir Dar in Amhara and Benč Maji zone in SNNP regions, respondents with better income levels are slightly more likely to name their representatives. The p-value of this finding is low possibly because of the very high proportion of respondents (60%) that refused to disclose their income. While income is a factor that could be explained in tandem with other socioeconomic factors such as marriage and the number of children, the results show stronger evidence that a higher number of children influences knowledge of an MP's name positively. The probit model clearly shows that divorced respondents were highly likely to know the names of their representatives than married, widowed and single respondents. Furthermore, respondents with two children or more were more likely to know the names of their MPs than those who do not. The impact of the number of children on income is something that has been debated extensively and multi-country research have established that the effect differs from one country to another depending on the state's role in providing social services, such as education and healthcare (Todd and Sullivan, 2002).

Education is one of the most significant factors; the data shows that while the explanatory capacity of other levels of education is unclear, we can simply conclude that university or college students have increased probability of knowing the names of their MPs over respondents with no formal education or tertiary level education. Similarly, respondents that have scored high awareness rates on the meaning of parliamentary democracy, the way it functions and the role of the parliament in oversight are more likely to know the names of their parliamentarians. On a negative note, respondents from minority identity groups such as the Benč and Sheko were unlikely to know the names of their representatives both at the HPR and regional council level. The Sheko are one of the identity groups currently assigned

the minority-allotted six seats. The finding on the Benč and the Sheko, when seen with a backdrop of the data presented above, is more interesting; a region where more than 50% of the respondents were able to identify their HPR representative.

On the other hand, drawing from the data on "knowledge of MP's name," multilingualism is a feature that enhances knowledge. Monolinguals, mainly Amharic speakers, have a statistically lower chance of knowing the name of their representatives, and consequently participating, even if the working language of the HPR is Amharic. The languages the HPR uses to communicate as an institution are limited and there is a lack of effort to reach a wider audience. Aklilu et al. (2020, p. 131) make a keen observation: "If the HPRs were able to disclose information in five languages, it could reach more than 75 percent of the people of Ethiopia, and if it were able to use ten languages, it could address about 90 percent of the population of the country."

Ideally, a parliament from a multilingual and multicultural society should be multilingual; the parliament as an institution should be representative of the country, accommodating multiple languages in its proceedings.[8] Interpretation services are provided to MPs in four languages – Afar, Somali, Tigre and Afan Oromo.[9] Whenever there is need for translation during communication between staff of the HPR secretariat and MPs, the secretariat uses informal channels where they find a fellow secretariat employee or MP that can translate.[10] The survey questionnaire completed by the MPs clearly shows an opportunity; 93 of the respondents were tri-lingual, 42 are bilingual and only 24 are monolingual. In places such as Benishangul, as reported in Chapter 4, there are possibilities of language barriers between MPs and the constituency; however, this is not the case in largely homogenous communities, such as Afar and Somali.

In spite of the outcomes related with language, interviews in locations covered by the survey (Amhara, Oromia and SNNPR) as well as in other places such as Addis Ababa and Afar have indicated responses where the public believe their ties with their representatives are weak. An Afar elder used the Afar phrase *"kaxxaan-gaarawdaginalon"* to mean "they (the representatives) have extremely high levels of disconnection with their people." He further expressed the level of relationship between the representatives and the people as *"foyya,"* meaning zero. The community feels that representatives do not "feel the pain of their people" and do not have "awareness of the fact that they were elected by the people to serve the people."[11] A similar sentiment was reflected in the zones visited in the Amhara region. They point out several reasons; the main predicament was the inability of elected representatives to be sympathetic to the electorate. Besides perceptions of hampered relations, this also indicates low 'trust' in the elected representatives and the institution of the HPR in general.

As indicated previously, constituency reports of official visits vary in frequency from one place to another. Most MPs report conducting constituency visits regularly, however, they report that the executive branch both at the federal and regional level does not respond with the urgency they seek. From the perspectives of the MPs "this has generated apathy and has also resulted in reduced interest in public participation" (Meheret et al., 2019, p. 40). The above findings show a different

picture than what other studies such as Meheret et al. (2019) have reported. Accord-ing to the data they collected from MPs, all respondents visited their constituencies the minimum number of visits specified in the code of conduct, while 7% even reported having more and all conveyed that they submitted constituency visit reports to their respective whips and standing committees (Meheret et al., 2019). While Meheret et al. (2019) attribute this result to strict party discipline, it oversees the possibility that the 'shape-shifting' affects not only the communication of MPs with their constituencies but also with researchers. During the course of the data collec-tion for this book, a candid discussion with individual parliamentarians has revealed that there are parliamentarians that fabricate visitation reports they submit to party whips and standing committee chairs, having remained in Addis Ababa during the assigned time.

MPs use various methods and tools to communicate with their constituencies; one study identified that

> according to the responses received from sampled parliamentarians for this study, a significant 75% said that they communicated with members of the constitu-ency by phone, 8.3% reported communications by formal letters, 6.7% by inter-net or fax and another 6.7% said that they had no communication at all.
>
> (Meheret et al., 2019, p. 38)

Regarding the planning of meetings, we learn from the same source that "77.7% reported that most [constituency] meetings were scheduled and organized by the local party secretary at and local government administration. Only a small 2.3% reported that their meetings were not formally planned but were rather spontane-ous" (Meheret et al., 2019, p. 38). Finally, the third indicator is participation. Table 5.2 shows the level of participation by the public in parliament, particularly through the means of contact with MPs.

In Amhara and Oromia regions, in what seems to align with the other two indi-cators discussed, only 9% and 23% of the respondents to this question have contacted their MP. 46% and 45% of the respondents of the question in Benč Maji zone and Addis Ababa reported that they have attempted to contact their MPs at one point in time – notwithstanding, the majority might not have succeeded in triggering response or action from the MP.

Table 5.2 Household survey on "Contact with MPs"

	Have you ever contacted your representative?			
	No (frequency)	*Yes (frequency)*	*No (percent)*	*Yes (percent)*
Oromia	749	230	77%	23%
Amhara	583	57	91%	9%
SNNPR	240	201	54%	46%
Addis Ababa (online survey)	339	278	55%	45%

5.3 Challenges of Constituency Visits

On average a single parliamentarian has 39 kebeles within its electoral district; a compilation of MPs estimates during the survey shows that an MP is able to reach 47% of the kebeles s/he represents through the course of 5 years. S/he visits the kebeles through 'cluster meetings,' where the parliamentarian will select a convenient location and invite the residents of the target kebeles to attend. MPs try to rotate among clusters to reach as many kebeles as possible in follow-up meetings. Subsequently, 92% of the MPs reported that the constituency visit timetables are not enough. A majority of the MPs believe that they do not get enough support from the House Secretariat in facilitating constituency visits and that they are not able to reach some areas due to inadequate transportation and infrastructure. The variation in reachability among electoral districts could easily result in information gaps that
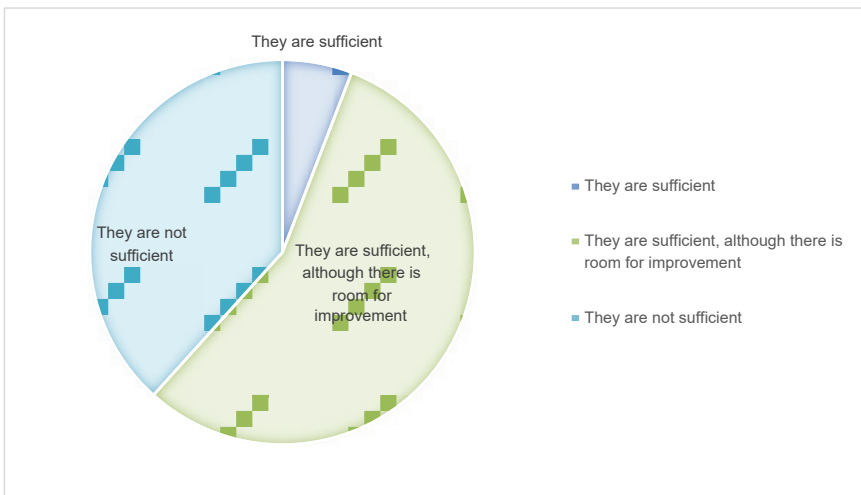
Figure 5.4 Pi-chart on "Is the current constituency visit schedule sufficient to fulfil your representational role?"

Table 5.3 HPR survey, challenges faced during constituency visits

Challenges identified by MPs	Number of MPs (total number of respondents = 159 Total number of MPs = 546)
Time designated for visit is not enough	96
The budget is not enough	99
Facility is not enough (availability of vehicles)	99
Infrastructure is lacking (even if there is a vehicle, there is no road)	73
Human resources are lacking (availability of support staff)	42

could potentially widen gaps between different subgroups. Studies show that MPs are often wrong about their interpretations of their constituencies' desires due to unequal contact (Pereira, 2021). Pereira (2021, p. 1320) argues about the Swedish parliament in which "MPs rely disproportionately on the positions of privileged sub constituencies" and attempts to reduce misconceptions through experimental study showing that "misperceptions can be reduced by encouraging representatives to avoid inequalities in exposure." Often the most accessible and the most heard segments of the community are those that are socially and economically privileged; in the case of Ethiopia, mainly due to infrastructural inequalities.

The secretariat provides MPs with a budget for two constituency trips per year. Unlike other countries, MPs are not equipped with constituency funds. If an MP has to visit his/her electorate outside of the normal biannual schedule, the MP will submit a request to the secretariat. According to a private source in the parliament, it is common for MPs to be denied funds, while those with better lobbying power and better connections have better access to resources.[12] Logistics, distance from constituency and socioeconomic status of the constituency could potentially play an important role in shaping the quantity of constituency visits. But most importantly, it depends on the commitment of the MP. MPs report that the budgets provided for field visits are not sufficient; they complain that, at times, they go to locations where there isn't good lodging for less than 1,000 Ethiopian Birr (EtB) while their per diem is half that amount.[13] As per HPR member's salary and benefit directive number 12/2000, MPs receive per diems based on the rates set for high-level public servants (with upper salary grades). This was justified not because MPs are believed to fit the category but because they are expected to use the 'extra' payments for running costs.[14] On the other hand, there is a subtle abuse of resources. There are times when MPs take their travel allowances and remain in cities.[15] Government whips report that they can only encourage MPs to go for constituency visits but there is no mechanism where they can hold them accountable: "If they don't go, they should give back the money but they don't."[16]

The inefficiency in the weak legislative and oversight duty is associated with the low quality or non-existence of proper work facilities such as offices, desks and computers (Kassahun, 2005). However, the absence of such facilities and support staff has caused MPs to depend on the executive branch extensively, especially on the woreda level.

> There are no institutions that help the members of HPR to deliver their representative role including their *constituency* work. However, executive organs in the *woreda* provide institutional support to the members of HPR based on their own discretion/willingness.[17]

The budget the HPR allocates for representatives to visit their constituents is so small that they must depend on the woreda administration to do much of the visiting. State council representatives get even lower funds. Even though most of the State Council members live among the community, their mobility is limited within a small radius of their residence. HPR members have to rely on logistical support and cooperation

from the regional and woreda executives during their bi-annual visits. It is quite clear from the ineffective results of these visits that those who are supposed to inspect and control are dependent on those who are meant to be inspected and controlled. It suffices to say that the economic problems of budget and logistical limitations have significant negative impacts on the representatives' ability to discharge his/her duty and the constituents' rights to get adequate representation.

The HPR's mandate is primarily geared towards enacting federal laws and policies (FDRE Constitution, 1994). Issues within the jurisdiction of the regional states and the woredas are not within their mandate but they might be involved in cooperation on issues that concern their constituencies. Some issues concern both the federal and regional governments (e.g., electricity, disposal of agricultural chemicals by regional states, etc.).[18] Often, federal and regional councils harmonise their constituency visit schedules and travel together. After completion of the visits, they organise meetings at the woreda and zonal levels, addressing concerns by their constituency; this coordination works its way to a regional meeting with the regional council speaker.[19] In the Amhara region, MPs report that such meetings were broadcast on TV, resulting in a feeling of being heard by the people because they would see their questions mentioned on televised discussion. There is no legal/procedural obliging an exchange of information or even cooperation between federal MPs and regional council members, but it is facilitated because both levels of government are led by the same party.[20] Party whips insist that the cooperation would still be there even if there were different parties forming government at different levels, citing cases in the Oromia regional state where political parties have signed an agreement of cooperation. So far, in practice, the working relations between the MP and a regional council member depend on the strength of the regional speaker.[21] Others insist that a strong institutional relation should be established between the two to ensure cooperation even when different parties are forming government.

Interviewees in the Afar regional state on joint supervisions reveal that they normally take place on selected development activities following the request of the regional offices implementing them. The requests to conduct joint supervisions are an informality solicited by the regional offices via telephone calls or are ad hoc, even when requested through official letters. They usually arise when the offices are faced with circumstances that require the intervention of the members of the HPR. Interviewees recommend that the relationship should be formalised and procedures for seeking services from the HPR should be in place.[22]

Even though constituency visits of HPR MPs are dependent on woreda executives, there is no formal vertical mechanism of coordination and cooperation established between the HPR, regional, zonal and woreda levels of government. The HPR uses informal mechanisms to facilitate its interaction with those government organs. While zonal officials confirm the existence of cooperation with the parliament, they note that it is not formal. However, zones are delegates of the regional president's office, they do not have elected councils and therefore do not have proper governing authority drawn from the people. But the situation is similar with woreda, kebele and town councils; they do not have a formal procedure of interaction and coordination with the HPR.

Once in their electoral district, MPs are expected to arrange their own transportation in collaboration with the woreda administration. In addition to the secretariat, the woreda institutions play a facilitator role for constituency work.[23] This is not an institutional arrangement but more of an understanding between comrades in the same party governing at different levels. Many MPs report that the provision of transportation lies in the discretion of the woreda administration and often, cars are not enough. They also report that it is more challenging for women because moving across woredas without cars is a 'physically demanding activity.'[24] Women MPs also report that "men MPs spend their time networking through whiskies"[25] giving them better leverage over woreda resources than women, whose family responsibility tends to keep them at home. In some areas, there is a high turnover of woreda leadership.[26] MPs report that local politicians at the woreda level might also sabotage invitations to local populations where there is political rivalry and ill will for various reasons. The number of people that will turn out for meetings depends on the local party administration.[27] MPs also coordinate with the woreda to have an office space during their visits; they report "you go and ask your acquaintances if you can use their office, women tend to use women affairs offices."[28]

Infrastructure is one of the most frequently cited challenges. In some cases, a large number of woredas and the population size creates a stressful situation for representatives.[29] An MP explained "We can't cover more than 3 kebeles when we visit our constituencies. An MP completes his term there are usually kebeles he has never been to."[30] The data indicates that the success of constituency visits is highly dependent on the socioeconomic status of the community.[31] There are also expectations that the Secretariat should facilitate necessary means whenever MPs find it necessary to travel or when their electorate calls on them. A common method employed by MPs is cluster visits and rotations between different places every parliamentary recess.

In Benč-Maji Zone, the lack of infrastructure is a challenge not only for competing political parties but also for election executives. What is interesting here is that despite the challenges in infrastructure, respondents from this zone reported more frequent visitations from their MPs than any other zone in the sample. Election executives encounter daunting challenges facilitating transportation for various election-related forms and ballot boxes. An election officer at the NEBE reported an incident where an election was delayed for seven hours on an election day due to a flooded river.[32] Poor infrastructure also poses a challenge to members of parliament.

> Roads from woreda centre to kebeles do not have bridges for crossing rivers. It is well known that rivers in this area cost too many lives. There is no access to electricity; even today electricity coverage of our zone (Benč-Sheko Zone) is 40 % . . . MPs encounter these challenges *during* their visits, one way or the other.[33]

Infrastructural challenges are also the main topic of public inquiry during constituency visits by MPs. It is a condition that haunts the public's day-to-day life.[34] A

former HPR member from Dizi area recalls security and infrastructural issues he faced during constituency visits:

> I was elected for two terms as an MP for Maji and Bero Woredas. Given the lack of infrastructure and grave insecurity, I was not able to visit Bero Woreda at all. Road access and security prevented me from reaching people who voted for me . . . I only met with selected kebele administrators who were invited to woreda centres; . . . Even selected kebeles I visited as an MP required long travel on foot . . . for example, I had to travel 22 kilo meters on foot from Maji Woreda to Tum town.[35]

Similarly, a woman MP representing Debub Benč Woreda[36] recalls life-threatening experiences while attempting to cross the bridgeless river named "Shor" located within Debub Benč Woreda: "the river took all my belongings at the time of my visit, people saved me."[37] The same MP narrates that the regional government is indifferent to a fair distribution of access to roads, bridges and electricity within the region.

> As an MP I revealed the prevailing unjust distribution of resources on Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SPDM) annual meeting backed with empirical data; at the time of the meeting there were six woredas in the region without access to electricity (two from South Omo, one woreda from Kafa and the reaming three woredas from Benč-Maji zone). As an MP, I challenged SPDM on the unfair distribution of resources with determination. As a result, my party evaluation (gimgema) result was reduced to C from an A.

Notes

1 Mainly during the loss of a close family member; but in recent times, the function of Idir has been criticised for not being responsive in time of sickness and other social crises.
2 Interviews, Debark Town Youth Association Coordinator and Amhara Women federation coordinator, 18 June 2020, Debark town, Ethiopia.
3 Interview, Head of Guder town administration, 16 June 2020, Guder, Ethiopia.
4 Interview, Member in Guder town teachers association, 14 July 2020, Guder, Ethiopia.
5 Interview, Melaku Gitab, Businessman, 24 August 2020, Mizan-Aman, Ethiopia.
6 Interview, Workinesh Badnes, Former speaker of Zone council for Benč-Maji and current speaker of Benč-Sheko Zone after restructuring, 30 July 2020, Mizan-Aman, Ethiopia.
7 A detailed discussion analysis of "Awareness of parliamentary democracy" in Ethiopia is included in Chapter 7.
8 Interview, Bureau head of OLF Guder office, 24 June 2020, Guder, Ethiopia.
9 Interview, Yohannes Letiso, Internal Audit and Inspection Directorate, HPR, 09 September 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Guidelines are not in place for most of the things in the HPR and the Secretariat. Trainings and experiences should match placement of an employee in the Secretariat.
10 Interview, Belay Legesse; Research Capacity Building, Library and Documentation Directorate Director, 07 July 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
11 Interview, Afar Community leader, 16 July 2020, Samara, Ethiopia.
12 Interview, MP, HPR, 03 September 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

13 Interview, Hon. Mr Chane Shimeka, Government Whip, 17 July 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
14 Interview, Dr Mesrak Mekonnen, Secretary General of the Secretariat of the HPR, 22 July 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
15 Interview, Kebede Kejela, African Initiatives for a Democratic World Order (AIDWO), 21 August 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
16 Interview, Hon. Mr Chala Lemi, Government Whip, HPR, 17 September 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
17 Interview, Getachew Mamo, Speaker of Ejerssa Leffo woreda administration council, 19 July 2020, Olonkomi, Ethiopia.
18 Interview, MP, HPR, 03 September 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
19 Interview, Hon. Mr Chala Lemi, Government Whip, HPR, 17 September 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
20 Interview, Hon. Mr Chala Lemi, Government Whip, HPR, 17 September 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
21 Interview, Dr Mesrak Mekonnen, Secretary General of the Secretariat of the HPR, 22 July 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
22 Interview, Kulsuma Budahaba, Regional MP and Deputy Office Head, Afar regional state disaster prevention office, 16 July 2020, Samara, Ethiopia.
23 Interview, Deputy Secretary General, HPR.
24 Amb Hon. Mesfin Chernet, Interview, Government Whip.
25 Interview, Gelane Bikila, MP, HPR, 03 September 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
26 Interview, Gelane Bikila, MP, HPR, 03 September 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
27 "የፓርቲ በጎ ፈቃድ ከሌለ ላይገኙም ይችላሉ፡፡"
28 Interview, Gelane Bikila, MP, HPR, 03 September 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
29 Interview, Kereyu Banata, Former MP and Information Technology Directorate Director, 08 July 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
30 Interview, Hon. Mr Chane Shimeka, Government Whip, 17 July 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
31 "ህዝብ ቀጥቶ ወረዳ ላይ ስብሰባ ቢውል የሚበላው ላይኖረው ይችላል፡፡"
32 "ህዝብ ቀጥቶ ወረዳ ላይ ስብሰባ ቢውል የሚበላው ላይኖረው ይችላል፡፡"
33 Interview, Fikire Aman, Former Benč–Maji Zone SPDM branch office Officer, and the current Benč–Sheko Zone Administrator, 25 August 2020, Telephone interview.
34 Interview, Cheneku Kontar, Former Debube benč woreda and former Benč–Maji Zone Administrator, 26 July 2020, Mizan-Aman, Ethiopia.
35 Interview Gebremariam Setegne, West Omo Zone council Affairs chairperson and MP from 1987–1997 Ethiopian Calender, 04 September 2020, Mizan-Aman, Ethiopia.
36 Interview, Hon. Tigist Bayna, MP representing Benč ethnic groups located within Debub Benč Woreda and Mizan-Aman Town, 04 September 2020, Mizan-Aman, Ethiopia.
37 Interview, Hon. Tigist Bayna, MP representing Benč ethnic groups located within Debub Benč Woreda and Mizan-Aman Town, 04 September 2020, Mizan-Aman, Ethiopia.

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6 An Ethiopian Experiment With E-democracy

Can E-democracy Platforms be the Answer?

This chapter explores the potential for e-democracy as a participation platform, discusses the piloting and launching of e-democracy platform/a mobile application of the HPR and explores lessons learnt from the processes. The HPR mobile application brings individual MPs and citizens together as an inclusive, interactive online political community. The platform (currently accessible on Play Store with the name HoPR) was developed through the project "Bridging Research and Innovation for Democratic Governance and Enhanced Participation" (BRIDGE 4 Participation). The first phase of the project focused on developing a model webpage where the concept was piloted, and the second phase implemented through the Institute for Peace and Security Studies of Addis Ababa University developed the mobile application in collaboration with HPR, finally launching it for public use.

MPs and other informants agree that there should be a system where MPs can be accessible to the electorate throughout the year, besides constituency visits discussed in Chapter five.[1] This chapter explores the use of e-democracy as one of the avenues of access and participation for the public. The chapter also appreciates that Internet facilities are not equally accessible throughout Ethiopia, with disproportionate advantage to youth in urban spaces. The first issue that comes to mind is how will the above infrastructural inequalities affect e-democracy platforms? While the inequality and low inaccessibility is clearly noted, the discussion is necessary because of the rapid growth in Internet and mobile connectivity in Ethiopia. According to the World Bank in 5 years, from 2015 to 2020, the number of Internet users in Ethiopia has grown from 13 to 25%; this number is especially promising when seen in light of nearly 50 million cellular phone subscribers (World Bank Data, 2020). Besides this promising distribution rates, this discussion underscores the understanding that the agenda of representational inequality is one that should be addressed in tandem with infrastructural inequality including Internet access.

