

Part II

Draft/2000-02-12
Document No. 1951-0729-C243

ETHIOPIA

**PRIMING POLITICS, STATE AND SOCIETY:
AN AGENDA FOR DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE**
A CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT OF ETHIOPIA
AND THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

*BT Costantinos, PhD**Lead Researcher and Distinguished Fellow, IBS
May 2000, Brussels*

Section I. BACKGROUND

Although the term “governance” has entered the intellectual discourse in the past decade in the international arena, now that its reforms are externally driven, the idea has a long intellectual history. A key distinction, which runs through much of in the history of political theory, is between the *stewardship/ guardianship* on the one hand and *guiding/steering* responsibilities of the state on the other. Over the centuries, these two images i.e. the *shepherd* and the *helmsman* - have been at the heart of many political governance controversies.

Neither *guardianship* nor *guiding* can be discharged effectively in isolation; some writers advocate one and others the other as the primary responsibility of the state. Developmentalists emphasise *stewardship* while neo-classical economists augur its *guiding* functions.

Today governance has come to signify political liberalisation and market reforms on the lower scale and democratic development on the upper scale.¹

¹ Recently the discussion has shifted tremendously. We have now governance appended to almost all kinds of

The concept of governance and the issues to be addressed cannot fit into one holistic definition of governance or even address ramifications in the recent history of political theory. Hence, this document addresses the conceptual issues of governance in Ethiopia as it relates to the role of civil society, political parties and business community focusing on civic education, political participation and conflict management, communications, information management and the media. It also addresses legislature at the federal and state levels, enabling environment and support to the judiciary, rule of law and access to justice and the functions of the public sector.

Governance must be distinguished from democratic development and political liberalisation occurs when a governing elite grants or extends civil and political rights that had previously been denied. These rights may benefit individuals (such as rights of privacy, speech of movement) or social groups (such as freedom important of association or assembly).

political, social and economic phenomena. Some of the significant once are democratic (political) governance, economic governance, open governance, social governance, environmental governance, and conflict management and development and management governance.

Democratic Development is a process of rule making in which citizens obtain opportunities for political contestation and political participation. Political contestation refers to open rivalry and competition among diverse political interests. Political participation refers to the entitlement of citizens, considered as political equals, to be involved in choosing governmental leaders and policies. Democracy is a regime in which the authority to exercise power derives from the will of the people. The use of these definitions is not a great leap of imagination into the different forms of societal change; but simply what's coming is the twisting the familiar slogan in terms that betray little in their meaning.

The attention for *governability and governance* is based on the concern about *object poverty and sustainability of development supported by IFIs*. If *sustainable human development is to happen, a predictable and transparent framework for policy design and all enabling environment for citizens' participation and private initiative, must exist. The institutional setting and the decision-making process in which this process takes place is essential, together with the norms and values on which they are based. Democracy and governance hence connect the norms, procedures, and institutions that must exist for effective, efficient and open public policies.*

Obviously there would be a transition period to which the major foundations to which they are often tied more or less closely, transitional ideological constructs tend to be unsettled and, at times, unsettling. Particularly at the initial stages of transition, they are more likely to be uncertain rather than stable structures of ideas and values. This has the effect of opening up the reform process, of freeing the process from simple domination by any one organised

stakeholder or coalition of them. Yet such elements and relations take shape and come into play within a hierarchy of global and local agencies and groups. A determinate order of institutions, powers, interests and activities operate through complexes of ideas and values, filling out, specifying, anchoring and, often short-cutting their formal content or meaning. Moreover, this may impose ideological as well as practical limits on the extent to which and how reform processes in Ethiopia can be opened up or broadened.

Section I

GOVERNANCE, DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT AND POLITICAL LIBERALISATION

Because possibilities and problems of democratic development can be grasped in terms of the related domain of ideology, ideological elements and constructs might be seen as the very constitutive structure of governance. Ideology will commonly be characterised by a number of distinctive and shared additional elements, including *concepts and rules of government, national and cultural values, traditions of political discourse and arguments, and modes of representation of specific interests, needs and issues*. These elements, or complexes of elements, will tend to assume varying forms and to enter shifting relations of competition, co-operation, and hegemony during political reform. Generally, the broader the range of ideological elements at play and the more varied and uncertain their relations, the greater the possibilities of process-oriented vision definition.