Currently the focus seems to be on formal mechanisms where the MP initiates the contact (e.g., constituency visits). Local administrations recommend installing communication mechanisms where electorate will communicate with their MPs, based on the electorates' schedule. This can be through constituency offices, investing in e-parliament technology, or a blend of the two.[2] Surveys show that a most common means by which constituents contact their MPs is through telephone calls on personal numbers. This method is convenient for the electorate with access to

the personal cell number, however, there is still a large percentage of the public that does not have equal access.[3] MPs are provided with digital tablets. However, all other information technology gadgets are considered a privilege. The members 'benefits' directive (የአባላት ጥቅማጥቅም መመርያ) states that each standing committee chairperson gets one laptop and an Internet stick while other members are only entitled to tablets.[4]

The IT department has explored possibilities of video conferencing facilities found in each woreda. The Ministry of Innovation and Technology has reports that 70–80% of the woredas have the facilities suitable for such meeting. Schools, universities and city administrations also have facilities that the parliament can explore to connect MPs with their electorate. In anticipation of the employment of such virtual facilities, the IT department of the Secretariat has prepared a guideline for video conferencing.[5] Besides these efforts, the HPR does not effectively utilise its social media pages like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to disseminate up to date information.

The parliament also has a call centre and is currently setting up its own television station. So far, the parliament normally uses government owned media and government newspapers to communicate with the public.[6] Secretariat members had reservations over using private media outlets, accusing them of being partial. MPs need to provide timely and accurate information for their constituencies and find a way to assemble their constituents' needs and opinions. Call centres and telephone services of the House have their limitations, mostly busy or out of services.

6.1 Perplexing Relations Between E-democracy Platforms and Participation

The crucial role of parliaments in representative democracy is uncontested and several policy interventions have targeted parliamentary support and reform in Africa (Hudson and Wren, 2007). Donor activities in the last three decades range from structural support, in the form of infrastructure and technical capacity building, procedural support directed at the bureaucracy of the institutions, and functional support focusing on the various deliverables of the institution (Power, 2008). One key technical capacity agenda that suffers from lack of funding is the use of digital facilities (Global Center for ICT, 2016). Empirical data on online activities is mostly based on studies conducted in the global north and focused on explaining the nature of youth political participation (Vergeer, 2013). This book brings in a unique perspective by analysing an online participation platform in Ethiopia. There is little understanding of how authoritarian and undemocratic government traditions, even while allowing digital facilities to be freely available, shape the quality of online political participation.

The Internet and digital age dominated with unofficial channels of 'communication' such as social media was welcomed with widespread optimism and an assumption that public participation in politics would register positive results (Anduiza et al., 2009, p. 860). However, the effect of the Internet and digital spaces on participation has had varied results (Vergeer, 2013). On the one hand, researchers have

reported positive impacts where engagement in social media has encouraged political participation (Boulianne, 2015). It is clear that social media platforms in Africa have allowed groups who are traditionally absent from national conversations to have a voice (Essoungou, 2010). Initial studies on social media and political participation have shown positive correlation between certain social media features (e.g., Facebook group use) and civic participation (Zhang et al., 2010; Valenzuela et al., 2009; Park et al., 2009). Facebook, an initially student-only platform, has increasingly turned into a more diverse communication, information and data platform with ever-changing features (Lampe et al., 2008).

Other studies have shown that online platforms have not always been constructive to political participation (Dean and Bell, 2012). Most apparently, the impact of digital media on traditional participation has been negative (Morozov, 2011). The digitization of democracy through official and unofficial platforms such as social media has obvious negative outputs; Nyabola (2018) discusses the "bad and ugly" of digital democracy, drawing from cases in Nigeria, Kenya and Myanmar, where it manifested political manipulation and uncivil engagement. Social media has become an unregulated platform for hate speech and fake news leading to identity, religious and ethnic conflicts in Africa, with the consequences of displacement and death at worst. Ethiopia has experienced days of communal violence instigated by a single Facebook post by an opposition political leader in November 2019, causing the death of 86 people (BBC News, 2019; Aljazeera, 2019). Following this incident, the parliament approved the "Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation" (FDRE Proclamation No. 1185/2020, Article 7 sub-article 7). The proclamation (Article 7 [7]) stipulates that "[i]f violence or public disturbance occurs due to the dissemination of disinformation, the punishment shall be rigorous imprisonment from two year up to five years." Rights groups believe that such legislation is likely to have negative consequence on freedom of speech and harm the democratisation processes. Still, they too report that dangerous online speech "has contributed to the growing ethnic tensions and conflicts across the country that have created more than 1.4 million new internally displaced people in the first half of 2018 alone" (Horne, 2018, p. 1).

Some studies have deemed the correlation between 'informal' online platforms and participation inconclusive due to the difficulty of extracting exposure and engagement of political Internet use from a multitude of communication channels (Bode et al., 2018). However, the relation between the formal e-democracy platforms and democracy seems more direct; unlike social media, all communication modes on the platforms can qualify as political Internet use (Bode et al., 2018). Yet, low-quality discussion with little or no benefit has been reported on e-democracy platforms (Linders, 2012).

It is obvious that emerging democracies should salvage political opportunities provided by the Internet era, yet carefully devise ways to curb negative effects. In a country with a track record of dictatorial policies restricting free speech, a step towards salvaging the advantages would be to allow such platforms to be freely used. This article presents the findings from the piloting of a web platform, Bridging Research and Innovation for Democratic Governance and Enhance Participation

(BRIDGE). The e-democracy Web Based Application was piloted by selected members of the House of People's Representatives (HPR) in Ethiopia, *hereafter* MPs, and students from Addis Ababa University, *hereafter* Contributors.

6.2 Building Bridge

Measuring 'political participation' using publicly available data such as Twitter archives has been challenging to research in different ways, one of which is the challenge of extracting political speech from a multitude of conversations (Bode et al., 2018). Studying platforms created for the purpose of political participation such as BRIDGE is not confronted with these challenges. The research does not have the difficulty of defining political Internet use. Every activity on the webpage can qualify as an explicit act of participation. Youth participation was one of the core features of the project. BRIDGE involved four core activities. The first phase, as indicated above, started with the piloting of the concept of e-parliament through an e-democracy website. The website was designed to help citizens to link with MPs, ask questions and contribute to discussions. The website was open to select Addis Ababa University students. MPs were able to make announcements and hold polls using the features of the website. BRIDGE has a standardised layout where users (for the period of this study, university students) needed to create and verify accounts to access the parliamentarians.

The website had three different roles: one assigned to Contributors, a second to MPs and the third to project staff who were acting as Moderators. The main web pages on BRIDGE are where one can see all questions posed by citizens, trending questions and their own profile page. Once an account is created, the user can immediately participate in an ongoing question thread, participate in a poll or opinion survey posed by a parliamentarian or select a particular parliamentarian or standing committee and ask questions themselves. At the piloting stage, the website was owned by a local communication company and the Institute for Peace and Security Studies of Addis Ababa University. BRIDGE aimed to have three different types of questions. The first is where Contributors ask thematically relevant questions by tagging a parliamentarian from the relevant standing committee. The second type is where Contributors chose to ask a parliamentarian about issues specific to their electoral district and the third format was when a student floated ideas or questions without directly targeting a respondent or group. Besides responding to questions or participating in a discussion thread opened by Contributors, MPs were also able to seek opinions on policy agendas and present a draft proclamation or report for discussion. At the piloting stage, the role of the moderator was limited to taking corrective technical measures that aimed at improving the website and removing questions and posts posted by Contributors reported as inappropriate by fellow users.

11 MPs (seven women and four men) and 62 Contributors (10 women and 52 men) participated in the piloting; they were selected through stratified random sampling to participate at this piloting stage. The Contributors are from the departments of Political Science, International Relations, Philosophy, Geography, Anthropology, History, Journalism and Peace and Security at Addis Ababa University; 48 were

undergraduate students whose ages ranged from 19 to 24, while 14 were graduate students whose age ranges from 23 to 43. For MPs, the stratification was as per the thematic standing committees of the HPR. These standing committees oversee and control the establishments and processes in executive bodies that fall under their thematic jurisdiction. They are also the primary institution that oversees the drafting and ratification of proclamations under these themes. These standing committees at the time of data collection included: (1) Agricultural, Pastoralist and Environmental Protection, (2) Revenue, Budget and Finance, (3) Foreign Relation and Peace, (4) Human Resources and Technology, (5) Trade and Industry, (6) Legal, Justice and Democracy, (7) Natural Resources, Irrigation and Energy, (8) Public Expenditure, (9) Women, Youth and Social Affairs and (10) Urban Development, Construction and Transport.

Introductory workshops for MPs and Contributors were held on 28 May 2019 and 1 June 2019, respectively. All participants of this workshop had already signed consent forms. After participatory exercises that explored the challenges and possible solutions for participation, BRIDGE was introduced to the MPs. Online discussion during the piloting period took place for six months starting on the first of June 2019. The Contributors are a small group of educated youth, significantly affecting the epistemic quality of discussion; as lack of quality of discussion is reported as one of the main challenges of e-democracy (Moss and Coleman, 2014). Due to the purposive selection of the pilot population, the data from the discussion was not predictive of the overall volume and quality of discussion on the application. Even though many similar studies focus on the participation level of individual participants and factors affecting levels of participation, this book does not include such analysis.

The monitoring of the process was done through a series of workshops that helped to maintain contact, draw feedback from both groups and solve problems faced by either group. A midterm evaluation workshop with MPs (20 October 2019) and with Contributors (25 October 2019) indicated areas of possible improvement on the website. These workshops allowed both groups to share these observations with the project staff. Furthermore, Contributors and MPs had a joint workshop on 15 November 2019 where they discussed each other's engagement face to face.

While at the stage of this piloting exercise the application only existed as a webpage, it was later in 2022 developed as an application. The findings were presented to the HPR, and the HPR Communications Directorate had shown an interest in developing the initiative further. This was when additional funding was solicited and an application was developed based on the technical and methodological lessons that were learned during the pilot testing.

6.3 Youth Participation

Ethiopia is found on the youngest continent in the world; a young population with over 70% of its population reported to be under the age of 30.[7] This calls for an agenda on youth participation in decision-making as well as youth-centred decision-making, as the young population is the most impacted by political, economic and social decisions of the country. Despite the youth population bulge, the trend in

youth political participation is showing daunting results (Loader, 2007). According to UN Youth (2013), the average age of parliamentarians around the world is 53. Eligibility for national parliaments and rites of political participation such as voting are usually set at the ages of 25 and 18, respectively. However, the participation in either of the activities by young people does not reflect this. In the United States and Europe, there is extensive data that shows decreased political participation of youth (Moeller et al., 2018). In Africa and the Middle East, statistics in UN reports also show that young people continue to engage in popular movements and protests while their engagement in formal political avenues such as running for parliament and political party memberships is still very low.[8] Now the question is, while young people are the most exposed to digital platforms of information and participation, how have such processes of digitization affected youth participation globally, and most interestingly, in Africa?

Loader (2007) describes what he refers to as "cultural displacement." Loader (2007, p. 2) explains:

> The restricted democratic practices of voting and social class party allegiance, which have formed the basic means of collective mobilisation, are being displaced by mechanisms and modes of democratic expression that privilege present day political preoccupations with the construction of self-identity (Giddens, 1991) within a global information economy (Castells, 1997). In this scenario it is not young people who have become disaffected with politics but rather that our political representatives appear distant and self-absorbed and unable to empathise with young people's experiences of a dramatically changing social and cultural world.

According to this conceptualisation, the inclusion of young people in politics can be associated with the inclusion of young people's experience of communication and decision-making through digitization and other contemporary approaches. On the other hand, research has also shown that exposure to political news in general does not always translate to participation in voting. Research by Moeller et al. (2018, p. 458) on youth voting trends in the EU found that "exposure to relevant news contributed to a higher likelihood of turnout." More interestingly, the research indicated that the "relevant news/information" was more likely to influence voting behaviour when distributed digitally. However, such studies raise more questions than they answer. They expose gaps in knowledge associated with presentation modalities on digital media and the extent to which information and access translate to behaviour. The gaps persist as researchers try to develop causalities (Schuck et al., 2016; Moeller et al., 2018).

Other factors that still need to be explored are the relations between young people's trust in political institutions and participation. UN Youth (2013) reported that young people not only lacked access but also felt "excluded and marginalised;" this is a reflection of both actual as well as perceived barriers where trust in institutions is affected by factors that confound with being young, such as education (cf. Chapters 7 and 8 of this book). Henn and Foard's (2012) study on youth participation and

Table 6.1 Indicator frame to measure output and input orientation of the quality of dialogue

	Dialogue orientation on BRIDGE			
	Authoritarian ⟵⟶ Democratic			
Data category	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4
Description	Indicates Output-oriented Good Governance	Output-oriented	Indicates Input-oriented Good Governance (Democratic Governance)	Input-oriented
Typical example	Output-oriented response by an MP provided for an input-oriented question/remark from a student	Question/remark by a student and response by an MP are both output-oriented	Question/remark by a student and response by an MP are both input-oriented	Input-oriented response by an MP provided for an output-oriented question/remark by a student

trust brought new perspectives that challenge what is referred to as the Citizen Disaffection perspective; they found that young people are both concerned about politics and are motivated to participate. However, Henn and Foard (2012) argue that their withdrawal from active participation (in the case of the UK, where they study) is confrontation with frustrating election experiences. This perspective is important in projecting the consequences of negative experiences youth have with elections or an attempt to participate, not only in the UK but also in different parts of the world, including Africa.

This chapter in a way explores the possibilities of encouraging youth participation in formal political processes, such as engagement with MPs through the use of digital platforms. While mindful of the complex set of factors at play in youth political participation, this chapter will draw from the discussion on participation in Chapter 1. The conceptual framework used for analysis in the next section is drawn from the discussion on good governance and participation from the first chapter of this book. Participation, representation and human rights are conceptualised as input dimensions of good governance; whereas other features of good governance such as rule of law, effectiveness and efficiency are output dimensions (Börzel et al., 2008). Democratic governance focus on the process through which policy responds to "citizens' concerns as a result of participation by the people" (Schmidt, 2013, p. 7).

6.4 Data Presentation and Analysis

BRIDGE includes qualities of e-democracy that aim to "generate processes that serve concurrently the goals of democratisation and of good governance" (Perez et al., 2019, p. 278). Focusing on the context of good governance in Ethiopia, a

selection of the online conversation between parliamentarians and Contributors was analysed. The aim was to identify the focus on input and output dimensions of good governance during this time of political transition. There were more than 315 conversation pieces during the course of the piloting period. This involved replies and reactions on 36 opinion pieces and 37 questions posed by Contributors and MPs.

Contributors were inclined to ask questions that address both input- and output-oriented issues. While MPs tend to justify government action and proclamations using output-oriented justifications, promoting a 'government knows best' attitude. Typical examples are answers provided to questions posed by Contributors regarding constitutional amendments. One student asked, "How can the parliament handle a process like constitutional reform in the current Ethiopian context where there are polarised outlooks on history and identity?" Another student asked about the amendment of an article (Article 39) in the constitution that grants ethnic groups (referred to as nations, nationalities and peoples) the right to secession from the country. In a subsequent note on the question by the student, s/he noted that there was no national consultation when the constitution was adopted and first ratified in 1994. The following are two replies from MPs on the BRIDGE:

> Parliamentarian: "Surely, we agree that the young generation now was not there at the time [when the constitution was approved], either they were not born or mature enough. However, when laws are formed, by nature it takes into consideration the current and future contexts. So it has you [the student] in its consideration."
>
> Parliamentarian: "Article 39 of the constitution has been the most debated even before the ratification of the constitution. Some criticize, write and sometimes make it a cause for conflict, claiming that it is a rainy-day provision for some groups. I do not see it this way. I believe that 16 million people have been consulted before ratification. In cases of violation of rights, lack of recognition of identities and discrimination, a region that fulfils the requirements under this article can set itself free. No one can easily build or destroy this right, it is implemented by the vote of the people for the sake of the people. This constitution is not perfect, it has itself provided us with the opportunity to amend it, it is acceptable to give comments emanating from fear that this article might not be the best for us. Everyone should be concerned about his/her country. So to amend the constitution, we should abide by the constitution. For many to decide we should listen to the few."

In this reply, the parliamentarian is subtly telling the student to take a step backward by pointing to the fact that the constitution knows best for him/her and, in the words of the second parliamentarian, replying with an ambiguous expression that: "for many to decide we should listen to the few." Another example in this regard is the question addressing concerns over the ratification of the FDRE proclamation (No. 1110/2019) that endorses the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) that grants refugees the same rights including employment as Ethiopian nationals. Regarding primary education, the parliamentarian acknowledged that it is

a universal right for all (FDRE Proclamation No. 1110/2019). The student featured employment as the main problem, noting high unemployment as one of the challenges of Ethiopia's population of nearly 100 million.

> Parliamentarian: "Dear inquirer . . . international monetary institutions including the United Nations will provide high support and aid to our country. So the question should be regarding making effective use of the money."

The student seems to have focused on an output-oriented aspect of the proclamation that is job creation. However, many in other spheres have questioned the ratification of Proclamation No. 1110/2019. Proper consultation, like many proclamations, was lacking during its adoption; for example, the concerns of the population of the Gambella region, hosting refugees twice the size of the region's population (about 396,000) was not considered (Fana, 2017, paragraph 7).

Data from focus group discussions (FGDs) and interviews and subsequent analysis has shown an inclination towards input-oriented aspects of governance by Contributors and output-oriented aspects by MPs. Contributors and MPs were asked to list and rank challenges to participation and representation during FGDs.

The output-oriented points from both tables include unsuitable conditions for youth participation, constituencies' appeals to MPs do not get timely responses, lack of awareness and interest by constituencies, lack of communication infrastructure and lack of skills to use technology. Both Contributors and MPs have mentioned two items: lack of awareness and interest by constituencies and lack of communication infrastructure. Most of these challenges could be addressed through effective communication infrastructure and awareness of the use of the infrastructure.

Table 6.2 Recurring challenging themes mentioned by Contributors and MPs. Colour codes reported below

No.	Categories of barriers	Barriers to participation	
		Contributors	*MPs*
1	Authoritarian tendencies and lack of democratic values	★★★	–
2	Unsuitable conditions for youth participation	★	–
3	Corrupt practices and malgovernance	★	–
4	Lack of coordination/synergy between MPs	–	★★★
5	Constituencies' appeals to MPs do not get timely responses	–	★★
6	Lack of awareness and interest by constituencies	★★	★★★
7	Lack of communication infrastructure	★	★★
8	Lack of skills to use technology	–	★

  – Not mentioned
  ★ mentioned
 ★★ Repeatedly mentioned
★★★ Frequently mentioned

Table 6.3 Ranking of reoccurring challenging themes during FGDs with HPR members. Colour codes reported below

No.	Categories of barriers	Barriers to participation	
		Contributors	MPs
1	Authoritarian tendencies and lack of democratic values	★★★★	–
2	Unsuitable conditions for youth participation	★	–
3	Corrupt practices and malgovernance	★	–
4	Lack of coordination/synergy between MPs	–	★★★★
5	Constituencies' appeals to MPs do not get timely responses	–	★
6	Lack of awareness and interest by constituencies	★★	★★★
7	Lack of communication infrastructure	★★★	★★
8	Lack of skills to use technology	–	★

– Not mentioned
★ mentioned
★★ Significant
★★★ Highly Significant
★★★★ Crucial

One input-oriented challenge was mentioned by students only: "authoritarian tendencies and lack of democratic values." This was the most frequently mentioned challenge by Contributors during discussions and brought to the top of their priority list during FGDs. This requires a transformation of the political culture and practices that are bigger and deeper than the provision of infrastructure. However, this did not come up at all during discussions among MPs. Ethiopia experienced numerous Internet blockages from the beginning of the protests from November 2015 to date. It was evident that the blockages mainly targeting social media (as some periods of blockage mostly targeted social media only), were not able to contain the waves of protest. While it is possible that other confounding factors would also play a role in the effective communication infrastructure and the ability to use it, it is evident that a democratic government would not deter the existence of such platforms. The two categories of challenges seen through the lens of current Ethiopian politics demonstrate how output-oriented challenges (such as those listed earlier) are mostly the result of the lack of democratic values (Hagmann and Abbink, 2011; Mitchell, 2017; Brown and Fisher, 2020).

The first key finding in this pilot notes the availability of e-democracy platforms might not guarantee the exchange between constituencies and their representatives and enhance participation – the incorporation of citizens' concerns in policy. The process of unlearning authoritarian behaviours, as always, takes time, except for transitions made through revolutions, bringing complete breaks from the past (Guo and Stradiotto, 2014). However, such revolutions are rarely successful in conveying initially promised transitions (Guo and Stradiotto, 2014). In input-oriented good governance, representatives not only listen to the views of their constituents but they take them seriously and engage in discussion to understand them thoroughly and even be open to influence (Schmidt, 2013). If MPs are not willing to be influenced,

it is a symptom of the old authoritarian assumptions that those with power know best.

In many African countries, and particularly in Ethiopia, the parliament is a dysfunctional institution due to the dominant one-party system that embodies authoritarianism, drawing back from public participation and representation (Samatar, 2005; Abbink, 2006). Arriol and Lyons (2016, p. 82) quoted a high government official, "'It is only through broad based participation' that Ethiopia can achieve 'good governance.'" From this, they concluded that "[p]articipation is therefore valued, but it does not entail a meaningful role for citizens in the selection of the country's top decision makers" (Arriola and Lyons, 2016, p. 82). The executive branch is known to initiate all 'democratising' reforms in Ethiopia currently. This is largely due to the nature and inauguration of the parliament. The election that brought the current parliament together was neither free nor competitive. Almost 100% of the parliament seats were occupied by the leading political coalition Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Front (EPRDF) and its affiliates (Arriola and Lyons, 2016). As a party with principles of 'democratic centralism' centrally-made decisions are difficult or impossible to oppose, giving all the parliament members the same voice, disapproving of "internal factionalism" (Bach, 2011, p. 641). The parliament remains an important institution with a mandate to represent and facilitate participation by the public.

MPs can easily be depicted as the political elite that represses democracy. However, with such structural challenges, they might be instruments of authoritarianism or even simply part of the oppressed. Thus, the second key finding of this experiment annihilates the dichotomy drawn between the "authoritarians'" and the "repressed mass." In the FGD, MPs had not brought up the challenge of "authoritarian tendencies and lack of democratic values," while Contributors did. The main reason for this is because MPs, specifically women MPs, do not see themselves as the "authoritarian," but rather as "victims" of an authoritarian system, citing strict party discipline.[9]

BRIDGE has witnessed not only Contributors but also MPs use the platform in ways ordinarily not possible in formal parliamentary proceedings. This brings to light the third key finding of this experiment: a novel political process that achieved civic engagement between citizens and members of parliaments has been realised. Of the 37 questions that were asked on BRIDGE, the MPs posed 13 to fellow MPs and Contributors. In addition to the 13 questions, MPs asked for the opinion of those using the BRIDGE platform on three draft proclamations and three reports presented to the parliament for approval. Indicative of the parliamentarian's positive response to the process is that the MPs initiated the discussion on the draft proclamations and reports. This is in line with Leston-Bandeira's (2012, p. 427) observation that "over time, the online presence of Portuguese party groups replicates the offline delegate style of representation." Even though there might be gradual changes of government actions and policies, the effect on communications with citizens will take slowly. This is because of the lack of trust; in countries where such culture is not established through time, government efforts to share information with the public might even be interpreted negatively, further hurting the credibility of the government (Chang, 2021).

Drawing from existing studies, we can also draw the conclusion that, similar to MPs, the online behaviour of citizens 'replicates' the offline culture of participation. Approach to collective identities such as ethnicity, language, religion and other social organization factors are reflected on social media; this especially resonates when one sees the need to belong and self-preservation as determinant factors of social media use (Nadkarni and Hofmann, 2012). Studies indicate that individuals from collective cultures are more likely to gain more self-esteem from use of Facebook, using it as a system of social appraisal for their beliefs and acts (inclining towards the need to belong) as they rely on feedback from their social support system more than they are concerned about being consistent/congruent (inclining towards the need for self-preservation) (Nadkarni and Hofmann, 2012). Nadkarni and Hofmann, through such analysis, (2012, p. 248) "assume that similar behavioural patterns are evident in a person's behaviour offline, which mirror the behaviour online." Thus, it is not only the online behaviours of the government that mirror offline behaviours – in fact, approaches to democratisation, and more specifically, participation are affected by societal culture and types of legitimacy claimed by the government.

6.5 Conclusion

The politics of ambiguity and the narrow framing of problems and solutions that systematically circumvent meaningful participation and representation are key to the nature of communication the government has with the public. Statements such as "the only way we can achieve that [sustainable change] is through broad-based democratic processes and good governance that addresses the issue of delivery of services for the people" are common (*Addis Fortune*, 2015). Such statements define all governance problems as 'good governance' problems, implying that, by achieving good governance, positive change can be sustained in the country, such as effective delivery of services (another narrow goal that views participation as a means to an end). There is a tendency by the government to mesh participation along with other values of good governance such as transparency, rule of law, effectiveness, efficiency and accountability, without clear regard to the value of participation independent of the effectiveness of a certain policy (Fana Broadcasting Network, 2015). Ethiopia, qualifying as a 'developmental' state, similar to China, has been known to ignore democratic processes and focus on development – thus being more output-oriented in its approach to good governance. A developmental state, referring to "an economic development model which emphasizes the influential, determining and leading roles of the state in the course of economic development" does not necessarily value participatory policymaking nor human rights (Pham, 2012, p. 3).

The above finding also demonstrates the advantages of the BRIDGE platform in giving people access to dialogue with MPs without the constraints of physical access to parliament. The Parliament building is situated in a high-security facility, presenting difficulties of access and also creating an intimidating space for visitors. One of the benefits of parliament's use of digital media is that it makes MPs be present among the public as one of its members. The creation and harnessing of platforms of communication like BRIDGE during democratic transitions can

facilitate an opportunity for participation narrowing geographic and age gaps. One of the consequences of a long history of strong executives in Ethiopia has been the heavy presence of armed military around government institutions such as the parliament.

There are still various knowledge gaps on political online communication that should be filled. This chapter has contributed a fraction, through a qualitative analysis of a specialised e-democracy website. However, whether the behaviour of both MPs and Contributors on unofficial interaction sites such as Facebook and Twitter are similar is something that can be explored in future research. Such studies and comparisons can indicate how the change in platform affects the type of communication. Furthermore, how the dynamic of interaction between the citizenry affected the interaction between politicians and citizens is also another interesting future research area.

Notes

1 Interview, Endale Nigussie, Ethiopian Civil Service University (ECSU), 21 August 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
2 Interview, Tadele Derseh, Vision Ethiopian Congress for Democracy (VECOD), 05 August 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
3 When calling personal lines, members of local communities flash call (miscall) their MPs. MPs complain their phone allowance is not nearly sufficient; which is 165 birr per month phone scratch cards (worth 10 hours of phone calls per month).
4 Interview, Kereyu Banata, Former MP and Information Technology Directorate Director, 08 July 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
5 See note 4.
6 Interview, Belay Legesse; Research Capacity Building, Library and Documentation Directorate Director, 07 July 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
7 "Young People's Potential, the Key to Africa's Sustainable Development" retrieved at www.un.org/ohrlls/news/young-people%E2%80%99s-potential-key-africa%E2%80%99s-sustainable-development
8 UN Youth. 2013. Youth, Political Participation and Decision-Making. www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-political-participation.pdf
9 FGD with women parliamentarians, 15 November 2019.

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7 Socioeconomic Factors Affecting the Public Participation and Attitude Towards the House of People's Representatives, Ethiopia

This chapter explores socioeconomic factors that affect public participation and its attitude towards the Members of the House of People's Representatives (MPs). The factors range from age, educational level, occupation, income, awareness of parliamentary democracy, gender and family size. The chapter has various probit models trying to understand probabilities of the likelihood of participation and likelihoods of certain attitudes towards MPs and the parliament. Attitude here refers to measures of the elements of trust towards the institution as well as the individual MP; however, participation refers more towards the actions initiated by the members of the public to pursue two-way communication. Different scholars develop categorisations of public participation. Some view it as a systemic process with one- or two-way communication strategies, including those initiated by MPs, such as constituency visits or media programmes, or initiated by the public, such as petitions (Walker, 2017). For others, it is a progressive stage that moves from informing the public to collaborating with the public, having various other stages in between (Challa et al., 2020). A study by Challa et al. (2020) indicated, in Ethiopia, the level of public engagement decreases as one goes from strategies of the HPR to inform, to consult and to deliberate.

In an attempt to regularly engage with the public, the HPR has a database of institutions representing the interests of women, youth, business communities, professionals, religious institutions, research institutions and political parties under the umbrella of what the HPR refers to as its "parliamentary public forum" (Challa et al., 2020). Challa et al. (2020, p. 125) report that the forum lacks an agenda-setting agency and that "most active civil and political organizations are systematically excluded from participation in the forum." Furthermore, from the side of the forum members, they are reported to lack the organizational and knowledge capabilities that would entail effectiveness in advocacy.

While online platforms have their limits, other enabling situations such as improved infrastructural barriers, availability of support staff and finance do not necessarily solve the fundamental challenges associated with representation. This perspective does not disregard the challenges MPs face, yet inefficiency of constituency visits is reported not only in geographic peripheries but also in Addis Ababa by individuals who have access to online media (able to report to an online survey).[1] Due to limits of understanding of concepts of representation and participation, on

a theoretical level, and for lack of actual physical effort put into these processes, the level of 'Constituency-MP' interaction does not show improvement in areas with better infrastructure, such as Addis Ababa and Bahir Dar (in the Amhara region). An important indicator is the maintenance of the website, which does not garner enough attention for regular updates.

7.1 Social, Economic and Political Factors

Some of the factors investigated in the following section are gender, age, trust in MP, trust in HPR, a sense of belonging in one's local area, knowledge of MPs name, number of visits by MP (based on the respondent's perception, as opposed to actual HPR reports), the sense of belongingness in the area of residence, awareness of parliamentary democracy and level of education.

As already indicated in the first chapter, the assumption that the majority of Africans, therefore Ethiopians, do not grasp the concept of democracy and do not seek it in a proper manner is flawed. For this study, awareness of parliamentary democracy was evaluated using a set of True and False statements that were used to rate public awareness. Some of the questions are true statements where the answer "agree" indicates awareness; whereas questions 3, 5, 6 and 7 are false statements, so the answer "agree" indicates a lack of awareness.

Nearly 40% of the respondents in Ethiopia who have not experienced democratic governance in its full range were able to identify the key tenets of democracy. This

Table 7.1 Indicator frame for "Do you agree with the following statement?"

Do you agree with the following statement?	*Correct answers*	*Individual awareness score*	*Awareness*
We should be able to join any organization, whether or not the government approves of it.	T	Between 0 and 1	If awareness score is >=0.5 have awareness (==1) And if awareness score is less than 0.5 don't have (==0)
The government is like our employee. We are the bosses and should tell government what to do.	T		
The government is like a parent. It should decide what is good for us.	F		
The House of Peoples' Representatives should ensure that the Prime Minister explains to it on a regular basis how his government spends taxpayers' money.	T		
The Prime Minister should be able to devote his full attention to developing the country rather than wasting time justifying his actions.	F		
It is important to obey the government in power, no matter who you voted for.	F		
It is not necessary to obey the laws of a government that you did not vote for.	F		
Total	6		
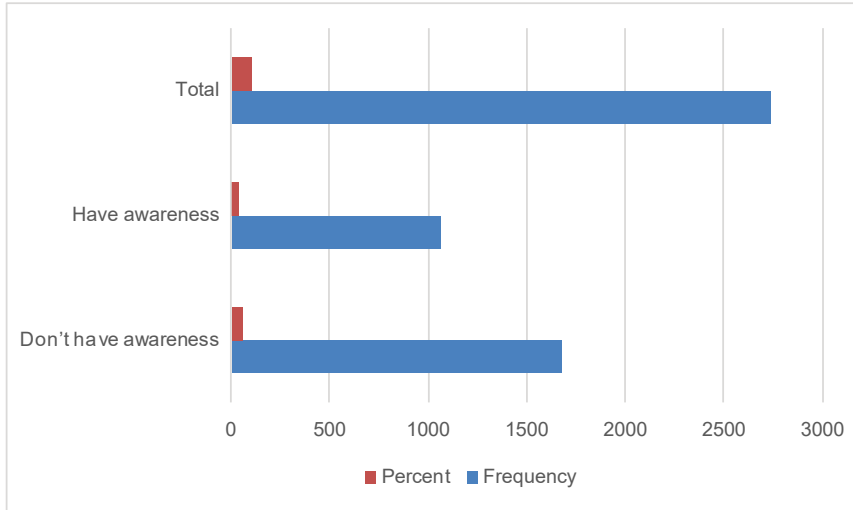
Figure 7.1 Bar chart indicating awareness of parliamentary democracy

Table 7.2 A probit model of "Awareness of the features of parliamentary democracy" and socioeconomic factors

Awareness of the features of parliamentary democracy

Parameter	Coefficient	St. error
(Intercept)	−1.197★★★	.1116
Region (Comparison group: SNNPR)		
Oromia	1.468★★★	.0924
Amhara Region	.823★★★	.0946
Gender (Comparison group: Women)		
Men	−.054	.0620
Education (Comparison group: College/University Education)		
No formal education	−.303★★★	.1046
Adult Literacy Education	−.366★★	.1807
Primary School	−.249★★★	.0821
Secondary School	−.162★★	.0781
Vocational school	−.089	.1579
Age	−.002	.0020

goes against the assumption by many western-based scholars that conclude that "[i]t is obvious that people in countries that have never experienced democracy in its western sense . . . could hardly possess the same ideas of democracy as the citizens of advanced democratic societies" (Zagrebina, 2020, pp. 174–175). As already refuted in Chapter 1, they argue that people in undemocratic countries, like Ethiopia, associate democracy with elections due to information they receive from the media.

Citizens of undemocratic countries associate democracy with "prospering economy . . . social control . . . religious authorities interpreting the laws . . . and the military taking over incompetent government" (Zagrebina, 2020, p. 189; see also Teti et al., 2019). What this view misses is that democracy is as much about performance as it is about procedures. Especially in countries where access to basic social services is strained, citizens tend not to think less of its democracy but of its legitimacy – an important principle in democratic governance. This is what Diamond (1990, p. 49) refers to as the "contradiction between consent and effectiveness."

> Democracy depends on popular legitimacy much more than any other form of government. This legitimacy requires a profound moral commitment and emotional allegiance, but these develop only over time, and partly as a result of effective performance. The people will not value democracy unless it deals effectively with social and economic problems and achieves a modicum of order and justice.
>
> (Diamond, 1990, p. 49)

The parameters used to understand awareness of the key tenets of parliamentary democracy reveal that education is an important probability predictor. The absolute coefficient decreases as the educational level rises, increasing the possibility of college-educated respondents having a higher awareness rating. It is also important to ask the question of why awareness and education matter in this discussion. The very premise is that "public attitude towards democracy shape the prospects of regime consolidation;" this in addition to other factors such as features of institutions (Mattes and Bratton, 2007, p. 192). Mattes and Bratton (2007), after analysing 12 Afrobarometer surveys, argue that awareness comes from learning from what they perceive in their environments, their experience and their political heritage. On the other hand, Lindberg and Morrison (2008) present the finding that there is a growing tendency among the African citizenry to prefer democracy over strong-man leadership. This brings to light that African societies are rapidly changing and the old narrative of preferring the African strong man should be re-examined.

Another important factor probed in through the models below is trust and education. The theoretical knowledge in political science supports that education increases the possibility of political participation – the main question has mainly been "how." Scholars who have analysed data from the Higher Education Research and Advocacy Network in Africa (HERANA) and Afrobarometer metrics have indicated that higher education increases interest in news media and being well-informed politically; educated citizens are also likely to be more critical towards politicians' performance (Mattes and Luescher-Mamashela, 2012). However, among citizens, higher education is not directly linked with political participation or contacting representatives in parliament (Mattes and Luescher-Mamashela, 2012). Other studies have also indicated that although there is a correlation, there are cases where erroneous attitudes and knowledge prevail in political communities with a fairly higher standard of education (Converse and Dupeux, 1962). Persson (2013) summarises the research work and theorisation in the field of education and political participation

in three models: absolute education, also known as the cognitive pathway, pre-adult socialisation and relative education. The absolute educational model represents the popular understanding that education takes the primary credit for the creation of a "critical mass" that possesses political knowledge and active participation of citizens. This model also implies that the small segment of the elite who take on the responsibility as leaders have the intellectual capacities to understand complex documents due to education (Mattes and Luescher-Mamashela, 2012). However, there are studies that question the absolute educational model on the basis that the model does not sufficiently explain "the mechanisms at work" leading up to the supposed effects, they are like an "undeciphered black box" (Persson, 2013, p. 691; see also Ichilov, 2003; Niemi and Junn, 1993).

The second model on pre-adult socialisation argues that "factors such as intelligence, genetic factors or personality types affect political participation in adulthood, and these factors might also affect educational choice" (Persson, 2013, p. 691). The relative education model focuses on the social network that one needs to enter the political workforce. In other words, the relationship between higher educational levels and political participation is not really a matter of cognitive ability, and education is not simply a proxy factor. Instead, education status makes some members of the public more likely to be selected, with the condition that education is a "positional good . . . valuable to some people only on condition that others do not have it" (Hollis, 1982, p. 236, cited in Persson, 2013). In the context of African countries, it is also important to discuss the history of educational institutions as active membership recruitment grounds for political parties. This has been true in the Ethiopian 'student movement' that began in 1960 and led to the creation of the first political parties in Ethiopia. Discussion in Chapter 2 subtly reveals this interconnection, a situation where political parties like the EPRP were founded by US-educated Ethiopians, and Me'ison founded by Europe-educated Ethiopians such as Haile Fida; a story with a gloomy ending leading to the political massacres and exile of a large percentage of educated Ethiopians. This is also true for the EPRDF, which conducted active recruitment of millions of members after the 2005 election (Yohannes, 2018). These models have also been proven complementary in some cases instead of exclusive. Although the relationship between education and participation is generally positive, this does not translate to representation. Studies in Africa have found that "University educated MPs are more likely to see themselves as representatives of the interests of their legislative institutions, rather than their constituents or political party" (Mattes and Luescher-Mamashela, 2012, p. 165).

7.2 A Closer Look at the Household Surveys

The household survey included data indicators on public trust towards the HPR as an institution and the MPs. These were formulated as "Has the person delivered/ kept their election promises?" a question where the indicators of trust are both "yes" and "s/he has tried," and the lack of it would be "no." The other question that targets the institution is "How much do you think your communities' priorities are included in laws passed by the House of People's Representatives?" With this

Table 7.3 Are decisions of the HPR considerate of the interests of your locality?

Trust in the MP	Has the person delivered/kept their election promises?			Has the person delivered/kept their election promises?		
	No	S/he has tried	Yes	No	S/he has tried	Yes
Oromia	349	136	93	60%	24%	16%
Amhara	177	62	6	72%	25%	2%
SNNPR	110	95	21	49%	42%	9%

Table 7.4 Household survey response on "Do MPs keep their promises?"

Trust in the HPR	How much do you think your community's priorities are included in laws passed by the House of People's Representatives?			How much do you think your community's priorities are included in laws passed by the House of People's Representatives?		
	Never	Sometimes	Always	Never	Sometimes	Always
Oromia	322	311	88	45%	43%	12%
Amhara	256	344	21	41%	55%	3%
SNNPR	233	171	49	51%	38%	11%
Addis Ababa	379	261	21	57%	39%	3%

question, the public can reflect on the intentions and actions of the HPR rather than its capacity. This question serves the purpose of measuring a candidate's performance and intention to perform vis-à-vis their promises from the perspective of the electoral; many studies use this indicator to discuss electoral trends, although that is not the main purpose of this section. Studies in the competitive Ashanti-Ewe associations in Ghana disproved popular opinion that voting behaviour is associated with clientelist behaviour rather than with democratic variables such as performance (either by the candidate or by political party) (Lindberg and Morrison, 2008). There is an increasing trend of ethnic-based political parties competing against each other in relatively homogenous areas, leading to a situation where two or more people from the same cultural background would be running against each other.

Figures 15 and 16 show that an overwhelming majority of the respondents believed that decisions made by the HPR do not take the interest of their localities into account and that the MPs have not even tried to fulfil their promises. In terms of frequency, the lack of trust is more severe towards the HPR than the MPs, whereas, when looking at the percentages of respondents, the opposite is true. When comparing regions based on the percentage of respondents to each question (excluding missing values and "I don't know"), MPs are trusted least by Amhara region respondents (an overwhelming 72%) and only 25% believed that they were at least trying. The second highest is the Oromia region, where MPs were not trusted

by 60% of the respondents, whereas 40% believed they were trying or that they succeeded in fulfilling their promises.

Trust here refers to the public's view towards government institutions, systems and politicians (Zhang and Schenker-Wicki, 2012). Besides the household surveys, interviews with community leaders in various places showed that they do not trust their representatives at the HPR; they perceive that "they don't seem to be working for the interest of the people but themselves."[2] The interviews indicated their concerns over the lack of accountability mechanisms for individual MPs; "there is lack of accountability and transparency on the work of representatives despite the presence of legal frameworks. Representatives are not held accountable for their actions and they lack transparency."[3] Even in times where trust is conveyed, the communities' trust for parliamentarians is not necessarily based on performance but interpersonal relations and empathy. In Benč Maji zone, an informant conveys

> we have full trust on MPs, yet it doesn't mean that MPs are perfect. The HPR in general, and our MPs included in it, are not a gathering of Angels. It is an assembly of human beings. Our MPs may have shortcomings, but they provide support . . . so I trust them.[4]

The acceptance and trust conveyed by the community in the zone towards their MPs have been acknowledged by anthropologists such as Abbink (2009). He observes that the Suri peoples have been represented at the HPR since 1995 by Guldu Tsedeke, "a promising young Suri man and well accepted among the Suri. He was re-elected with a large majority in May 2000, as an independent candidate" (Abbink, 2009). Even MPs brought to candidacy through their party (predominantly the EPRDF) are selected on the basis of social acceptance by their community. However, this procedure by the party is sometimes seen suspiciously by some members of the community, as one person put it: "if the public supports you then you will be recruited for an MP position so as to disconnect you from the public."[5] This deep reading into the practice might subsequently result in (or be a result of) low trust towards the institution while still maintaining trust in the individual.

Conversely, in the West Shoa zone of the Oromia region, the HPR as an institution enjoys minimal trust.[6] Except for a few informants from government offices and the Prosperity Party, other informants conveyed mistrust during interviews. Those that expressed their trust praised MPs as "the voice to the voiceless." Contrarily other informants described parliamentarians as "the mouthpieces of the ruling party" and cited controversial elections and a number of repressive declarations like the anti-terror law as their rationale for their mistrust of members of the HPR. Informants from opposition political parties (OLF and OFC) of West Shoa zone and informants from the trade and teachers' association of Ambo and Ginchi areas also described the HPR as "a mere collection of people who do not know the people and the interests of the people they represent." They describe them critically as puppets who "raise their hands to vote during the parliament meeting" playing a part in a governments' drama of acting as a democratic government. Table 7.5 reveals a similar outlook on trust.

Respondents in the Oromia and Amhara regions have a probability of low trust towards the HPR when compared to the SNNPR. Gender is also another important indicator; women respondents display more trust towards the HPR than men respondents. Region and gender do not exhibit statistically significant impacts on trust towards individual MPs. Respondents who believe their MP has visited his constituency more frequently than others and respondents who know the names of their MPs are likely to have more trust towards the MP and HPR. Respondents who reported having a sense of belonging in their locality also have more trust towards the HPR; significant results are not registered towards MPs. On the other hand, 'awareness of parliamentary democracy' is a factor that decreases the possibility of trust towards MPs.

Similar to 'awareness of parliamentary democracy,' education is a factor that decreases the possibility of trust towards both the institution of the HPR and MPs. In both cases, the significant coefficient was for respondents who reported 'no education;' in the case of the HPR, they had a statistically significant coefficient of 0.39, and for MPs, their trust had a statistically significant coefficient of 0.48.

The lack of trust by college-educated respondents could be explained by the core character of their relations with politicians in general – such as the perception that MPs are "bad people" (Crewe, 2021, p. 180). There is always the presumption that they are corrupt and have a better living standard than the public. Some people outright argue that a career as an MP is a ticket to better living conditions (Kassahun, 2005), which is arguably a flawed conclusion when studying Ethiopian MPs.