Governance is the conscious management of regimes with the aim of enhancing the effectiveness of political authority. Governance can be thought of as the applied realm of politics, in which political actors seek mechanisms to convert political preferences into managing society. Good governance involves improvements in the technical competence and efficiency of the public sector as well as measures to make public policy more accountable, transparent, and predictable to society at large. The complexities of transition to good governance and the assumptions that are made based on perceived necessities or demand of societies and states are well beyond the scope of this paper. However, it would be necessary to deal briefly in trying to identify the modalities and sources of political transitions.

Two aspects need to be considered.² Political transitions are initiated at three levels: state-led transitions, civil society initiated and led transitions and combinations of state led and society led transitions. Three main strategic and processual issues are usually considered in the study and analysis of democratic transitions. The first is the presence of *objective conditions for political transition* in the socio-economic structures. The second is contingent political dynamics -- good governance is installed as a result of the conscious reform initiatives of individual leaders, elite factions, and social movements. Thirdly, it depends upon the emergence of supportive set of rules and political, social, and economic institutions.

International IDEA⁴ identifies the convergence and merging of three agendas: the security agenda, the economic agenda, and the development agenda. This indeed makes the monitoring process more complex. *The security agenda* has put political governance and participatory politics at the forefront of international diplomacy and conflict prevention and management. *The economic agenda*, after a first wave of structural adjustment programmes aimed at downsizing and "shrinking the State, and promoting market economies, is rehabilitating the role of the State in its core regulatory functions. The *development agenda* is linking sustainable human development (economic development) and participatory development (political development). This convergence of agendas reflects an emerging consensus on the mutually reinforcing role of political governance

² Global Coalition for Africa / Africa Leadership Forum. (1993). P. 9 The classification of the 'Trajectories of Political Transition' has been taken from ALF/GCA. "Research Design and Methodology".

³ Costantinos, BT (1994) Political transition in Africa: An Ethiopian case study. GCA/ALF Washington DC.

⁴ International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance: (1998) Dialogue for Democratic Development.

and development, re-emphasising the importance of the political context of development. However, the definition of good governance is imprecise partly because different users use them in different contexts and partly the concept is still evolving. It could also be argued that the inflation in the definitions of good governance reflects the different constituencies of the institution using it and is sometimes the expression of opposing foreign policy agenda.⁵

UNDP defines governance is the way in which a society makes and implements decisions - achieving mutual understanding, agreement and action. The Commission's policy paper on governance States that "governance comprises the

The upshot of the relative inattention to problems of articulation of systems and processes is to make the governance mission at once the most concrete and reefered of idea systems. Within current proposals of reform, it is either conventionalised on terrain of theory or often vacuously formalised on the ground of practice. It enters society in relatively abstract form, yet is expected to land itself to mediate vital social and political experience. It suggests itself and seems within reach only to elude, appears readily practicable only to resist realisation.³

complex mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations."⁶ As

such, governance has social, political and economic dimensions. In addition, the roles of the State are being reshaped; civil society is everywhere on the rise; and several global corporations and mega-cities are more powerful than many nation-States. The belief and practice of protecting human rights is becoming the common sense of humanity. The leadership role of women in national and global decision-making is becoming more prevalent. The environmental movement is rallying action to protect the earth's fragile eco-system. And even now a new global

⁵ Interestingly enough, the study of the policy documents of major international agencies perfectly reflects the convergence and merging agendas. However, the differences in the terminology used by the different international actors (democratic governance, good governance, open governance, etc.) reflect not only divergent foreign policy but different constituencies: the OAS and IDB were able to impose "democratic governance because all their member States were democracies; the World Bank and IMF may be not able to do so.

⁶ UNDP Conceptual notes on Governance. New York

movement to end extreme poverty is gaining momentum.

Nevertheless the main question here what are the trajectories of change that the Ethiopia transition has taken and how could the Ethiopian democratic project pursue its goals consistently in varying contexts, but do so without resorting to a self - defeating, overly scripted and stage- managed political "play"? In other words, how could democratic transitions combine immediately programmed intentionality with more open, process - based purposefulness? In presenting conceptual analysis to help answer this involved question, we may wish to start by defining, and distinguishing between, the outputs of the political transition in Ethiopia. One can draw a conceptual distinction between the political liberalisation that has marked the post 'Dergue' era and transition to democracy that has distinctive political, social and economic latitudes.