Table 7.5 A probit model on "public trust in HPR"

Dependent variable: trust in HPR (indicator: How much do you think your community's priorities are included in laws passed by the House of People's Representatives?)	*Coefficient*	*St. error*
Threshold [Q44=0]	0.99★★★	0.26
[Q44=1]	2.77★★★	0.27
Region (Comparison group: SNNPR)		
Oromia	0.36★★★	0.11
Amhara	0.46★★	0.11
Gender	0.15★	0.09
Age	0.00	0.56
Number of visits you believe your MP has conducted	0.14★★★	0.01
Education (Comparison group: College/University Educated)		
No Education	0.39★★	0.16
Adult literacy education	0.18	0.20
Primary school	0.02	0.11
Secondary school	0.07	0.10
Vocational school	0.25	0.24
Awareness of Parliamentary Democracy	−0.04	0.03
Do you know the name of your MP?	0.16★	0.09
Sense of belonging in the local area you reside	0.11★	0.06

b. Fixed at the displayed value. ★★★ p<0.01, ★★ p<0.05, ★ p<0.1

Table 7.6 A probit model on "the electorate's trust in MP"

Dependent variable: trust in MP (indicator: Has your MP kept his/her election promises?)	Coefficient	St. error
Threshold [Q40=0]	0.75★★	0.36
[Q44=1]	2.24★★★	0.37
Region (Comparison group: SNNPR)		
Oromia	0.06	0.14
Amhara	−0.08	0.17
Gender	0.15	0.12
Age	0.00	0.00
Number of visits you believe your MP has conducted	0.16★★★	0.02
Education (Comparison group: College/University Educated)		
No Education	0.48★★	0.22
Adult literacy education	−0.46	0.35
Primary school	0.18	0.15
Secondary school	0.00	0.14
Vocational school	0.38	0.33
Awareness of Parliamentary Democracy	−0.14★★★	0.04
Do you know the name of your MP?	0.23★	0.12
Sense of belonging in the local area you reside	0.09	0.08

b. Fixed at the displayed value. ★★★ p<0.01, ★★ p<0.05, ★ p<0.1

Subsequently, trust and political participation of the public (in the form of contacting parliamentarians) are discussed. Besides trust, the relationship of participation with socioeconomic factors is probed through a probit model. In the Amhara and Oromia regions, only 9% and 23% of the respondents to this question have contacted their MP. On the other hand, 46% of respondents in SNNPR have contacted their MPs (see Chapter 4 for details of the data on participation).

In what seems to resonate with the descriptive statistics above, residents of the Amhara and Oromia regions have significantly low probabilities of contacting their MPs than do residents of the SNNPR, Benč Maji zone. On the other hand, gender and age, similar to the probit model for "knowledge of MP's name" in the last chapter, do not show any statistical significance. While one is theoretically inclined to assume that awareness of parliamentary democracy (which has high relations with educational level), a sense of belonging in one's place of residence (a factor associated with ownership and concern) and speaking Amharic (the main working language of the HPR) would increase the probability of participation; it is actually not the case. All three factors do not have statistical significance. On the other hand, trust (both in MPs and the HPR) is the key factor associated with participation. It is possible to draw from this observation that it is not really the intellectual ability and physical capability of the public that encourages participation, but instead, the public's

Table 7.7 A probit model on participation

Dependent variable: participation (indicator: Have you ever contacted your representative?)	Coefficient	St. error
(Intercept)	1.94★★★	0.65
Region (Comparison group: SNNPR)		
Oromia	−1.86★★★	0.22
Amhara	−1.49★★	0.25
Gender	0.11	0.18
Age	−0.01	0.01
Number of visits you believe your MP has conducted	0.06★★	0.03
Trust in the MP (Indicator: Has your MP kept his election promises?, comparison group Yes)		
No	−1.11★★★	0.41
He has tried	−0.74★★	0.38
Trust in the HPR (Indicator: Do you think your communities priorities are included in the laws passed by the HPR? Comparison group: Yes)		
No	−1.83★★★	0.39
Sometimes	−1.15★★★	0.37
Awareness of Parliamentary Democracy	0.00	0.06
Do you know the name of your MP?	0.56★★★	0.17
Sense of belonging in the local area you reside	−0.13	0.11
Do you speak Amharic	0.25	0.27

b. Fixed at the displayed value. ★★★ p<0.01, ★★ p<0.05, ★ p<0.1

perceptions of the HPR as an institution and the MP as an individual. Of course, these are factors that are indirectly associated with socioeconomic backgrounds. For example, trust is a factor likely to increase as educational level decreases and aware-ness of democratic practice decreases.

The findings of this chapter so far, resonate yet expand the perimeters of the relationship between political participation, trust and education. While people with low trust in institutions could still engage through modes of direct participation such as political party membership and advocacy, the possibility of indirect participation through MPs, particularly through the act of contacting the MP, is low. This could be indicative of the powerful role the executive branch holds over the HPR; thus these individuals could easily take advantage of their ties in the executive branch rather than using means of indirect participation. On the other hand, this might be in line with what some researches show – that people who are more likely to rely on government services (due to the inability to purchase services) are more likely to contact their parliamentarians in developed countries (Crewe, 2021). Thus, people with lower economic status and connections, as well as the largely uneducated pub-lic in rural and urban spaces, are more likely to trust government institutions and contact them for help.

7.3 Are Ethiopian MPs Competent and Trustworthy?

Discussing trust towards the HPR as well as MPs side by side is necessary because of what the interview data delicately reveals. When compared to politicians in the executive branch, Ethiopian MPs lack a strong 'presence' in politics as individuals. This is perceived by the people, as well as procedurally established. Procedurally, it reflects in the culture of election administration where the party takes the lead in campaigning for the candidate and the role of the candidate is limited to "send his photo only."[7] Furthermore, MPs are not able to write and address institutions in formal letters as office holders. They do that as part of standing committees or request their home woreda to write a letter on the issue they want to address.[8] As to the public's perception, there is the popular opinion that MPs are accountable to their parties since their "allegiance is to their party, not to the electorates. They respect their party more than the people."[9] Individual 'presence' results in individual accountability; such accountability is somewhat lacking to some extent in the eyes of the public. MPs' constituency visits are perceived as actions taken due to their accountability to their party and not to the people. If there is any sort of account-ability to the electorate, it is the party that is somewhat accountable to the public. This, of course, is not the case legally; Article 12 of the FDRE constitution stipulates that representatives are accountable to the people. The electorates also can rescind representation when it is necessary, a phenomenon that is not practical without individual accountability.[10] From the perspective of some MPs, the public percep-tion is not flawed. They believe that they personally did not promise anything to the constituencies, but that they spoke on behalf of their political parties;

> If you are an electoral candidate selected by your party, then there is nothing you can promise for the people. Instead, it is the party who pledges for the public and your role is executing party program.[11]

The HPR has various organs set in place to execute its mandate, including the Gen-eral Assembly of the House, the Speaker; the Deputy Speaker; various committees; Government Whips; Party Whips or Parliamentary Groups; the Secretariat; and the Sergeant-at-Arms of the House. However, various informants confirm that: "The HPR has severely underutilized its constitutionally mandated power."[12] It performs neither its legislative nor oversight responsibilities to the satisfaction of the public. Currently, the executive branch initiates all laws eventually approved by the par-liament.[13] Various interviewees recommend that the parliament should reclaim its role of initiating laws.[14] While the separation of power is constitutionally provided, the roles of the executive branch and the parliament must be reinvented/redefined (further discussed in the following chapter). Even when recognising the overarch-ing role of the political party, the public still demands answers. To summarise the discussions so far, contending views on the MPs' 'inability to deliver' include that MPs are weak and incompetent (they don't know), MPs are party loyalists (they don't care) and MPs are themselves victims of an authoritarian system (they don't make a difference).

Besides substantial representational gaps that can be cited to doubt the competence of MPs, the claim that has persisted the longest is that "they don't know." Many question their intellectual capacity and educational level. In the 1960s and 70s, the educated class mainly disregarded parliamentarians as "a set of ignorant country-men" (Clapham, 1988, p. 65). Authors like Holcomb and Sisai (1990) believed that the Ethiopians assigned in either ministerial or parliamentary positions were not well versed with how the institutions worked. This view of Ethiopian parliamentarians still persists among many scholars, both Ethiopian and foreign. The ineffective oversight is often attributed to the low level of education and experience by the MPs (Kassahun, 2005). This perpetuates the view that the more educated Ethiopians would play an outstanding role in operating the institutions, resembling more the western model that was copied. However, this was not true in the 1960s and 70s, when more and more western-educated Ethiopians returned from the west; these returnees lacked the political poise and bureaucratic knowledge the uneducated aristocrats, landlords, and military officers possessed (Clapham, 1969; Hess and Loewenberg, 1964).

The research conducted for this book has also found that there is a widespread perception that MPs are "not as educated as they should be" among various members of the public. Consistent with the aforementioned findings, locations with higher trust are mainly marked by more relational experiences. In Benč-Sheko, local government officials recount that members of parliaments have strong societal acceptance and enjoy respect. An official narrates:

> MPs social acceptance is too strong/too high. MPs visit and express their condolences when there are funerals. They come to visit us when they hear of problems in the area. Even if roads are blocked the community opens the path for them, the public would say "Ohh our son where else will you go? Just come! Get in!" With this sentiment, the public receives MPs convivially. When MPs are in problem the public invites them for rest.[15]

According to an Afar regional council member,

> in pastoral communities such as Afar region, the social background of a person is among the key qualities that affect his/her ability to participate and be a representative because a person will be required to have a strong social base and needs to be a member of a dominant clan of a certain locality.[16]

Members of a strong and dominant clan are given priority over educated elites of the region. A community leader recalls an incident where an Afar representative struggled to develop minutes and read in public: "that incident was a shameful experience to the entire Afar people and we still remember that day to remind ourselves about the importance of education among public representatives."[17]

Save the exceptions above, popular understanding in Amhara, Addis Ababa and Oromia is that the incompetence of the MPs mainly comes from their educational status. Many interview respondents in West Shoa believed that an individuals' social
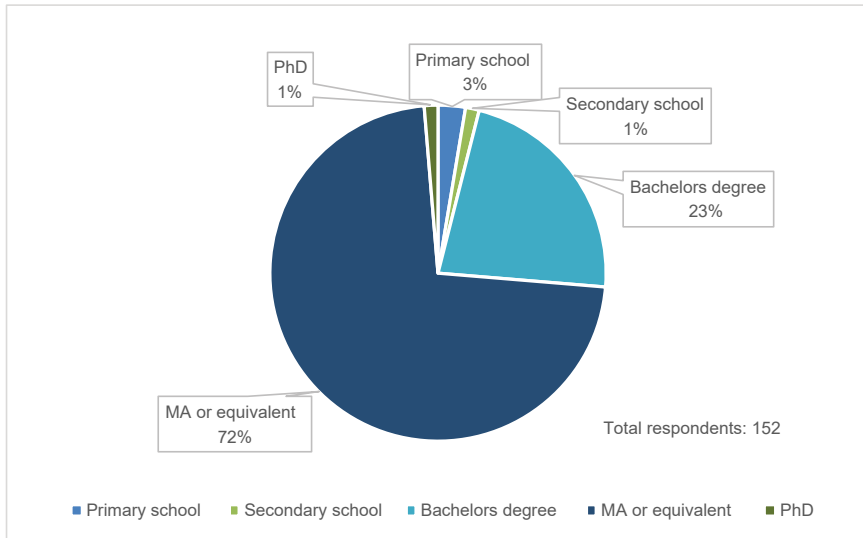
Figure 7.2 MP survey, educational status

status in the community, educational background and language proficiency critically affect their ability to be a competent MP. Some argued that fluency in reading and writing is sufficient for one to be a representative. Others, on the other hand criticised the current Ethiopian HPR as merely a collection of uneducated people. They explain: "Public budgets are pooled toward executives and by executives organs . . . most influential and educated experts of the HPR compete for the executives instead of staying at the legislative."[18] The perception of MPs as 'uneducated' might be something rooted more in historical perspectives than the current reality. Oromia, West Shoa zone, has some of the most educated representatives in the parliament; two actually have PhD degrees.

The data on the educational status of MPs (153 respondents) disproves this perception. It is important to acknowledge that this discussion would be more robust if higher education enrolment and progress date were somehow incorporated in the data. This is because there is the possibility that some of the parliamentarians might not have had their degrees before election. It could be a qualification they acquired by studying part-time while in parliament. Many MPs consider the work in the parliament as routine and lacking challenge (referring to stimulation) most of the time, thus MPs find the time, after work hours, to pursue their studies in Addis Ababa University and other colleges in their surroundings.

Gaxie and Godmer (2007) call the increasing engagement of the educated in politics the professionalisation of politics. To them, this has already had several consequences in the west, such as the "parochialization" of candidate selection, increased autonomy of MPs from their political parties due to their possession of an "individual

political resource" and the creation of "indirect political representation" (Gaxie and Godmer, 2007, pp. 131–133). Interestingly, constituencies tend to be more supportive of MPs who are more educated, independent and do not strictly represent the voters' or their parties' interests (Bengtsson and Wass, 2011). What Gaxie and Godmer refer to as indirect political representation is a situation where "social, occupational, religious and ideological groups" are not directly represented in parliament because of the professionalisation (Gaxie and Godmer, 2007, p. 134). Thus, groups such as smallholder farmers, small businesses and clerics are not descriptively and symbolically represented in parliament; they are represented by educated individuals who propose goals attractive to different sections of the community.

7.4 Women MPs and Representation

Gender is one of the socioeconomic factors this chapter needs to address. Around the world, studies have found that women's participation in politics is affected by culture, education and economic status (Kivoi, 2014). Many studies demonstrate that gender, along with education, is an important indicator of political knowledge and political participation in developing democracies, although this was not something reflected in the quantitative data used for this book. Nisbet (2008, p. 474) found that structural and cultural gaps are likely to explain the knowledge gap more than "income, education, interest and efficacy." The effect of culture and societal perception on women politicians is evident through the primary qualitative data, and to some extent, through the quantitative data. The question that measures this perception asked respondents in Oromia, Amhara and SNNP regions "Do you agree with the following statement? Men make better political leaders than women."

According to Figure 7.3, the results are comparable in all regions: respondents who somewhat or fully agreed that "men make better political leaders" were 23% in
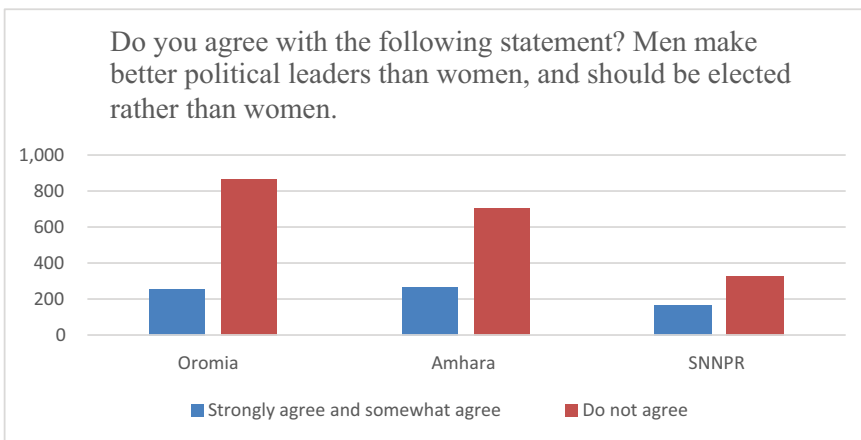
Figure 7.3 Descriptive statistics: Do men make better politicians than woman?

Oromia, 27.5% in Amhara and 34% in SNNPR. While a large percentage did not agree with the statement, the percentage that did agree is not negligible. What is concerning is that many women come to office not because of their approval rating by the population but through other mechanisms that cause the gender gap to grow narrower, such as administrative and political measures (namely the quota system) that do not address structural inequalities in culture, society and economy. Areas even with a significant bias against women leaders are equally likely to have women candidates because of candidate selection procedures adopted by the political party, the EPRDF. The EPRDF has in place a quota system installed since 2010.

> In 2008, of the 547 members of the federal parliament, only 116 were women (less than 22%). Also, in the 29-member Central Committee of the ruling TPLF party, there was only one female delegate – a mere 3 percent representation in a country where the number of men and women is almost equal.
>
> (Paulos, 2011, p. 232)

The steady increase in the number of women is evident through time. During the time the data was collected, there were 212 women MPs (38.76%) out of the 547 members of the HPR (Meheret and Tsedey, 2017).

Studies exploring gender quota practices in parliament in Africa have suggested that "a democratic state is not necessarily more likely to adopt gender quotas or have more women in parliament than a less democratic one;" in fact, they argue that quota systems are more likely to be implemented with success in countries with hegemonic polities (Bauer and Burnet, 2013, p. 103). However, such quotas in this context emerge without the social, economic and political developments that support it. Meheret et al. (2019, p. 44) do not treat the rise in the number of women in parliament as a self-sacrificing move by men in the political party, instead, they argue it could be viewed as "deceptive, serving either as symbolic expressions of representation or a facade to lend legitimacy to the system."

It would, however, be wrong to consider the action, from the perspective of enhanced representation, a total failure. According to some legislative scholars, party

Table 7.8 Composition of men and women members of the Ethiopian parliament (1995–2015)

No.	Election year	Total number of candidates	Distribution of parliamentary seats		Percentage of women members
			Men	Women	
1.	1995	2,871	526	11	2.01
2.	2000	–	505	42	7.68
3.	2005	1,594	410	116	21.21
4.	2010	2,188	395	152	27.79
5.	2015	1,828	335	212	38.76

Source: Meheret et al. (2019, p. 43)

directives can indeed increase the proportion of nominated women candidates by creating formal rules that propose a certain proportion of women among the party's candidates (Sadie, 2005; Caul, 1999). Institutions such as the African Union calling for 50% representation of women and UNSC resolution 1325 see the quota system as one of the methods of reaching these goals. Around the globe, 40% of countries have gender quotas for parliaments (Bacha et al., 2020).

The quota system has obviously brought many women into office, women parliamentarians acknowledge that the reason they currently have their positions is because the political party selected them; one MP argues, "It is the determination of the political party that mattered the most." They believe that their presence in politics encourages more and more women to join politics. However, the impact of cultural and social contexts on women MPs that are elected through these circumstances is a subject mostly neglected. One of the main reasons cited in studies for the lack of women's representation in political offices is their lower chances of selection by their parties during elections; the challenge is "not the voters but party members" (Crewe, 2021, p. 38).

> Citizens tend to assume that the most important vote in a democracy is cast by voters for a politician or party to represent you. However, you could argue that the candidate that political parties select in the first place is as influential on the process of securing a seat in parliament.
>
> (Crewe, 2021, p. 31)

The approach to bringing women into office through a political party's quota system seems to alleviate this challenge, but this is mainly the case when the political party implementing a quota system is the one likely to win (Meheret et al., 2019). Studies around Ethiopia show that the number of women is higher at the level of local government. This number dwindles as the ranks go higher and the positions closer to the national capital. The powerful role of selection held by political parties is also there when obtaining influential positions like party whip and standing committee membership/chairmanship. All party whips of the EPRDF from 1995 to 2021 were men. This trend also persists today with the Prosperity Party and other parties that have won seats in parliament in the 2021 election. Commonly, women are assigned to lead social and gender affairs committees and caucuses.

Studies have contested results on the correlation between women's representation in high-level government positions and good governance. For example, one study shows that the representation of women in national parliament does not necessarily translate to effective governance and rule of law (Bacha et al., 2020). He draws this data from Sub-Saharan countries, referring to countries with the highest records of effective governance and rule of law, such as Botswana and Ghana, and the highest records of women in parliaments, such as Rwanda and Namibia. However, the analysis fails to control for other important factors in democracy and economy, thus making the results somewhat questionable. Other scholars, setting aside women's representation and participation as a rights issue, insist that gender representation in

high political offices is not translated into an improvement in governance indexes, giving similar arguments.

In Oromia, the share of women parliamentarians was 36.5% in 2005, then dropped to 27.8% in 2010 and grew to 46.7% in 2015. Gender parity is reflected in Western Oromia, the study site for this quantitative research. According to Bacha et al. (2020), even though there are high numbers of women in the regional parliament, woreda councils and woreda executive positions, he argues that they are mainly placed in "non-strategic sectors," such as children, youth and women affairs, sports and tourism, as opposed to security, budget and finance and other economic sectors. Besides these discrepancies, women are severely underrepresented in mid and lower-level management positions.

To understand economic, social and cultural impacts on women through the course of the research for this book, the data collection involved a focus group discussion for men and women MPs separately. This was essential for the results since responses by each group would influence how women respond (or vice versa) for fear of how they are perceived, an experience already proven in other contexts (Crewe, 2021). This discussion brings up one of the key arguments and findings of this book. The HPR, while it is constitutionally an assembly of representatives of constituency groups, is in practice a highly tiered and hierarchical institution: there are power relations between different MPs and different genders resulting in different experiences at each tier.

On the other hand, we can argue that all parliaments are a place where power is expressed in subtle expressions of competition and fear. Crewe (2015, p. 213) described this phenomenon in the UK's House of Commons: "at every turn politicians are spying on each other, winning support and articulating cooperation or antagonism? Every day they meet old friends, opponents and supports as well as strangers who they need to woo." Access to methods of communication is an important tool utilised daily by parliamentarians. While formal proceedings of the parliament are described as 'boring,' including by prominent politicians, what goes on outside of the room is more interesting (Assefa, 2015). Outside of parliamentary proceedings, members' interactions are consumed with political socialising, from which women are mostly excluded. During the focus group discussion, women MPs discussed:

Woman MP1: Men MPs go out at any time and stay as late as they like with the woreda leadership at night – they would go to recreational places such as bars together. They talk to one another whenever they meet in bars and restaurants; they make many of their decisions there.

Woman MP2: The woreda leadership likes it when they are invited out to drinks but we (women MPs) do not do that; we spend time on our work and leave.

Woman MP1: Our social life is full of caution; it is restricted in time and space. We don't go to bars because we have to protect ourselves and our name. This is because of our culture.

Woman MP2:   This is true for our relation with male woreda counterparts not women.

Womane MP3:   Besides this the male counterparts do not come to meetings on time; they don't arrange transportation for us as they should, and they generally have a tendency to push us away.

This group discussion focuses on the experience of women MPs during field visits. They attribute this to problems resulting from the way the community sees women (pressure associated with their reputation if seen dining out late), and also a problem resulting from the way their men counterparts behave (using informal channels that exclude women and disregard their position as MPs). Meheret et al. (2019) argue that women parliamentarians in Ethiopia are similar to men in their interaction with constituencies and boldness (unafraid) to speak in parliamentary sessions but are different during personal interactions,

> As one woman MP put it, it is very important to keep the conventionally accepted more 'gentle' and 'softer' side because it prevents their male peers from jumping to the hasty conclusion that the women are aggressive. . . . Assertiveness by women is not favourably viewed by male-dominated Ethiopian society.
>
> (Meheret et al., 2019, p. 53)

The way men woreda officials treat women MPs is not only a result of the way they view women, the institution of the HPR as a whole. The lack of regard for the HPR as a prestigious political institution plays a role in how they are viewed. A woman MPs says, "In the community we are harassed like any other female no one sees as a member of parliament." Men MPs' complacent behaviours in these situations exacerbate the way women MPs are treated in the community and the woreda administration. Women MPs describe this as cultural – an "attitude that women are not capable" – even though there is much progress they do appreciate regarding women's participation in politics.

Male MPs during the focus group discussion mentioned some of the challenges in terms of defining the overarching themes of the context women face. However, the political implication, such as systemic exclusion from decision-making (affecting them as politicians and their constituency as voters) is completely missing from their discussion. The discussion is also filled with a cloud of uncertainty, circumventing responsibility and deflecting the blame back on women, maybe from fear of acknowledging wrongdoing on the part of the community and the HPR. They acknowledge through their discussions that "women are not seen as decision-makers. But even when they are empowered, people don't believe they can decide." At the woreda they also recognise that most administrators are men that do not "encourage women leaders to come to administrative councils." When discussing the challenges women face at the parliament, men MPs' deflection and ambiguity continue.

Male MP 1:   Women do not get promoted as often.

Male MP 2:   It is not such a big challenge in the parliament.

Male MP 1:	They are not empowered and encouraged to come to decision-making responsibilities.
Male MP 2:	In the parliament they can equally participate. But in standing committee leaderships there are three women standing committee leaders out of the ten committees

Before that, in 2018, among the 18 standing sub-committees of parliament, women chaired seven of them; the challenge was the non-strategic position they assumed rather than the number. Interviews in local administrations also show similar results. For example, in Afar, interviews revealed low representation in several committees of the regional council. Women are included in only one committee of the regional council, the "women's affairs committee," while the rest of the committees are dominated by men parliamentarians.[19] The representation in social and women's affairs committees by itself should not be disregarded. For example, the HPR has a women's caucus with 17 women MP members who have made a number of achievements in the last decade. The caucus has played a role in the revision of the family law, especially in the increased number of months of paid maternity leave, and advocacy for girls' access to education and leadership (Meheret et al., 2019).

While on the one hand, the men MPs want to paint a different image of the HPR than that of the woreda, they obviously struggle to reconcile the facts knowing women face challenges in participating in decision-making in Addis Ababa as well as their local woreda.

Male MP 3:	At the woreda, women face cultural communities that don't believe women can work equally as women. Both women and men don't believe that women are capable. I think it is even worse that women don't have good attitude towards working women.
Male MP 4:	No, I don't think there is cultural pressure that women cannot be above men.
Male MP 3:	When they go to the electorate Women parliamentarians are expected to display the character of 'any uneducated women' to be accepted by the community. Or they will be called names, her reputation will be tarnished and they will be degraded and outcast by the community. They are expected to live the same way. . . . The community will say "She changed after going to Addis Ababa," "She is civilised," "She does not know norms."

The other men MPs nod and say "yes" in agreement.

Male MPs acknowledge that the attitude that women can work equally just like men and are able to execute responsibilities is not prevalent. They mention "cultural and economic" challenges. They also extend the discussion to the household level. They discuss decision-making as a challenge women face at work as well as in their homes. They go beyond discussing the MPs and discuss boys and girls (unclear if they are pondering their own childhoods or are reflecting observations of how their children are now raised). An MP says "A boy and a girl in the same household are not heard

in the same way." The household challenges the men MPs discuss differ depending on their cultural background. An MP from Afar explains that in pastoralist societies, there are harmful traditional practices associated with polygamy and female genital mutilation that hampers women as leaders. In other locations, they discuss how women are deprived of the means to own property and create wealth. In cases where women achieve their property ambitions, they "cannot make decisions over property equally like men." Further delving into the realm of the home, the MPs discussed what they called women's "double responsibility" associated with family and children. It was obvious to them that women MPs do not get help from their husbands to do housework or raise children. But when asked whether men MPs have any "housework or child raising" responsibilities; one MP responded: "We the men parliamentarians do not support our wives."

Woman MP1: We do not have husbands that think, "She has so much responsibilities let me help her."

Woman MP2: Our husbands do not [take responsibility of taking case of our children]; they don't even want to speak to them unless they have completed all their responsibilities.

Women MPs agree with the men MPs but go one step further to show the political decision-making implication this creates in their career. They argue that everything in the household is their responsibility; "We don't have enough time to read draft laws . . . we normally run late." In order to juggle the priorities of both children and work, they admit to decreasing their social relations. However, in politics, decreasing socialising is as good as decreasing political networking, as indicated earlier. With this the gender dichotomy in the household, the woreda, the Federal, the household, the social and work suffer when women participate in politics. The issues cross each other's realms and what is considered a personal issue becomes a policy debate.

7.5 Facility, Family Size and Women MPs

Research shows that both having children and not having them can be presented as an argument against women politicians; in the former, the case would emphasise their time commitments and in the latter, how their perception of society and responsibility is lacking the perspective they could gain by leading a family (McDougall, 1998; Crewe, 2021). Interviews from the Afar region also indicated similar concerns over additional household responsibilities. But what followed as a concern reflected the culture; "the need to travel long distances alone to discharge public responsibilities are also among the problems exclusively faced by women parliamentarians." The presentation of solitary travel as a challenge could be reflective a culture that encourages companionship of a man during long-distance trips. In Afar, a story of an incident of violence against a woman "speaker of the house [regional council]" in her office had created an alarm, although such incidents are unheard of in the region before.[20] As indicated in the previous chapter, logistical challenges that
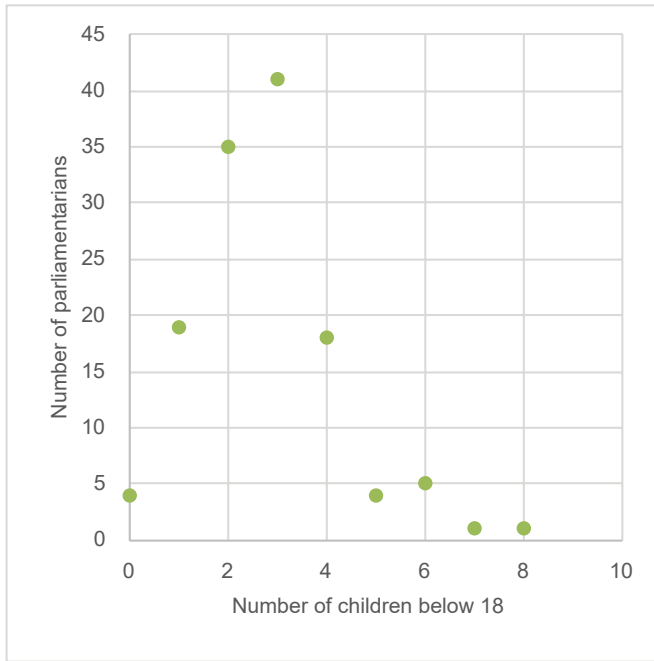
Figure 7.4 MP family size

require long, harsh and sometimes on-foot travel are considered by men interviews as challenges hindering women more than men MPs.

Earlier in this book, the complex relationship between a family's number of children and living standard was recognised (Todd and Sullivan, 2002). As per Todd and Sullivan (2002), this is the result of a specific confounding factor related to public services, that is, government's role in the provision of social services to children. In the context of socially knit communities like most communities in Ethiopia, besides free or low-cost government services such as education and basic healthcare, the role of social capital for childcare becomes a critical factor in determining the relationship between the number of children and the family's living standard.

Of the 159 parliamentarians that responded to the questionnaire, 124 reported having children below 18 years of age. 35 of them had two children below the age of 18 and 41 had three. During interviews, parliamentarians revealed that the cost of childcare and school is one of the highest costs they have to bear because of living in Addis Ababa. Some women MPs mentioned a colleague who decided to send her children to live in the woreda she represents to live with their grandparents because of the high cost of living.

With regards to housing, there are 495 houses for the MPs in Bole, Olympia, Gerji and Dereja Medbi areas. Maintenance to the houses is provided by the Federal Housing Corporation and by the Secretariat. House members pay between ETB

250 and 350 for the houses.[21] Most secretariat members explain that the Secretariats' operational activities outweigh its programme activities:

> If you look at the plan and report of the secretariat it is more of the service sector – cars, houses, and fixing pipes. The parliamentarians also concern themselves with these issues more than the representation work that they do. If they propose a research topic and it is not completed on time, they wouldn't be as offended as they would if their water pipes aren't fixed.[22]

With regards to transportation in Addis Ababa, Chairpersons of standing committees and sub committees have their own cars. Others use the bus shuttle services.[23] MPs might also ask the transport unit at the secretariat for assistance if they have business outside of the HPR building; however, this is not considered their 'right.' To claim the service as a 'right,' the business has to be endorsed and requested through a specific standing committee.[24] Among the constituency there is a flawed assumption that MPs (and to some extent public servants) are highly paid individuals living in luxury. A member of the public explains:

> They only visit the people during year-end budget closing time. Even then, they don't conduct the visit with the motivation to discuss problems of the public but to earn their daily subsistence allowance (DSA) in the name of conducting visits.[25]

In reality, MPs' living standards are a major challenge to representation; the DSA is important to them just for that reason. MPs report that their monthly salaries and benefits are not sufficient to live a fairly comfortable life where they don't worry about daily expenses or school fees. It is evident that members of the HPR are some of the least-paid parliaments in Africa. People with high living standards do not want to become parliamentarians because it implies a significant loss of income.

The HPR itself realised the financial challenges most MPs face living in the capital city. MPs are accused of seeking and attending per-diem paying executive and NGO meetings and trainings; some even go so far as to allege the per diem is used as a payoff to lure the parliamentarian to partiality. To avoid these, MPs are not allowed to accept if invited directly unless they are on good terms with the chair of their standing committee. The chair basically acts as the supervisor, ensuring that MPs are within the vicinity of the parliament hall. They also make sure all invitations go through them, distributing meeting 'opportunities' among members.

In this plethora of challenges, women MPs still manage to fulfil their responsibilities; most even go through private colleges or public universities to get degrees during their term in Addis Ababa. Others decide to grow the size of their family by becoming mothers for the first, second and third times. To some, this is because, "the work at the HPR is not challenging and it does not make a difference anyway, it is a good place to take extended maternity leaves." This should in no way be interpreted as women slacking more than men. Women MPs revealed during a focus group discussion that vast sections of their communities prefer to be represented
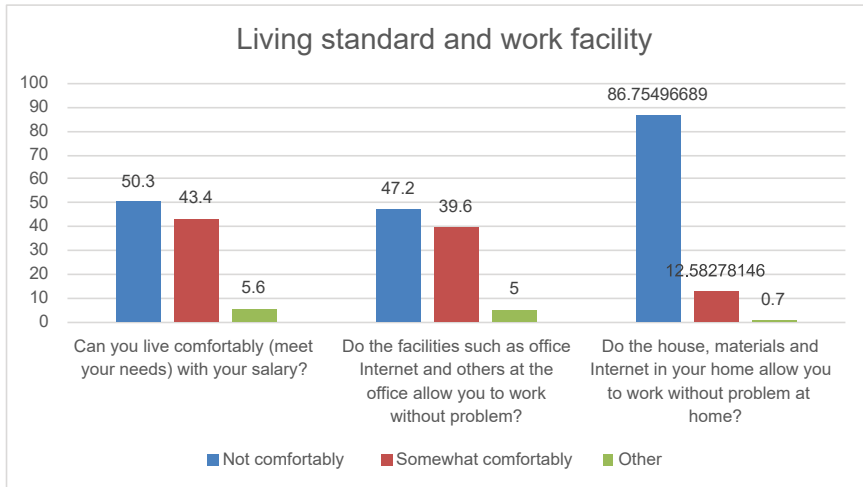
Figure 7.5 MP survey, housing and home working facilities

by men MPs, while they believe in practice women MPs are more hardworking. This aligns with the discussion in Chapter 4 that proves that women MPs are more likely to engage in constituency work themselves than delegate (Crewe, 2021). The women MPs in the focus group discussion also mention grimly that "generally questions by MPs either by men or women are not answered by the executive." Some expert interviews also try to show the downside of the quota system.[26]

> Some women parliamentarians are poorly qualified to be public representa-tives as they are carelessly chosen as representatives merely for being women without having to look at their academic achievement or leadership capac-ity. As a result, most women parliamentarians fail to have active participation during the regional council meetings. They spend the whole day sitting and listening without making contribution to the agenda at hand. Hence, there are problems of targeting and selection of qualified women to the regional council as public representatives.

However, from this, it is impossible to decipher whether the women lack capacity or are quiet for other reasons. During the focus group discussions, the women MPs revealed,

Woman MP 1: At work we expect others to speak first and only raise our hands if our idea hasn't been said by others – but men will repeat the idea for the 30th time even if others have said it.
Woman MP 2: They will improve what others have said and say it again.

This is telling of a situation where men speak over women and enhance their posi-tion through patronising explanations about issues the audience already understands.

This tendency of men MPs to speak more assertively and repetitively occurs not just in Ethiopia but all over the world.

> Power hierarchies are not just about numerical participation or decision making but about value too. So a gendered hierarchy is not merely revealed by the absence of women from influential or decision-making forums . . . Sometimes women's ideas go unnoticed, but when repeated by a man – especially a senior one – are taken up as masterful.
>
> (Crewe, 2015, pp. 214–215)

Women MPs also cite two other reasons that contribute to their relative silence during meetings. The first is that they value substantive contributions when speaking that go beyond their men counterparts' objective of mere recognition. Unfortunately, in leadership, those that speak often are more respected and recognised. A woman MP explains, "When you first start your work you actively speak people's concern but then when there is no substantive change then we stop speaking." Their perceived inability to trigger action has led to a state where women MPs admit "We don't tell ourselves 'my idea is useful and my idea is substantive.'" The other reason is for fear of aggressive evaluation gimgema from their fellow men MPs and woreda officials. An MP explains:

> In the woreda men who make many mistakes are not evaluated as strongly as the women – the men are able to circumvent the problem; the women are attacked by many – she easily categorised as incapable. When women forward unpopular ideas, they are not only rejected but they will never be forgotten, they will be used to undermine her.

Women MPs analyse the situation and describe a situation where, after a while, most women MPs fade into the background and become invisible; they all agree that "When new people raise their hands they are not given opportunities to speak as much the frequent speakers." This gendered analysis clearly unveils an intricate hierarchical system at play in parliaments, among different genders, different branches of government at the federal and regional levels, as well as a hierarchy between 'normal' MPs as opposed to chairs of standing committees. This hierarchy is further unveiled in the following chapter on the discussion between MPs' relation with political parties, the executive branch (who are chairs of political parties) and the HPR secretariat led by career politicians mostly posing as 'technocrats.'

Notes

1 Interview, Dereje Tekle, American College of Technology (ACT), 03 August 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
2 Interview, Afar Community leader, Samara, Ethiopia, 16 July 2020.
3 Interview, Usman Ahmed, Dean of the College at Law of Samara University, 27 June 2020, Samara, Ethiopia.

4 Interview, Amanuel Abel, Benč-Sheko Zone Women, Youth and Children affairs, Mizan-Aman, Ethiopia, July 26, 2020.
5 Melaku Gitab, Businessman, 24 August 2020, Mizan-Aman, Ethiopia.
6 Interviews, Tafarraa Dhugaasaa, Abdi Bekele, Darajjee Olaaniii, Abera Tiye Tesfaye Gosomsa, Margaa Wadaajoo, Teshome Beyene, June 2020.
7 Interview, Dr Mesrak Mekonnen, Secretary General of the Secretariat of the HPR, 22 July 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
8 Interview, Belay Legesse; Research Capacity Building, Library and Documentation Directorate Director HPR, 07 July 2020, Addis Ababa.
9 Interview, Dereje Tekle, American College of Technology (ACT), 03 August 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
10 Interview, Dr Sisay Mengiste, School of Federalism, Addis Ababa University, 05 August 2020, Addis Ababa.
11 Interview, Dejene Komtikes, Former semen benč woreda administrator and former MP of Benč People, 27 July 2020, Mizan-Aman, Ethiopia.
12 Interview, Dr Getahun Kassa, National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), August 2020, telephone interview.
13 Interview, Dr Sisay Mengiste, School of Federalism, Addis Ababa University, 05 August 2020, Addis Ababa. Interview, Dereje Tekle, American College of Technology (ACT), 03 August 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
14 Interview, Dr Getahun Kassa, National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), August 2020
15 Melaku Gitab, Businessman, 24 August 2020, Mizan-Aman, Ethiopia
16 Interview, Kulsuma Budahaba, Regional MP and Deputy office head, Afar regional state disaster prevention office, 16 July 2020, Samara, Ethiopia.
17 Interview, Afar Community leader, 16 July 2020, Samara, Ethiopia.
18 Interviews, Waladhat Kumela, Tasfaye Gosomsa, and Daraje Olani, June 2020.
19 Interview, Usman Ahmed, Dean of the College at Law of Samara University, 27 June 2020, Samara, Ethiopia.
20 The interviewees stressed that "The incident should be taken as a shift from the normal trend of the Afar people as the Afar culture discourages disrespecting women."
21 Interview, Hailu Berhane, General Services, HPR, 02 September 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
22 Interview, Dr Mesrak Mekonnen, Secretary general of the Secretariat of the HPR, 22 July 2020, Addis Ababa.
23 Interview, Belay Legesse, Capacity Building, Library and Documentation Directorate Director, HPR, 07 July 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
24 Interview, Belay Legesse, Capacity Building, Library and Documentation Directorate Director, HPR, 07 July 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
25 Interview, Usman Ahmed, Dean of the College at Law of Samara University, 27 June 2020, Samara, Ethiopia.
26 Interview, Usman Ahmed, Dean of the College at Law of Samara University, 27 June 2020, Samara, Ethiopia

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8 Oversight and Substantive Representation by the Ethiopian Parliament

This chapter aims to show the processes and barriers MPs face when pursuing the implementation of their campaign promises by the executive branch. In their interaction with the executive branch through such processes of substantive representation and oversight, incumbent political parties take centre stage in managing their actions and relations. Political parties are subsidiary institutions to the state that are central to the three branches of power but crucial in defining the relationship between these three branches. Their position as the "gatekeepers to legislatures" make them a force that is sometimes not directly governed by the HPR internal standards while actively playing a role in shaping them (Opalo, 2019, p. 10). Besides the processes MPs employ to manoeuvre the system, the chapter also explores the self-view of MPs as 'powerless messengers,' going as far as looking at themselves as being akin to the 'oppressed.'

There are several mechanisms the HPR can adopt for effective oversight and substantive representation. The House has the mandate to scrutinise executive bodies. If the house does not find the responses and actions to be satisfactory, they develop a decision and forward it to the speaker of the house; the speaker then forwards it to the Prime Minister. The HPR can take measures against executive bodies that do not deliver.[1] The measures are recommended to the Prime Minister, who will take action on behalf of the parliament.[2] When asked about the measures the parliament has taken against the executive branch in their terms of service, MPs do not have many examples. There are also cases where MPs feel that there should have been enough grounds to expel ministers such as the former Minister of Education and Housing and Urban Development, who only faced 'strong warnings' without any actual consequences.

Theoretically, trust in parliamentary institutions could also be due to the lack of proper implementation of laws passed by the HPR.[3] This refers to the parliament's ability to properly oversee implementation. The discussion on oversight in the context of the EPRDF's Ethiopia is starkly different from opposing party MPs scrutinising the ruling party. Oversight in this context is when MPs of the ruling party conduct oversight work against their party officials. Several reasons are cited for the low oversight power exerted by the parliament towards the executive branch; these include lack of resources and capacity (Rapoo, 2004), type of relationship (Malapane, 2016), vagueness created due to overlapping memberships (Ahmed, 2011), laws

like the constitution and election proclamations (Hudson and Wren, 2007), the nature of the political parties (Mickler, 2013), contradicting mandates of the parliament (Salih, 2005) and competing loyalties of MPs (Malapane, 2016).

The parliament evaluates the plan of the executive branch based on targeted national problems and alignment with mid- and long-term strategies of the country.[4] The parliament evaluates executive reports; written and oral briefings. Interviews revealed that oversight in Ethiopia has challenges related to oversight tools. Such tools include "committee hearings, hearings in plenary sessions of the Parliament, the creation of commissions of inquiry, questions, question time, interpellations, the ombudsman, auditors general, and public account committees" (Aklilu et al., 2020).

Question time refers to the procedure where the HPR invites the executive branch to come and respond to the parliament face to face. Based on the Rules of Procedure and Members' Code of Conduct, the prime minister is required to appear in person and explain once a month, and other ministers should do the same for one hour every Thursday; but this is not always conducted as per schedule.[5] Questions are normally exercised during question time per the parliament's schedule. Various members of the ministerial cabinet and their team are subjected to such questioning by members of parliament, specifically members of the standing committee that matches the ministerial office in question. There are times where two or more standing committees question one minister due to overlapping responsibilities. The composition of such a committee, referred to in the UK as the Select Committee Panel, has come under scrutiny for direct control of the selection processes by party whips, leading to a situation where most pro-status quo individuals are placed in the committees (Flinders, 2002). Besides the scrutiny of processes of selection, another recommended measure to ensure the independence of select committees/standing committee chairs is paying their salaries from sources other than the pro status quo bodies; critics believe instead of guaranteeing independence these types of monetary rewards might be manipulated by the party, resulting in the opposite. Other reformatory activities on the menu to promote select committees'/standing committees' critical scrutiny towards ministers involve e-services; allowing e-communication and creating a library of these communications to help uphold accountability (Flinders, 2002).

The parliament is also engaged in supervision. Members of parliaments meet with members of various constituency representatives to supervise activities by the federal government. The basis for the questioning is usually planned or surprise field visits; these visits are a form of supervision of routine activities of the executive office. Committees are equipped with checklists they employ when conducting field visits. Planned field visits are scheduled twice a year (Aklilu et al., 2020). Some parliamentarians have reported harsh questioning towards some executive branches due to clear breaches of regulation during field visits. In addition to standing committees, the parliament also establishes special committees that look into different issues such as natural or manmade disasters. One of the mechanisms by which the HPR holds the executive branch accountable is the report of the general auditor.[6] The creation of quasi-autonomous bodies under ministerial offices is a growing concern for parliamentary oversight in developed democracies (Flinders, 2002). These

institutions often fall through the cracks of scrutiny because they enjoy a privileged status, reporting directly to the Prime Minister instead of the parent ministerial office. MPs and other oversight institutions such as the auditor general face similar challenges in Ethiopia.

Another area that requires abundant scrutiny by the HPR towards the executive is delegated legislation; each proclamation issued by the HPR has the clause "The Council of Ministers may issue Regulations for the implementation of this Proclamation" embedded in it. Aklilu et al. (2020) report that the HPR reviews regulations mainly on the basis of whether they are in line with the constitution or not, although this power of adjudicating constitutional issues lies with the House of Federation instead of the HPR. However, the main gap identified by the authors lies in subsequent 'child' laws that emerge out of regulations such as directives; "they are not aware of the existence of the excessively large number of directives already in use" (Aklilu et al., 2020, p. 102). One former parliamentarian explains that the public is normally confronted with restrictions enclosed in directives rather than proclamations and confrontations; a common phrase in use by public servants is "the directive does not allow it" "መመሪያው አይፈቅድም." However, in many cases, these directives are not available to the public or even to the oversight bodies in parliament. An approach the HPR is taking currently is making all directives available on its public application, according to the regulation and the proclamations under which they emerged.

8.1 Powerless Messengers

One of the MPs biggest concerns regarding constituency visits is their role as 'powerless messengers' between the people and the executive branch. Their inability to provide timely and sufficient responses to the demands of the people frustrates many MPs. One MP admits "when we come from constituency visits to Addis Ababa, we face a corrupt institution called the executive; they tell us 'do not raise unnecessary issues.'"[7] Constituency visits are followed by reports; MPs submit their reports to the party whips, to the secretariat and to the executive branch.[8] The reports usually include the challenges/requests, the number of people they have contacted and the number of kebeles visited.[9] They submit this formally on issues that concern the federal government only.[10] The government whips compile and share MPs' reports to the executives to respond to the house (through the speaker). Unless the House is able to respond to constituency concerns, trust in MPs is further eroded. MPs report that the executive branch is unresponsive; issues persist for five and six years.[11] Several reasons are cited for the executives' unresponsiveness, including the lack of policy options drawn by MPs, the lack of public engagement in decision-making and the confusion of the mandates of the HPR and regional councils by the public.

It is also common to mention "lack of technical knowledge about the subject matter" as one of the challenges of supervision by parliamentary groups (Aklilu et al., 2020, p. 105). This is a puzzling situation given parliamentarians are not significantly less educated than those in policy, but it indicates an important deficit where parliamentarians could be significantly less informed on policy options and

less equipped with competent staff. A number of reasons might contribute to the lack of information. The first is MPs' ignorance of their role as legislators because the executive branch is taking care of it. Another reason is that parliamentarians are limited through the hierarchical chains discussed earlier from accessing the sources where such information is made available; this includes research and higher learning institutions. Studies on pastoralist parliamentary groups in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda show that parliamentarians have limited capacity to use appropriate procedures to make valuable policy and legislative contributions. The report showed that MPs have an "acute need for information on a variety of topics, including technical and policy options in the dry lands" (Morton et al., 2007, p. 1).

As discussed in the previous chapter, a large proportion of the household survey respondents believe that decisions made by the HPR never take the interest of their localities into account (48.5) and that the HPR is not fulfilling its mandate at all or that it requires significant improvement. The electorate have not perceived substantive results from the constituency visits; but this is a sentiment MPs also share – feeling weak due to their positions. Interviewees indicated that their representatives and their constituency work have miles to go before delivering on the major concerns of their constituencies. They discussed a range of competing priorities including flooding, agriculture, poverty, health, education and water conservation. The public conveyed that several legislative acts from the HPR became controversial after adoption because of the lack of legitimacy that emanates from a lack of popular participation. They claim that they are not kept up to date on the electorate's interest, and there is a lack of active engagement and consultation with the public. In general, the law-making process follows a top-down approach, an interviewee reported:

> Until today the initiation, drafting, adoption, and deliberation of laws are largely decided at the top level and flows to the bottom level. In practice, there is no popular participation in any form of legislative procedures.

This demonstrates, on the one hand, a gap in the HPR's public engagement mechanism, and on the other, the evolving understanding of indirect representation. As politics become more accessible through technology and mechanisms of transparency, the public is seeking more direct involvement in decision-making – a growing trend around the world. The absence of public engagement has a negative implication on the implementation of laws.

A 'challenge' continually faced by MPs and the executives is that the constituency often confuses the mandates of the federal HPR parliament and regional councils. This, according to MPs, results in a situation where the questions cannot be sufficiently addressed by one MP, without collaboration with the MP in the regional council, which is not always possible. While confusing demands from the public that are outside mandates or outside of the fiscal year's agreed-upon plans will probably be a persistent problem, the most urgent challenge is following up on unimplemented projects that lie within the mandate of the federal executive body as well as those that are planned within the fiscal year.

The most common phrase explaining this problem that popped up during politicians' media appearances, parliamentary discussions and even interviews for this research is the "challenge of project implementation." In many cases, MPs have difficulty addressing the concerns of their constituencies, even though the concerns lie within the mandates of the federal government. The decision to select projects that are to be pursued in a given fiscal year and those to be put off until the next practically lies with the executive branch, as part of project implementation.[12] MPs are usually weak in enforcing their desires and decisions in these regards. A former MP conveys: "Traditional elders/leaders have more authority than a member of parliament."[13]

> When I was a member of parliament, I managed to get a letter asking Ethiopian Road Administration (ERA) to take over and administer a road in my electoral district. Even though the road qualifies as a federal road connecting two regions, I had to take traditional leaders with me to convince ERA. They accepted our request, but it is not at the top of their priority, which means the road is not properly owned by anyone; now the community does not have anyone to follow up on the road construction. There was a budget approved by the federal government to build the road. But the whole year passed and it wasn't built so people in my zone went out on a peaceful march. They were suspicious that the government was going to use the budget for something else because the end of year approached. The members of parliament demanded response on the issue and they were told that it was delayed because the funder wanted to make some design changes to the road. The representatives went to the local community to deliver the response but the community no longer trusted them. Therefore, they asked ERA to publish the situation on media so the constituency can hear it directly from the institution. They were not willing to do this. With so much nagging ERA posted the response to the community on its Facebook page; even then, it was not an actual post, it was a comment under another unrelated post.[14]

The former MP explained that this has now become a common procedure where a parliamentarian takes traditional elders with him when they need something to be done. It is apparent that executive offices do not respectfully accept and process requests from MPs. It is indeed common to see traditional leaders in executive offices.[15] MPs use their own money to mobilise local traditional elders to execute on behalf of their people.[16] The executive branch, on the other hand, has what it calls a "project implementation problem" (የአፈጻጸም ችግር).[17]

The tendency to focus on issues of implementation, which we can refer to as programmatic issues, is clear among parliamentarians; they have ample complaints about programmatic issues that should be addressed by the executive branch without legislative intervention. When approached with questions such as "Is there a new legislation that would address the challenges of your constituency?" or "Are there any existing legislations whose revision would alleviate the programmatic issues?" MPs rarely have an instant answer. The parliamentarians usually discuss the 'what,'

that is, the service or goods to be delivered to the communities such as roads, schools, and other social services. The items in the laundry lists are more or less agreed upon by all candidates. However, in competitive elections, the main debate is the 'how.' Thompson (2000, p. 113) observes the same about Kenyan politics,

> [e]ven in cases such as 1960s Kenya, where elections were more open, African parliamentary candidates rarely stood on issues or policies. They failed to offer choice between policy alternatives. This was not possible, after all, since political decision-making only took place in the higher echelons of the executive, and not in parliament.

8.2 Beyond Implementing Infrastructures: A Macro Economic Agenda

In Chapter 6, infrastructure was highlighted as one of the key barriers to representational work due to the challenges MPs face during constituency visits. However, the most fundamental question is access to basic infrastructure by the constituency itself – both as a means to better living conditions and access to political infrastructure of the federal government. Poverty has cast its dark shadows over the practice of representation due to the limited economic capacity of the government and the grandness of the projects demanded by constituency members. Infrastructural demands are usually made when representatives make their biannual visits to their constituency. The representative will try to explain the limitations the government has; the priorities set; the national implications and benefits of the demands, and so on, and usually end up making promises to make the case to the State or Federal government. However, it is usually the case that only a few of those promises made by representatives produce substantive results.[18]

This shared view by the public and some MPs has not liberated MPs from criticism from the public. Various members of the community report an irreconcilable gap between the promises of parliamentarians and the actual implementation of the promises. The following two interview quotes show this frustration:

> During the election campaign, the representatives had promised so many things to lure the hearts of the constituencies to win the election. They made big promises related to infrastructure, clean water, road, electricity, telecommunication services and banking. They promised to deliver development, peace, and democracy. The problem comes after they win, and the people need them to work ['walk'] as they 'talk.'[19]

To show the magnitude of the unattainability, interviews make a mockery of candidates' promises with an allegorical example "*suufiin isiiniif binna,*" meaning "we will even get you tailored suits."[20] They had promised unrealistic and unachievable things to get cheap popularity from electorates. The problem was worse among EPRDF candidates. Opposition political party promises always sound the same: "We will overthrow the dictatorial regime, EPRDF, and will bring you democracy." Almost

all opposition political parties' candidates invest and waste their time by criticising the regime, but they do not promise as much as EPRDF candidates do.[21]

> Even though our representatives had promised so many projects, infrastructure, and good governance-related issues; they barely deliver. They are mocking the ruling party laying a foundation stone here and there, during election campaigns to handle us.[22]

Interviews in Benč–Sheko Zone, the place that reported frequent constituency visits by its MPs, are sceptical of the ultimate outputs of the visits.[23] They understand that it is crucial to examine how much of the public demands get proper solution. Political parties, both the incumbent and the opposition, have been promising infrastructure progress for the past two decades. They pledge to construct roads, build schools and achieve economic development for the public, yet there is little practical progress, according to the zonal administration. While there are major asphalted roads and transportation now, compared to the late 1980s and early 1990s, it is still largely underdeveloped.[24]

In North Gondar, according to informants, people currently have high expectations of the government. There are several areas where the electorate expects substantive change such as employment and food security. As Bahir Dar is the capital of the regional government, people from different areas in the region and other parts of the country come in search of job opportunities. There is an increasingly pressing problem of youth unemployment. Several unemployed youths with first and second university degrees anticipate the city council will provide them with jobs. This unemployment problem is also complicating things further in the city as it pushes many youths to get involved in illegal activities. North Gondar is one of the most impoverished zones in the country. Such poverty undoubtedly affects any political undertaking including representation. The major concerns of the constituencies are linked with food security projects such as a social safety net and the provision of basic services. The actual results of constituency visits are disappointing to all interviewed constituencies. They believe these are issues that have been regularly raised for five to 10 years by the public and by the woreda, each time falling on the deaf ears of the Federal government. For instance, a community elder explains the failures to complete road constructions: "the Debark–Beles road project, contracted to a private company has remained incomplete for the last 10 years."[25]

8.3 MPs, the Executive and the Political Parties

The lack of substantive results of representation in Ethiopia is often linked to the capacity and accountability of the executive branch. The executive branch is accused of neglecting constituency complaints collected by MPs and overriding the members of the legislative branch through strict hierarchical party structures. The lack of response from the executive branch has a significant negative impact on MPs' representational role. Local government officials from Benč–Sheko Zone express their frustration as the public demands: "What have you accomplished? You are there not

for our interest, but for yourselves. Even you [MPs] are not presenting our demands [for concerned bodies]."[26] Others sympathise with the position of the MPs: Nobody listens to an MPs' talk, comment and suggestion; they are just symbolic. Additionally, MPs who challenge repeatedly will be evoked from their standing committee membership posts, if they have one."[27] Former MPs of the zone recall tremendous interventions from their party. They assert that a party-delegated MP cannot challenge his party's stance in the parliament.[28] One former MP disclosed: "The constitution entails that MPs within HPR will not be punished for whatever opinion and belief they disclose within HPR. Yet, the executive will order 'return him back' through gimgema [evaluation]."[29] Gimgema is the member evaluation system used in the EPRDF, easily misused as an intimidation strategy by those holding powerful posts in the party.

The legislative work and the oversight work are shared between the HPR and the council of ministers in two ways; the first is through delegation and the second is through the political parties' tradition of peer and supervisor evaluation (gimgema). If a sustainable democracy is to be built, the powerful executive should be able to turn away from its parochial ways and cede its power to the people, and therefore the parliament; and somehow trust that the designated MPs will represent the best interests of the Ethiopian people well (including those 'Ethiopian people' in the executive branch). In relation to the executive branch, Salih (2005, p. 3) argues that parliaments are caught between two important tasks: to serve as the foundation for the legitimacy of the executive branch while also holding it accountable and exercising oversight over its decisions and actions.

Although the constitution states that the HPR has the power to question and "the power to take decisions or measures it deems necessary" against the executive branch (FDRE constitution, Article 55, 18); many parliamentarians are puzzled by exactly what the possible range of actions and procedures are. There are several cases of executive members being deposed by the Prime Minister without the involvement of the HPR, a prominent case being that of the former Deputy Prime Minister Tamirat Layne (Assefa, 2015).

To some extent, the powers to oversee and 'take decisions and measures' are associated with the power to elect; if the power to elect through votes exists, so should the power to force out of office through a "vote of no confidence." MPs have the power of electing the Prime Minister (Article 55, 13). However, this power to elect the Prime Minister has not been exercised strictly by MPs, meaning, the power to recede votes was inapplicable by way of practice. The practice so far has been where MPs would vote to bring the only candidate to power, which later was reduced to the act of endorsement without voting after 2005. The practice of submitting multiple nominations for voting by the HPR, as paralleled by many Ethiopian scholars with the German system, would be unexpected (Assefa, 2015). Such an election also creates a system where the chair of the leading political party is not necessarily the Prime Minister; allowing for multiple loyalties and networks to emerge. However, in the current practice, the highest-ranking party members go into the executive branch and the rest go into parliament and other offices. Thus, the high-ranking government officials have the power to 'select' those most suitable for the position,

and MPs will be in a subordinate position where their benefits and political career lie in the hands of the executive branch. A former MP discusses his belief that MPs vote within in party lines as they have a fear of being removed from their position by the party leadership, who are also the heads of the executive branch (ይሾመኛል – ይሸረኛል በሚል ፍርሃት).[30]

An MP, referring to party discipline, figuratively noted: "'that which isn't written used to lead us' instead of the constitution and our conscious."[31] The structure, the schedule and the budget are not the only flaws in constituency work. The most important are structural challenges such as the fusion between state, party and government. MPs mostly discharge their responsibilities from their party's perspective and the people do not trust them. As discussed above, they face many challenges in their constituency work because they are less accountable to the electorate than the party.[32] While there are many dilemmas parliamentarians face, one is where they are caught between their representational and oversight role; this calls for playing to somewhat competing roles as they are "the machinery that confers legitimacy on government and makes or breaks governments" (Salih, 2005, p. 4).

Traditional legitimacy is developed through consistent performance of roles, through symbolism and myth (Markakis and Asmelash, 1967, p. 195). But in the form of government currently developing in Ethiopia, legitimacy is based on both rituals (constituency visits) as well as relationships (attending funerals). It is also based on how the public perceives government institutions and MPs' allegiances to the people or to other entities. During the household survey, respondents were asked "Who should the MP serve?" and "Who is the MP serving?" The difference between the responses for the two questions was the highest in the Amhara region. In the Amhara region, while 1,164 votes were cast towards "The MP should serve his constituency, conscience and constitution (3Cs)," the votes decreased by 75% since only 385 votes supported that the 3Cs were what the MPs were actually serving. In Addis Ababa, a small number of 97 votes indicated that MPs should serve their political party, Prime Minister or Speaker of the House. However, when asked who they actually served, the number grew to 615 votes, where 77% of the votes indicated that the MPs were actually serving their Political party, Prime Minister or Speaker of the House. While not as high, in all regions, the number of people that voted for the 3Cs decreased and the number that voted for the category of political parties increased when asked what was actually taking place.

This clearly indicates the public's perception of competing allegiances of the MPs. This could easily be supported theoretically, as the understanding of MPs in this way is not peculiar to Ethiopia. Crewe (2021, p. 2), discussing the House of Commons, says "It is a place where hierarchies, power, conflict, rituals, rules, are always found alongside loyalty and disobedience." She further refers to MPs as shapeshifters, having different ways of relating with different actors. Crewe (2021, p. 195) refers to the shapeshifting characters of MPs as their ability to transform their method of relating from one person to another depending on the context, person and agenda. This includes their relations with the executive branch, the public and fellow MPs. Assefa

Table 8.1 Descriptive statistics on "Who should the MP serve?"

Who should the MP serve?
Respondents could select multiple answers at once; they are therefore referred to as 'votes.'

	Constituency, conscience and/ or Constitution	The entire country	Political party, Prime Minister or Speaker of the House
Oromia	1,038	73	106
Amhara Region	1,164	344	296
SNNPR	270	145	124
Addis Ababa	1,240	331	97

Who is the MP actually serving?

	Constituency, conscience and/ or Constitution	The entire country	Political party, Prime Minister or Speaker of the House
Oromia	856	65	173
Amhara Region	385	166	347
SNNPR	292	128	118
Addis Ababa	142	31	615

The percent of "votes" put towards
"Who s/he is serving" as opposed to "Who s/he should be serving"

	Constituency, Conscience and/ or Constitution	The entire country	Political party, Prime Minister or Speaker of the House
Oromia	−14.82%★★	−0.65%	5.46%★
Amhara Region	−75.41%★★★	−17.23%★★	4.94%★
SNNPR	3.36%	−2.6%	−0.92%
Addis Ababa	−178.25%★★★	−48.7%	84.09%★★★

★★★ >70% ★★>10% ★>5%

(2015) argues that there are three conflicting interests: the constituency who provide the necessary votes, the party that provides the necessary selection and funding, and the entire national interest – whom the whole parliament represents. Such arguments present the three interests and the three actors mentioned earlier as exclusive groups that do not have a converging purpose and identity. Parliamentarians reflect this 'false' tracheotomy during interviews; they use it to justify their deep party loyalty (justifying actions not supported by the constituency) as well as indicate some sort of legal ambiguity that should somehow be clarified. Some scholars use the concepts of party cohesion and discipline to explain the difference between following wilful loyalty and impositions by a party chair or central committee (see Assefa, 2015 for more). Such centralist political culture is described as a situation where "ideas would filter upward but once policies were adopted, power was intended to flow only down" (Paulos, 2003, p. 16).

Proclamations and regulations are used as instruments to gain the support of a certain international audience or execute particular projects. The proclamations will be approved despite their political disposition as long as they can be used to the end that is envisioned. Sometimes they even clash with another existing proclamation or with the constitution, though that went without concern. For this reason, it is typical that little debate goes into the proclamation itself (which is just a means), and most goes into the project it wants to achieve (the end). However, the end programme is usually determined in the chambers of the EPRDF party central committee rather than parliament. Gebru (2015, p. 312) explicates, "the EPRDF programme founded on the ideology of revolutionary democracy is the main primary document; the constitution, based on liberal democracy, is barely a document used to accomplish the EPRDF programme." For this reason, some people argue that even though participation was not actively demonstrated in public consultations and the parliament, it was present within the party. However, even there the discussions were neither open nor fair. As an insider, Gebru argued, "For TPLF/EPRDF members what we mean democracy is 'control' founded on the revolutionary democracy ideology we used to follow dominantly" (Gebru, 2015, p. 303).

Assefa (2015) then goes on to argue that the party document insists, "if MPs find a contradiction between party's policy and his/her own conscience (a matter of principle to the MP) they have the option of leaving the party." While this is a stringent approach from the political party, it should not lead to the implication that a country's political future rests on the political parties only. Two actors that can clearly contend such party policies are the National Election Commission, responsible for ensuring party bylaws are in line with the constitution, and the individual MPs who should in fact pronounce their rights to challenge party decisions.

The Marxist-Leninist student movement has certainly influenced the ethnonational ideology, the articulation of the 'the national/ities question' and the procedures of the EPRDF (Ochieng' Opalo and Smith, 2021).

> Whatever the Politburo decides has to be approved by the Central Committee. In cases involving key policy decisions that the EPRDF wants to make, the prime minister has to go to get the approval of the Politburo and the Central Committee of the TPLF. If a decision is not approved, it cannot be implemented even if it is passed by Parliament, which is now almost totally controlled by the EPRDF.
>
> (Paulos, 2003, p. 63)

Although the principle of legislative delegation is common, there are no procedures in place that ensure that the regulations are developed as per the intention of the delegation, as well as adherence to the constitution (Assefa, 2015). In fact, such a guideline would be part of an overall guideline of parliamentary oversight that operationalises various steps of oversight and the steps it could take against it, as per Article 55 of the FDRE constitution. However, such an overarching guideline is yet to be developed by the HPR.

8.4 Significance of the HPR

While there is a hierarchy within the HPR and between MPs and executives, this does not mean that the executive branch overlooks the HPR in its decisions; whether for endorsement of elections or appointments, actions are always brought to the HPR for approval, by the executive branch. The executives attempt to develop laws before every move, "strictly differentiating the rule of law from the rule of man" (Crewe, 2021, p. 16).

The executive branch largely tries to work within the bounds of the laws, yet these laws are mostly initiated by the executive branch itself. In several African countries, we can see the executive branch wanting to work within the bounds of the constitution and not finding the provisions of the constitution encouraging the desired act, like third terms (Thomson, 2000). Thus, constitutional amendments initiated by the executive branch have been a growing trend in Africa. In Ethiopia, such acts of constitutional amendment are in place, yet the executive branch has initiated several laws that undermine the constitution and even the parliament. These laws were later issued by the parliament, with little discussion, with haste and a lot of resistance yet not a lot of opposing votes. Examples of such proclamations are the state of emergency, the anti-terror law, anti-corruption and election laws. These laws were never strategic innovations but instead were reactions to processes that were considered destabilising. The anti-demonstration proclamation in 1967 was aimed to discourage peasant revolts in Gojam and other districts; similarly, the anti-corruption laws were meant to disenfranchise a group of traitors within TPLF, and the civil society law was meant to discourage donor support in electoral activities following the 2005 competitive election; and the anti-terrorism law was to discourage the political parties from freely campaigning and recruiting members for subsequent elections.

According to Gebru (2015), the intention of making corruption an agenda was never to truly fight it, but to use it as a tool to bring down opposing factions. Gebru explains that there were proposals to establish independent investigative committees on corruption forwarded by some members of the EPRDF. He clarifies that the party chair and his clique rejected these proposals because that would bring to light cases they would rather keep hidden. The TPLF leadership ousted MP members of the faction from parliament and deprived them of parliamentary immunity. The mechanism initially employed to achieve this was to present the case as an agenda to the HPR; leading to stripping the MPs' of their privileges through a simple majority. Later, as internal and external resistance grew, the TPLF moved to evoke that the electorate in fact recalled the MPs' signatures of the electorate, claiming that they no longer had confidence in the elected representative, as per Article 12 of FDRE Constitution (1994) (Gebru, 2015).

The Charities and Societies Proclamation (No. 621/2009), commonly referred to as the CSO proclamation, was first drafted by the Ministry of Justice, provided to various groups, including the council of ministers, for feedback and finally submitted to a joint group of 34 members formed by three parliamentary standing committees: Social Affairs, Foreign Affairs and the Defense and

Security Standing Committees. During the final voting, four of the members of the group voted against the proclamation, while all others voted for it. Before the voting, the group called for a public hearing on the draft proclamation, as is the usual practice. Among the various questions presented by the audience, the more serious were those that alleged that the restrictions imposed on the proclamation contradicted the constitution's Article 31, the right to due processes of law and the Continuo agreements. While the discussion brought out many more valid problems, the public hearing did not result in any meaningful alterations of the draft (Meheret et al., 2019, p. 94). This was confirming what Lidetu Ayalew, an opposition MP (one of the CUD members that did not join the boycott by the leaders), had said during the hearing – "it would have been good if this discussion was genuine and not for public relations purposes only" (Meheret et al., 2019, p. 94). The minutes of the public hearing also show that various CSOs disagreed with the logic of the law and only questioned its implication in their 'sector,' such as women CSOs like the Network of Ethiopian Women Associations. However, most of these associations were already co-opted by the party. Civil Society Law Article 2 (5) allowed civil institutions such as youth and women associations that were already controlled by the EPRDF (see Eyob, 2020), to get support from the government to run for elections.

It is clear that the consequences of this law went beyond CSOs who worked on political advocacy. It affected the entire democratisation process and created a weak parliament due to the lack of impartial Civil Society Organizations overseeing the work of MPs. On the other hand, it is very concerning that there are no locally owned civil society organizations that are locally resourced; evidently, even with the revision of the CSO law in 2019, it is becoming clearer that even though CSOs thrive under foreign funding, they do not have clear, mission-driven agendas and do not have local constituencies. What could have been genuine CSOs, such as associations of women, farmers, and youth, were mostly co-opted by government institutions and the vanguard party. African countries are yet to find the perfect balance between enabling and governing local civil societies. The same is true for international funding of institutions that often miss the balance between supporting and piloting the work of African CSOs.

The Proclamation on Anti-terrorism (Proclamation No. 652/2009) served several purposes; to some extent, it ensured that incidents like that of 2005 would not arise again. The major objective was to target institutions like the OLF and the ONLF. The government wanted to justify the 2006 invasion of Somalia and act against what it considered ONLF support in the Somali region. In 2007, the ONLF had attached an oil exploration site, killing 69 Ethiopians and nine Chinese. There was a rising withdrawal of Oromo elite from EPRDF, allegedly collaborating with the OLF (Smith, 2007).

In rare cases, the executive branch did not even seek the approval of the parliament to initiate proclamations. A costly incident is Ethiopia's Military Pact with Eritrea that led to the situation where efforts to prevent or defend an eminent war

with Eritrea were not taken because of the Military Pact. According to a US strategic affairs analyst,

> When [Meles'] fellow-Politburo members asked who had approved such a pact ("not the TPLF, not the EPRDF and definitely not the Government of Ethiopia and the Parliament which decides on such matters"), he said: "Well, we had one [a pact]." The Politburo members insisted that he cancel the pact immediately and take the issue of the invasion to Parliament. Meles resisted and said that the matter should be handled only by the Prime Minister's office.
>
> (quoted by Paulos, 2003, p. 19)

To take it to parliament, and get the votes, the Prime Minister needed the alliance of the TPLF with the OPDP and SEPDF, who together held more than half of the seats in parliament. However, this was in question because of the split on the issue even within TPLF. While the Prime Minister was hesitant to bring the military pact to parliament, he brought the anti-corruption law. This 1993 law targeted a faction within the TPLF, some of whom were members of parliament. The faction was created due to differing views over the Ethiopian and Eritrean war. The MPs and mostly high-level TPLF politicians were detained or ousted from position by instrumentalising the anti-corruption law. The move undermined both the HPR as well as the judiciary by inhabiting the presumption of innocence and immunity (Kassahun, 2005). Until 2005, the Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (FEACC) was accountable only to the Prime Minister (Rahman and Kirya, 2018). By taking parliament out of the picture, the anti-corruption proclamation was a tool for the leading TPLF, led by the Prime Minister, to depose opponents from power, including those from within TPLF. This created major confusion in differentiating between political prisoners and corrupt prisoners when releasing 'political prisoners' after 2018 (Rahman and Kirya, 2018).

Clearly, from the perspective of the executive branch, MPs are not a force to be simply ignored. They are a force to be reckoned with; systemically convinced, just like the people they represent. Every time the HPR approves the appointment of an official in the executive or legislates a draft law, it is beyond rubber stamping. And just like the people they represent, MPs resist the approach of the executive branch, sometimes openly and other times, subtly.

8.5 Oppression and Resistance in Parliament and Political Party

The history of elections in Ethiopia clearly outlines opposition and persistent resistance towards the EPRDF from the outside. The rise and fall of multiple coalitions opposing the EPRDF are clear from the discussion in Chapter 4. The HPR and the EPRDF coalition were venues of resistance as well. This was true for the political party, the EPRDF. Party cadres would organise themselves in smaller groups and

exercise subtle acts of resistance against the political party. An observer describes EPRDF conversions that take place every five years as

> a place where in smaller intimate groups people discuss what they really feel and criticise the party extensively, whereas they will go into the halls, raise their hands for a chance to speak and say the exact opposite what they just said outside.

The resistance, still subtle, became more action-oriented in other areas. There are cases of parliamentarians independently or in groups resisting the executive branch in covert acts of defiance. This includes 'parliamentarians seeking asylum in other countries,' or outright denying their votes, leading to a series of party meetings and gimgema[33] sessions before the decision was passed.

In 1994, while the factions in TPLF created a clear problem where the Military Pact was hidden from parliament, the Prime Minister and his in-group had to take action to tame the belligerent parliamentarians. Negasso Gidada, President of Ethiopia, a former parliamentarian himself, had entered into conflict with the Prime Minister for refusing to sign a document that expelled 10 members of the TPLF Central Committee members from parliament for forming a faction against the Prime Minister's in-group. Coupled with other factors and several points of divergence, the President resigned from his position; the Prime Minister then found a way to get the parliament to approve an order stripping the former president of all privileges and retirement packages. Subsequently, the expelled members of the TPLF were imprisoned; the parliament also helped Prime Minister Meles keep them in jail on charges of corruption, although a court had ordered their release. Orchestrated by the Prime Minister, an anti-corruption proclamation was enacted "making the matter an executive not a legislative matter" (Paulos Milkias, 2003, p. 41).

The act of resistance was even more shocking when members of the the EPRDF jumped ship to form an opposition (the outside resistance). Medrek, a prominent coalition in 2010, was a coalition formed by eight opposition political parties; its top leadership included prominent names such as the former president Negaso Gidada, Seye Abraha (former Defense Minister) and Gebru Asrat (former president of the Tigray region). The chair of Medrek upon formation was Beyene Petros, professor of biology, who in 1991 was a member of the EPRDF and part of the TGE. However, following disagreements with the EPRDF, Prof Beyene left his position as the deputy minister of the Ministry of Education and formed two coalitions besides Medrek, known as the Council of Alternative Forces for Peace and Democracy in Ethiopia (CAFPDE) and United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF) (Shinn and Ofcansky, 2013, p. 79). Prof Beyene has been an opposition member of parliament, winning a seat during the election in 2000.

When Negaso Gidada left in 2001, Girma Woldegiorgis of the EPRDF became president of Ethiopia. Upon leaving office in disagreement with the Prime Minister, Negaso Gidada was stripped from all privileges to which he was entitled as a former president; he still chose to speak openly against the government. President Negaso Gidada represented an interesting controversy of the EPRDF's political strategy.

While upon its formation, the EPRDF rejected political parties like Me'ison and EPRP for working with the Derg (see Chapter 3 for details), after 10 years in power, Girma Woldegiorgis was exempted from such scrutiny for being part of Imperial parliament and politics. This was in contradiction to the TPLF's strong stance against the narratives associated with the aristocracy and its subscription to an ethnonationalist narrative that believed ethnicity was central in class subjugation. President Girma had been a politician during Emperor Haile Selassie; he was an MP as well as a speaker in the Chamber of Deputies (Adejumobi, 2007, p. 176).

Besides the faction in the TPLF and President Negaso Gidada, there were multiple actions of resistance within the HPR. Clouded by the fog of complacency and restricted information, the stories of the politicians that resisted from within the HPR are overlooked in discussions. There are cases where MPs sought asylum in other countries; for instance, Bekele Etana, an MP who criticised "corruption and unaccounted spending within the federal government" went to the UK (Abink, 2017, p. 109) and speaker of the House of Federation, Almaz Meko, sought asylum in August 2001 in the US (Shinn and Ofcansky, 2013). She had claimed in her statement after applying for asylum:

> OPDO is being prevented from becoming an autonomous organisation representing the Oromo national interest in the government and is reduced to a rubber stamp for TPLF rule over Oromia. . . . As a result thousands of innocent Oromos have disappeared, perished in detention centres from torture and many more forced to flee the country.[34]

In many cases, voices of resistance, who normally are the anomaly of politics from within, were silenced to the point where their memory is vanished and stories untold. In 2005, a parliamentary commission investigated the killing of 193 civilians surrounding the 2005 parliamentary election; a leaked report that was never published attributed the killings to the actions of a security force who had employed excessive force. Instead, the parliament endorsed a report that described the use of force as "legal;" "The chair and deputy chair, and at least one other commission member, fled the country, citing political intimidation and harassment by the ruling party" (Smith, 2007, p. 8). This is likely a trend in many African countries whose parliaments are referred to as "rubber stamps." In 2002, the actions of Cameroonian MPs who boycotted the inauguration of President Paul Biya could be interpreted as such (Salih, 2005). Thomson (2000, p. 114) reports a case in the Kenyan parliament in the 1970s. A defiant member of parliament, J. M. Kariuki, passed away under suspicious circumstances and the Kenyan parliament launched an investigation despite President Jomo Kenyatta's interest. The circumstances did not end in triumph for the parliamentarians, leading to a stringent constitutional amendment allowing more power to the office of the president.

> Kenyatta responded by dismissing those junior ministers who supported the investigation, while the ringleaders of this parliamentary 'revolt' were promptly detained. Subsequently, the executive made sure the Kenyan parliament was

never to exercise this level of independence again, and Kenyatta's successor, Daniel Arap Moi, confirmed this position when he altered the constitution and made Kenya a *de jure* one-party state in 1982.

(Thomson, 2000, p. 114)

In addition, there were times when executive members were removed from their posts from pressure by the executive branch; not because they weren't delivering but because they were not complicit in the patrimonial networks of the party and the executive branch. There are cases where MPs decided against the wishes of the executive branch; the MPs were later called for gimgema, costing them highly and forcing overturn of their decisions. This is partly because the facilities of anonymous voting are not in place.[35] One MP remembers:

The Executive wanted to remove an MP from a position in land administration because he was not complacent to the network of corruption. They brought the case to HPR and the members decided against the executive's recommendation in the morning session. In the afternoon, a high level party official that isn't an MP came to parliament and conducted a gimgema. I had missed the meeting in the morning but I was present in the afternoon. I was graded 'C' along with those that voted against the executive's recommendation. . . . We were made to vote on it again and the recommendation passed.

After 2015, the resistance from outside became less pronounced during times of elections, and more visible on the streets of the Amhara region and Oromia through popular protests that first emerged in November 2014 and fully developed in 2015. Social media and satellite television played a critical role in mobilising protest activities and disseminating provocative messages. The executive branch, once again, developed a law that would help it fight against online media; and through the HPR legislated the Computer Crime Proclamation No. 958/2016. During the protests between 2014 and 2018, the resistance was especially outspoken by the emerging Oromo and Amhara Elite within the EPRDF. In defiance of the TPLF, the OPDO and ANDM changed their names to Oromo Democratic Party (ODP) and Amhara Democratic Party (ADP), respectively. There were a series of press statements that emerged from both camps in what the public noted as a war of words.

As the protests continued so did government violence against civilians by security forces. In December 2017, Oromo and Amhara MPs boycotted the parliament, demanding that the Prime Minister clarify why such deadly force was applied. An Oromo MP explained "We simply don't have the conscience to engage in regular, day-to-day activities of parliament on the face of mounting daily reports of civilian death and displacement."[36] This, along with all the events that took place in Ethiopia, marked the beginning of the end of the EPRDF in Ethiopia. In some cases, the parliament provided platforms for others to display actions of resistance. One example is when members of the OPDO, most of whom were not members of the parliament, attended a public hearing on 22 December 2017. The TPLF had developed a draft law on "Oromia special interest on Addis Ababa" that would have changed the

course of the Oromo protest – since the issue of Addis Ababa was seemingly central to the protest movement. However, members of the OPDO did not acknowledge the move by TPLF as a positive response to the question of the Oromo; instead, during the public hearing, the EPRDF parties (excluding TPLF), rejected the law.[37]

The popular protests and internal skirmishes resulted in the eventual resignation of Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn in 2018, inadvertently making room for the formation of new alliances within the leading political coalition, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and its ally parties, bringing a new Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, to position (Fisher and Gebrewahd, 2019). During the time of the protests and before it, the Ethiopian government no longer qualified as a dominant one-party system, as traditional one-party systems function in the context of weak opposition political parties; instead "after the electoral near-defeat of 2005 the EPRDF thus reclaimed its 'vanguard' role, again fusing party, state, and market into a campaign for economic transformation that it presents as a logical extension of the original struggle for liberation" (Weis, 2016). The EPRDF controlled all state institutions – the legislative, executive, and judiciary branches as well as democratic institutions such as the Human Rights Commission, the Ombudsman and the civil service.

In 2018, the EPRDF embarked on a process of democratic reforms. Some of these included the lifting of the state of emergency, unblocking of websites and news channels, ending the territorial dispute with neighbouring Eritrea and the establishment of a reconciliation commission (Mokaddem, 2019). Ethiopia released more than 13,000 political prisoners and journalists in six months and opened the country for exiled politicians.[38] It unblocked 260 websites and several television stations; and the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reported zero imprisoned journalists "for the first time in 14 years" (Mumo, 2019). In addition to the 2009 Charities and Societies Law, the Terrorism Law enacted the same year was revised, removing several opposition political parties and media institutions from the country's terrorist watch. As foreseen by the former Prime Minister, the resignation has been followed by the release of political prisoners, peace talks with armed secessionist groups and the receding of violent protests. The newly united party, the Prosperity Party (PP), consumed the former members of the EPRDF, making the parliament a dominant PP parliament. In the 2021 election, while a little over a dozen non-PP candidates won seats, 122 positions remain vacant. Obviously, an analysis of this parliament is premature due to the large number of vacant seats and the short period since the inauguration.

Notes

1 Article 55 (17) – "አስፈላጊ የሆነውን እርምኛ ሁሉ ይወስዳል."
2 Interview, Hon. Mr Chane Shimeka, Government Whip, 17 July 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
3 Interview, Tesfaye Kefele, Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission, Addis Ababa Branch, 05 August 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
4 Interview, Hon. Mr Chala Lemi, Government Whip, HPR, 17 September 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

5 Interview, Hon. Mr Chala Lemi, Government Whip, HPR, 17 September 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
6 Interview, Hon. Mr Chane Shimeka, Government Whip, HPR, 17 September 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
7 "ስንመጣ አስፈጻሚ የሚባል ጉልበተኛ አለ። የምንሰራውን እንሰራለን ሌላ ነገር አትቀስቅስ ይላል።" Interview, Member of Parliament, 15 July 2020.
8 Interview, Tamir Kebede, Deputy Secretary general of the Secretariat of the HPR, 27 July 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
9 Interview, Hon. Amb Mesfin Chernet, Government Whip, HPR, 15 July 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
10 Interview, Hon. Amb Mesfin Chernet, Government Whip, HPR, 15 July 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
11 Interview, Hon. Mr Chane Shimeka, Government Whip, 17 July 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
12 Interview, Kereyu Banata, Former MP and Information Technology Directorate Director, 08 July 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
13 Interview, Kereyu Banata, Former MP and Information Technology Directorate Director, 08 July 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
14 Interview, Kereyu Banata, Former MP and Information Technology Directorate Director, 08 July 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
15 "ሲንከራተቱ ታያለሽ."
16 Interview, Hon. Gelane Bikila, MP, HPR, 03 September 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
17 Interview, Hon. Amb Mesfin Chernet, Government Whip, HPR, 15 July 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
18 Interview, Zinachew Nigussie, Mayor of Dabat town administration, 16 June 2020, Dabat, Gondar, Ethiopia.
19 Interviews, Ambo town teachers association vice president and Member in Guder town youth association, 09 and 14 July 2020, Ambo and Guder, Ethiopia.
20 This is not to be taken literally; respondents were trying to show how unrealistic the promises were.
21 Interview, Dereje Olani, Bureau head of Ambo town communication office, 18 June 2020, Ambo, Ethiopia.
22 Interview, Head of Guder town administration, 16 June 2020, Guder, Ethiopia
23 Interview, Tamirat Minase, Former sheko woreda Administrator and the currently Ethiopian Prosperity Party Benč-Sheko Zone branch office officer, 06 August 2020, Mizan-Aman, Ethiopia.
24 Interview, Tesfaye Mamo, Formmerlly Benč-Maji and currntlly Benč-sheko zone NEBE branch committee chairperson (1987–2007), 25 July 2020, Mizan-Aman, Ethiopia.
25 Meseret Tefera, Debark Town Elder and Member of Chamber of Commerce, 19 June 2020, Debark, Ethiopia.
26 Interview, Workinesh Badnes, Former speaker of Zone council for Benč-Maji and current speaker of Benč-Sheko Zone after restructuring, 30 July 2020, Mizan-Aman, Ethiopia.
27 Interview, Melaku Gitab, Businessman, 24 August 2020, Mizan-Aman, Ethiopia.
28 Interview, Dejene Komtikes, Former semen benč woreda administrator and former, MP of Benč People 27 July 2020, Mizan-Aman, Ethiopia.
29 Interview, Dejene Komtikes, Former semen benč woreda administrator and former, MP of Benč People 27 July 2020, Mizan-Aman, Ethiopia.
30 Interview, Kereyu Banata, Former MP and Information Technology Directorate Director, 08 July 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
31 Interview, Hon. Amb Mesfin Chernet, Government Whip, HPR, 15 July 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
32 Interview, Dr Getahun Kassa, National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), August 2020, Telephone interview.

33 An act of intense evaluation session against an individual party member by his subordinates, peers and supervisors. These sessions can be very harsh and personal, going down to a person's dressing habit.

34 Almaz Meko, BBC, 2001. "Ethnic tension sparks Ethiopian defection" by Nita Bhalla. Accessed on 22 August 2022. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1490533.stm

35 Interview, Kereyu Banata, Former MP and Information Technology Directorate Director, 08 July 2020, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

36 Tsion Girma. 22 December 2017. "ጠቅላይ ሚኒስትሩ ካላነ*ጋገሩን ወደ ሥራ አንገባም* ብለናል" ወ/ሮ ነኢማ አሕመድ የፓርላማ አባል. https://amharic.voanews.com/a/ethiopian-parlament/4174051. html

37 "OPDO members of Federal parliament opposed discussion on Addis Ababa Special interest" 22 December 2017, https://borkena.com/2017/12/22/ethiopia-opdo-addis-ababa-special-interest/

38 Africanews, 23 January 2019. "Ethiopia pardons over 13,000 political prisoners" available at: www.africanews.com/2019/01/23/ethiopia-pardons-more-than-3000-political-prisoners/

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9   Conclusion

Generations of parliaments discussed in this book showcase an institution that has had within it contradictions and conflict, while at the same time having a contrasting dull character, described by many as 'boring.' This conflict gives rise to eventual dynamic steps that result in the gradual evolution of the parliament, both explicit (reform) and implicit (resistance). "The history of parliament" is synonymous with "the history of parliamentary reform" in political systems that are committed to parliamentary democracy (Flinders, 2002, p. 23). Parliamentary reform from 1931 to 1974 entailed actions following a revised constitution, such as popular election and limits to the intermediary role played by the emperor, allowing the ministerial cabinet to work directly with the parliament. Parliamentary reform during the four-year existence of the parliament from 1987 to 1991 is difficult to track mainly due to the short period and scant records of the parliament. After 1994, as discussed in the previous chapters, many proclamations readjusted the powers of the parliament with an anti-corruption law and an anti-terrorism law that at times stripped the immunity of the MPs and limited the power of the HPR in having oversight in various executive sub offices such as the anti-corruption commission. While all these were critical in redefining (reforming) the parliament in many ways, they were not actual programmes that functioned under the guise of 'parliamentary reform.'

Studies commissioned by the HPR in 2019 were aimed at initiating a parliamentary reform based on their findings. One of the initiatives focused on the insufficiency of the formal visitation schedule of parliamentarians and enhancing opportunities for the electorate to reach out to the parliamentarian. MPs only met with the electorate during recesses as per article 102 (1) and the Member's Code of Conduct (Proclamation No. 3, 2005), provided that "The House shall go for recess in the month of Yekatit (mid-February to Mid-March) as well as Hamle (1) up to the last Sunday of Meskerem each year (Mid-July to mid-October)" (Article 24). This had been defined as the main problem of MP-constituency relations by the bureaucrats in the HPR, who saw MPs as lazy and lacking initiative. Their view, justified with selected paragraphs out of a 100-page report, focused the reform processes on ensuring MPs that are not in standing committees stay in the field for an extended period of time after the inauguration of the parliament towards the end of 2021. However, how this works in practice and how it will be supported by staffing, logistics and budget are yet to be explored.

Various politicians and academics have expressed, in different platforms within the HPR, the media and parliamentary research network, recommendations to reform the parliament. One of the recommendations that has been highlighted by many staff within the Secretariat suggested the development of an 'MPs representation guideline.' While such a guideline can be instrumental in protecting the rights of MPs to visit the electorate by establishing clear procedures; it runs the risk of diminishing 'representation' to a set of procedures between MPs and their constituencies, excluding other important factors such as the executive branch, both at the woreda and the federal level. Representation is a broad term that encompasses a wide range of activities. The guideline, if such a thing should exist, will most likely hold the MP accountable based on his/her 'achievement,' and might do so with good intentions. However, the MP should be accountable only to the electorate (besides the constitution and his conscience) and such 'achievement' and 'visit'-based criteria will reinforce the party hierarchy in the House. Party leadership in standing committee positions and the executives may also manipulate MPs by subduing them to their agenda.

Such approaches reinforce the executives' perception of MPs as their agents instead of overseers. A former Minister of Education who presided over one of the most controversial educational policy reforms in 1994, explained the role of MPs:

> MPs were able to influence the decisions of the regions – for example the Somali regional government did not want to accept the education policy. The MPs went there and gathered support from the local level to get it accepted by the region.

Various elements of the education policy itself empowered the 'local,' such as introducing over 50 languages as mediums of instruction and implementing a decentralised administration. Still, the logic through which the Minister viewed the MPs calls for concern. The MPs were not reflecting the views of their constituencies, instead, they were sold an agenda through their political parties, which they adamantly voted for and went to their constituencies to 'sell.' It seems like the MP is the agent of government towards the people, instead of the agent of the people in the face of power. Similar tendencies persist to this day. For example, in July 2014, the Prosperity Party whip provided orientation to MPs departing on summer break to see their constituencies. While the verbatim of the orientation has not been made available to the public, the HPR developed a news story on the website summarising it:

> The party whip . . . indicated that MPs should support work that has been launched at different levels; he also indicated that peace and security, high living standards, good governance and project implementation should be given priority in their representational work. Furthermore, he expressed that they should actively involve the public on city and rural agriculture, green legacy.[1]

While it is perfectly normal for a political party to have priorities, this coining of the MPs' work, still projects the age-old sentiment towards MPs as messengers from the centre to the public, rather than the other way round.

Indirect participation through political representation is a right grounded in international, continental and national legal provisions. Legal frameworks where Ethiopia is a signatory; and National Legal frameworks such as the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Constitution (1994). It is clear that one of the fundamentals to representational work begins with free and fair elections; however, this does not entail that parliamentary democracies without free and fair elections are obsolete in their role as representatives. Still, the June 2021 election (liberalised to the extent possible, given the circumstances), would be considered steps towards parliamentary reform. It was obvious that the government had started to encourage some opposition political groups such as Ezema, led by former CUD leader Berhanu Nega, to compete towards seats in the HPR and offer some seats in the executive branch. Berhanu Nega is currently the Minister of Education. However, the processes were bumpy, as several opposition political parties withdrew from the election; this includes the OLF.

There are also efforts towards restructuring the HPR secretariat. This includes establishing a research wing – a parliamentary research network that would support the HPR; it is still not clear how individual MPs would benefit from schemes like this that do not offer individualised support. Another step initiated and under development is working closely with woreda administration to set up offices for MPs. This is a move based on findings that identified gaps in office facilities. However, due to budgetary restrictions, these offices are not set up independently from the executive branch yet are attached to the woreda executive. This reform process, while still unfolding, should be seen with the backdrop of creating a secretariat structured in a way that is suitable for multi-party democracy.

To meet these aims, there are roles to be played by different bodies besides the HPR and its Members; these include the executives and CSOs working to impact the HPR. The lack of trust projected towards the people is to a large extent projected towards the HPR by the executive. The executive branch should create awareness among its cabinet at various levels that the institution is/should be accountable and transparent to the people, and the representatives of the people who are constitutionally mandated to stand and act in place of the sovereign people. Of course, as the most supreme law-making body of the country, there are actions the HPR should take to ensure this. For example, the executive branch could be restricted to a maximum number of ministers appointed from among MPs, to make sure that the members of the House with the best qualifications are nothing but representative of the people. MPs, on the other hand, have to exercise more stringent oversight over delegated legislation. Currently, one of the challenges of populating the HPR public application with data is properly placing directives by the executive branch under appropriate regulations by the Council of Ministers, which in turn should clearly be placed as a child node under the appropriate proclamation. However, this has been a challenge for the HPR since there are numerous directives in use by the executive branch that are drafted without clarity of where the delegated legislative power is emanating.

Civil society organizations, besides the critical role of scrutinising election processes to ensure free and fair elections as the basis for a legitimate and meaningful

representation, should play critical roles in facilitating and monitoring MP electoral relations. CSOs at local and national levels should engage in research work supporting different causes, participating in legislative processes and utilising their lobbying power. Their role can be critical in ensuring individual accountability of MPs by monitoring their promises, evaluating their work and conducting regular public opinion surveys to see their approval ratings. Furthermore, they can create Forums that bring together various parliamentarians (even from different levels and regions) advocating for similar causes.

9.1 Towards a Theory of the Ethiopian Parliament

The complex relations and expectations that are built between the parliament, the executive branch and the electorate call for an intricate conceptual model that goes beyond the linear liberal model. That model (represented in Figure 9.1) simply assumes three distinct centres of power where one establishes and holds the other accountable – at least in parliamentary systems where the political party with the largest majority forms the government.

However, the processes and relations between these branches of governments have not been straightforward in many African countries, including Ethiopia. The most severely incapacitating setting for parliaments is when the executive branch simply disregards the existence of the legislative institution, as was the case from 1974 to 1987 in Ethiopia. Opalo (2019, p. 8) discusses how "beginning in the early 1960s, there was a precipitous decline in the share of African countries with open legislatures due to elite political instability. African presidents that could not control legislatures simply disbanded them." In this situation, democracy and democratic rights were something to be granted and something to be withheld by the incumbent. This was the case during the leadership of the emperor.

Secondly, gaps in constitutional provisions and third, the supremacy of the executive branch, mostly through the brokering of subsidiary institutions (e.g., political parties) are challenges to the existence of legislatures as envisioned by liberal democracies. Robust constitutional provisions are a necessary foundation for a strong legislative branch; its lack will automatically result in weak institutions and MPs. The 1931 constitution lacked in building a strong legislature, primarily through the deprivation of the right to vote to the people and relinquishing popular legitimacy.
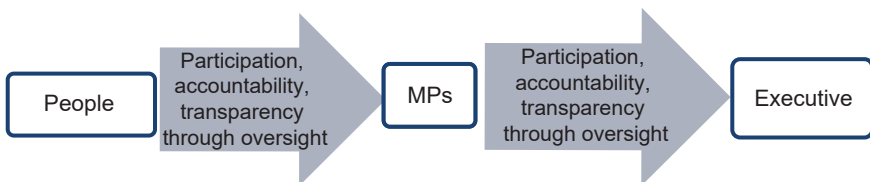
Figure 9.1 A linear representation of the relations and accountability chains between the people, MPs and the executive branch

Article 32 of the 1931 constitution provided that "As a temporary measure until the people are capable of electing them themselves, the members of the Chamber of Deputies shall be chosen by the dignitaries (Mekuanent) and the local chiefs (Shumoch)." Obviously, the people were not considered capable for the decades to come. Similarly, the legislative provisions constituting the Shengo presented another challenge for a strong legislative branch, inextricably linking the Shengo with the Workers' Party of Ethiopia, mass organizations (who were also tied with the Workers' Party) and the military, who acted as gatekeepers of the Shengo (PDRE, 1987, Article 64). In these cases, it is important to note that the constitution itself is a gift from the executive branch to the people, and so is the legislative branch; in order of existence and importance, the executive branch heralds not only the legislature but also the constitutionalism and the constitution.

Nevertheless, after 1994, the legislative branch of government. although having the constitutional power laying the necessary foundation for a strong legislature, lacked means, or what Opalo (2019) referred to as, 'means independence.' Many seemingly contradictory processes take place around the parliament; the biggest controversy right now is the parliament having all the legal powers it requires to pursue its full legislative power, however, on the other hand, not possessing the ability to project a desired 'end.' There are things in place that hold the legislative branch back from becoming all it could be; becoming strong to legislate its will and desire.

Real commitment towards a strong parliamentary democracy in Ethiopia requires the realisation that individual parliamentarians need to be empowered, and with this should also be instilled a sense of individual accountability. The office of an MP should be acknowledged as an institution backing at least 200,000 people. For this reason, necessary facilities and resources should be made available not only to the HPR as an institution but to individual MPs as well. The capacity of the HPR can be built only by empowering the individual MP in every way.

The setbacks are mechanisms of subjugation, similar those used against the people, and pushback comes in the form of resistance, similar to those used by the people. Like the people, the resistance does not always stay hidden. An important means that the current Ethiopian parliament is lacking is the organizational structure and resources that would allow it to pursue its tasks. It has none of the obvious needs parliamentarians would have: constituency offices, offices for individual parliamentarians, a laptop, and access to the Internet or individualised administrative assistants helping with travel arrangements or with research. With so much reform and initiation, the secretariat (an appointee of the executive branch), believes it is 'enough' that members of one standing committee share an office and two research staff. Individualised investments are still not considered 'worth' investing.

Another controversy that has been dragged on from the past reputation of parliaments, yet persists to this day, is the way the elite looks down on the parliament while also having the necessity to pass every decision by it. For the last 100 years, it is obvious that the Ethiopian parliament and people have evolved immensely. Yet the way the parliament and the people are viewed by the Ethiopian elite has hardly

Blue arrow	Expectations of efficiency: Confronted with competence or insecurity
Red arrow	Hierarchy: Confronted with compliance or resistance
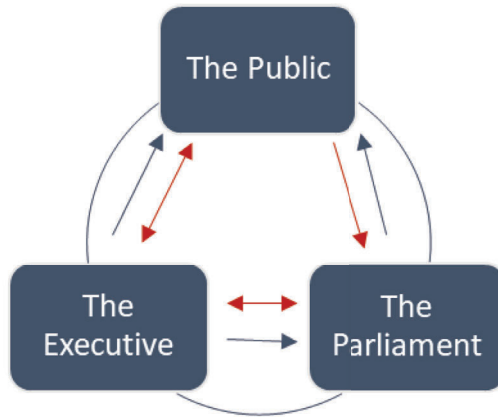
Figure 9.2 Challenging the linear model, author's construction

shifted. There are processes where 'the best minds and leaders' in the political party are placed in the executive branch, even when they are members of the parliament; on the other hand, some parliamentarians are themselves the best leaders, highly accepted and highly educated in the areas they are representing. Their level of education depends on the level of literacy in the area they are running; for instance, in Addis, the most educated have PhDs, while in many pastoralist woredas, the highly educated have BA degrees. The parliament is not simply a collection of uneducated opportunists.

The intricate relations identified through the chapters of this book between the parliament, the electorate and the executive branch have been summarised in Figure 9.2. This book has found that the parliament does not have effective means of oversight towards the executive branch; in fact, it does not even have the means to demand competence and efficiency from the executive branch. Instead, the executive branch continuously accuses the parliament of lacking competence, viewing it as its messenger to the people; and evaluates it through party channels. The executive branch is also able to employ various mechanisms of power in its demand due to the hierarchical nature of their relationship because of its access to soft and hard power. These relations and expectations deserve detailed discussion.

9.2 Relational Factors Between MPs: Hierarchy and Resistance

Two key factors emerge when observing the relations between MPs with each other. Parliamentarians are obviously not a coherent group; their diversity goes beyond their political beliefs and the various groups they represent. Besides these factors, MPs hold different positions depending on their 'rank' of hierarchy in the HPR – the speaker, deputy speaker, standing committee chair, standing committee member and so on. These structures reinforce hierarchical relations within the political party, which are also closely linked to socioeconomic factors such as gender and educational level. Similar to Crewe's (2021, p. 5) argument, "politics in parliament reveals change that is happening elsewhere because it unfurls within MPs' domains in amplified forms." The relations between MPs do not distinctly take place in the context of the study of parliament. They have far-reaching consequences for our understanding of Ethiopian politics and society. Education has been central in this hierarchical structure, directly affecting access, political literacy and participation. Education during Emperor Haile Selassie's reign was a resource cultivated by the emperor himself, creating a force that became a critical political player in the formation of political parties during the Derg, in an effort to restructure societal hierarchy. The educational hierarchy played a critical role in determining election outputs, relations with foreign representations and ex-pats, and finally forming a class 'embarrassed' by an old monarchy. Similarly, the mass of educated young Ethiopians absorbed in the EPRDF created a critical role in re-shaping and re-forming TPLF-led guerrilla fighters into a government of the 'elite.' The role education has played in redefining hierarchies has obviously been slow, as the resistance methods were meshed in phony compliance to authorities in the highest echelons of the hierarchy.

Resistance was another core factor defining the relationships between different MPs. The resistance was towards the 'oppression' MPs faced from those in higher positions. The government drafted and facilitated the approval of laws that were oppressive and that undermined the constitution. The constitution was also used as a barrier to prevent actions by MPs or the populace. Actions challenging the executive and its representatives were ambiguously discarded as 'unconstitutional' or were also not explicitly provided for when parliamentarians would be stopped by mentioning a constitutional gap. A typical example is actions proposed by MPs against the executive branch. The constitution provides that parliament is to appoint and oversee the executive branch, yet the possible steps of oversight are not clearly stated, tying the hands of MPs and perpetuating inaction. Thus, the parliament is a reflection of the electorate; it is a place of oppression and resistance.

9.3 MPs and the Public: Competence and Trust

Trust is an important factor defining the relations between the MPs and the public. As MPs point out, through repeated observation, the public has mainly lost trust in them. They are not the most trusted sources of information passed by the federal government. It is also a matter of how their competence is evaluated by the public

and by the executive branch. However, similar to the oppression imposed on MPs while directed at the electorate, the lack of trust by the executive branch towards the HPR is reflected in MPs' lack of trust in the electorate.

In a small think tank in Addis Ababa, a political appointee from Burundi was invited to speak on the 2015 crises in Burundi. The speaker gave a briefing of what happened and many people in the audience, mostly students, asked interesting and possibly challenging questions to the politician, who had the responsibility of presenting the best interest of the Burundian government that had appointed him. He answered as best he could and ended with a familiar remark, whose gist most people are familiar with, along the lines of: "There are things I can't disclose here, but if I did you would know that the government was correct" (not a direct quote). This is a move familiar to many politicians who pretend to have a large sum of information and competence that the public is lacking. The public is not trusted with the information and therefore the decision.

The people are told to trust the decision-maker (for now) because they do not have the full information to judge (for now). This alludes to Haile Selassie's decision in the first constitution preventing people from electing MPs directly because they were not yet ready. Thus, the main question is not whether the people trust the parliament; instead, it is if the executive/higher-ranking party cadres trust the people, and by extension, if they trust the parliament to make the right choice. MPs face competence questions from both sides – the people and the executive branch.

On one hand, MPs are accused of being loyal to those in power, not to the electorate. To this challenge, some propose a constitutional amendment allowing people to elect the executive directly. However, the real challenge is not regarding the legitimacy of the executive. The real challenge concerns how to make the executive directly accountable to the people and parliament – a phenomenon that is also challenging in presidential systems.

The competence of parliamentarians is measured based on their achievements because they are seen by the executive branch as party cadres who must 'convince' and mobilise the public on the newest hottest executive agenda. For this reason, parliamentarians have become more focused on programmatic issues. When parliamentarians are asked what they would change as a matter of legislation, they tend to discuss programmatic issues rather than identify systemic aspects that require new legislation. In 1967, Markakis and Asmelash argued "to date, Parliament has not made any significant impact on the political processes of Ethiopia." Many today in 2022 would deem this statement still true.

9.4 Areas for Further Research

Finally, it is important to point out areas of further research that emerged through the discussions in the last eight chapters. While empirical evidence and the theories discussed in this book bring to mind many important insights that can be tested in different contexts, three major areas of further research have not been dealt with thoroughly in this book. These are (1) the link between infrastructure

inequalities and representation, (2) MPs in Executive positions, (3) constitutional reform and form of government and (4) the post-2018 state of representation in Ethiopia.

(1) Infrastructure can be a question of access; while the consequence of access to basic needs is fairly obvious, the consequence of infrastructural inequality on representation and participation is not so straightforward. As indicated in Chapter 5, infrastructure could be the reason for a wide gap in terms of economic progress as well as having one's priorities as a national agenda (Pereira, 2021). A country-wide research that incorporates household data from large cities like Addis Ababa and peripheral borderlands could clarify the political and representational consequences of infrastructural inequalities.

(2) As this book comes to a conclusion, it is fairly obvious that most MPs that responded to the quantitative as well as qualitative questions were those that were most accessible at the HPR offices. None of the parliamentarians that responded to the questionnaire are appointed as ministries or minister d'état. Thus, it is important to note that the discussions in this book are mainly about the MPs who work full time, whether as members of standing committees or not. MPs in the executive branch have been mentioned by the electorate where their MPs had a responsibility in government. For example, the interview in Guder woreda of Oromia argued that the parliamentarians' dual membership both on the HPR and Executive as the main factor for their weak performance of public visits and community consultations in their electoral district. They implied that MPs do not have time not only for constituency visits but also for regular meetings of the house (only attending mandatory sessions).[2] Besides this line of argument, interviews with MPs in high-level executive positions might bring other areas of discussion to light.

(3) It has become clearer through the course of the research for this book that there is a tendency by the elite to consider constitutional reform and government structure an overarching agenda in Ethiopian politics. The Ethiopian government is structured on the basis of the Federal System with a parliamentary form as per Article 45 and Art. 50(1) of the FDRE constitution. Several members of the HPR believe that the constitution should be amended to reflect the current number of regional states and the number of members per population size of the country. More regional states are likely to come into existence.[3] Since the provision in Article 47 sub-article 2 provides that any of the nations, nationalities and peoples within the listed states in sub-article 1 possess the right to form their own regional state, it is not an area that requires a constitutional amendment.

While it is difficult to suggest or refute a constitutional amendment based on the discussions in this book, the resounding recommendations for a constitutional amendment – some kind of change in the structure of the government and mandates of the HPR and the House of Federation in relation to Federalism – all require more research. Another argument for a constitutional amendment seldom mentioned is

that the size of electoral districts should be revisited. While there is no international standard on the number of MPs, a smaller parliamentary size is fairly easily manageable and cost-effective, while larger parliaments have the merits of bringing the MPs closer to the electorate.

(4) In April 2018, observers praised the federal structure of government, which allowed the TPLF to govern the Tigray region as a balancing mechanism allowing a smooth transition (Opalo and Smith, 2021). However, as the research for the book progressed and the politicking between the TPLF and the federal government progressed, TPLF MPs walked out of the HPR (as did all TPLF in executive positions), following the call from the TPLF central committee. The situation quickly deteriorated into a full-blown war between the Ethiopian government and the TPLF. While all this requires analysis of its own, it would be inappropriate to discuss these developments without incorporating the perspectives of former MPs who are largely inaccessible due to the war. Thus, future research in these areas would bring a fuller understanding of the HPR during this turbulent period.

Revolutionary changes in 1974 or popular protests that resulted in an unprecedented demand for government change similar to the period from 2014 to 2018 are likely to emerge in contexts where there is low citizen satisfaction in economic and social life (Curini et al., 2014). However, the relationship of democracy with these factors (economic and social satisfaction) is much contested (Deribe, 2020; Inglehart, 2009). While a nuanced understanding of what led to the reshuffling of power within the EPRDF and among regional states requires much analysis, representation post-April 2018 has various distinctive features. These distinctive features have been described as 'better performance' as well as 'weak government and party.' But these interviews took place within a year of the inauguration of a new ministerial cabinet – not a new parliament. Vacuums of power could be noticed in the split within the EPRDF, causing a rift between TPLF and its other coalition members, as well as the absence of government whips in parliament for an extended period. Some described a situation where MPs were becoming more assertive in their positions;[4] as well as a situation where the constituency was more critical of MPs.[5] This is reported as both a positive and negative development, indicating weaker government and party institutions that are to some extent 'vulnerable' to the people.[6] Government whips tend to have weaker and looser relations with the chairperson of the party (who is also the prime minister).[7]

MPs also report progress in their ability to hold the executive branch accountable. In the last two years, MPs mentioned two cases where executive heads were removed from position through the recommendation of standing committees.[8] In 2018, a newly introduced practice helping the House hold ministers accountable was signing contracts between the executives/ministers and the standing committee chairs on plans in the presence of the speaker of the house. This trend helped hold them accountable for items they had not delivered, yet the practice seems to have since been discontinued.[9] This indicates premature reporting on the part of the MPs

and the need to observe the developments at the HPR for a longer period of time, warranting more research on the Ethiopian parliament in the years to come.

9.5 A Final Word of Introspection

Throughout the nine chapters of this book, there is a pattern among MPs that has persisted. In many cases, parliamentarians are aware of the important position they play as bearers of community needs in the face of a historic and powerful machinery called the government. Equally, they fear they will not be able to explain why things have not taken the course foreseen by the public; they have the involuntary responsibility of explaining and defending what the executive branch does. Many MPs feel useless in their positions, reminiscing over what they had achieved in their communities before being 'selected.' To be selected as candidates, they had to have a certain level of education; the most educated of the pool are likely to become a candidate but also must be likable by the people and usually have a good track record of deliverables. In some places, however, there are cases where politicians facing increasing resistance from their constituency will be selected as candidates as a way of helping them 'escape.' This by itself reveals ample insight into elections and reasons for voters to support candidates.

MPs also live amidst the dilemma of where their responsibility lies – 'their specific constituency' or 'the entire country.' On one hand, the rationale for the MPs' presence at the HPR is to represent the interests, positions and needs of the specific constituency who cast their votes to bring the MP into office. Therefore, the prime purpose of the representative should be to present, promote and push the needs and interests of the constituency and engage with the executive branch at any given level – kebele, woreda, state or federal – in an effort to address their demands. But this is not a phenomenon all MPs agree on; they mention it as a dilemma they face if they have not yet made a choice on the matter. They ponder, "if everyone in the council is solely concerned with the demands of their constituencies, making national decisions will be difficult." Accordingly, they believe that it is the responsibility of every representative to try to strike the delicate balance between responding to the needs of their constituents, maintaining the functionality of the house and serving the electorate in general. Others claim that Article 54 provides "Members of the House are representatives of the Ethiopian People" and that this creates a dilemma or at least raises the need to strike a balance between serving the 'Ethiopian people' and their constituency. This in effect might not be a controversial article; "The constitution states that they represent their electorates/constituency. However, representation functions require standing for the whole in discharging parliamentary functions. The two are inseparable."[10] These arguments, instead of a legal dilemma, represent a practical dilemma MPs face; aggravated by the political party leadership that manipulates the dilemma to push for an agenda that is not necessarily aligned with an MP's specific constituency.

They carry this dilemma individually, affecting their work morale; a dilemma not really shared by an institution or the HPR staff. It is a personal struggle each MP goes through, a solitary journey that leads almost every person on the path of

hidden resistance and outspoken compliance, landing everyone in different positions depending on who or where they are on the hierarchy of power. Once their terms have lapsed, if they do not get 'selected' again, few, who already are in executive positions, will remain there; those in higher echelons of the HPR like the standing committee chairs and party whips will be absorbed in higher positions of federal institutions, regional government or diplomatic missions. The rest will take lower-ranking positions in the executive branch, continuing to serve their country – this time without the dilemma of whether their constituency comes first or not.

Notes

  1 Parliament News. 14 July 2022. www.hopr.gov.et/am/web/guest/news-room
  2 Interview notes from interview of WS zone women's association, Guder woreda council; WS zone youth association, Okonkomi town council.
  3 http://addisstandard.com/breaking-sidama-becomes-ethiopias-10th-regional-state/
  4 Namsi Olka, Information Services Team, HPR.
  5 Amb Hon. Mesfin Chernet, Interview, Government Whip.
  6 Amb Hon. Mesfin Chernet, Interview, Government Whip.
  7 Interview, Government Whip.
  8 Interview, Government Whip
  9 Interview, Government Whip.
 10 Addis Ababa University professor.

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