Political liberalisation and openness would relate in part to various conditions or developments in government and civil society, only some of which may be necessary for or comparable with democratisation. This is illustrated by processes such as decline or liberalisation of authoritarian regimes and/or ideologies resulting in increased opportunities for political competition and popular participation, transformation of state- society relations. Democratisation refers to an entire distinctive form of political thought, discourse and practice, which underlies popularly, elected and controlled government.

Political openness may or may not lead to full-fledged democratisation, but the two are better understood as overlapping, possibly mutually supportive, processes rather than self - contained transition phases. Thus, in the absence of a widely open political space in which opposition parties of various ideological persuasions are allowed to exist legally and to compete freely and peacefully for state power, democratic elections of truly

uncertain freely cannot be held. Nor can formal constitution writing and satisfying efforts led by incumbent regimes and their intellectual

supporters attain broad and deep legitimacy as democratic activities. Political openness and democratic transition are possibly, not necessarily

mutually supportive. Because a project of democratisation managed by a governing elite may also narrow the political playing field below the level where opposition groups can freely operate, restricting the dimensions and elements of a broadly enabling transition process by its

Governance can be thought of as the applied realm of politics, in which political actors seek mechanisms to convert political preferences into managing society.

Section III

DEMOCRATIC ISSUES IN ETHIOPIA TODAY

transition strategy.

A survey of Ethiopian history shows the overbearing weight of authoritarianism and orthodoxy in Ethiopian society and the presence, if in a weaker form, of some countervailing tendencies. Undoubtedly, the struggle between the "anti-democratic" and "pro-democratic" elements in Ethiopian society has been an uneven one, with the scales unmistakably tipped towards the former. The purpose of this exercise has not been to preach fatalism and despondency but to urge caution and restraint in one's expectations from any intervention at the international level and one's judgements of it. We are prisoners of our past to the degree we do not properly understand it; and we are not to the extent that we can properly analyse it and avoid its pitfalls. True historical knowledge liberates because it saves one from repeating past mistakes. The challenge in Ethiopia is to escape the tyranny of the past, not to repeat it. The value of history is to help us understand the anti-democratic traditions of the past in order to try to overcome them. This admittedly is a difficult task. But knowing is going half way towards solving a problem.

In the Ethiopian context, therefore, the most formidable challenge is to liberate society from the authoritarianism and militarism of the imperial legacy and the doctrinaire and commandist

traditions of military establishment. An important way of meeting the challenge is by fostering the brighter aspects of the Ethiopian past while consciously fighting the darker ones.

The sense of security and self-esteem that the individual enjoyed through both access to land and expectation of fair arbitration are traditions worth cultivating. An individual who has a personal stake in society and who can expect from society recognition of his human worth can assist considerably the growth of a genuine democratic culture. The essence of that culture should be respect for the common man, listening attentively to what he wants for himself rather than trying to do it on his behalf and in his name. If common sense could replace ideology, much of Ethiopia's ills would have a better chance of cure.

Another vital lesson of the Ethiopian past is the importance of regional loyalties and identities. Ethnic identity is a relatively recent phenomenon, largely created and fostered by politically motivated elite. Given its relative vastness and the diversity of its traditions, Ethiopia cannot but adopt a federal form of government. But many believe that there is no historical justification for that federal structure having an ethnic basis. Nor does the experience of other ethnic federations of the past have that many salutary lessons to offer. On the other hand, equitable regional units reflecting both historical reality and responding to economic rationality could and should be set up. Only in that manner could Ethiopia avoid the over-centralisation of the past and the future danger of disintegration.

Given the background of very short spells of press freedom in the past, the transition process faces a formidable challenge in fostering the culture of a free press. The post-1991 period has seen yet another spurt of free expression of views. But many observers have entertained from the outset a somewhat fatalistic foreboding of its impermanence. Nor are the developments that have taken place recently calculated to dispel this fatalism. The current spell of press freedom has both similarities and differences with the post-1974 precedent. The major difference is the emergence of a large number of privately owned

papers and magazines now, whereas two decades back most of the debates took place within the columns of the government-owned papers.

This situation has come about through a combination of factors - the ethos of private enterprise that has come to prevail and the resort of many civil servants who have fallen victims of the government's retrenchment policy to earning their livelihood by the fount of their pen. The fact that these victims included some of the country's most skilled personnel has tended to place the government-owned press at a clear disadvantage. On the other hand, the culture of anonymity - which seems to be a pervasive Ethiopian trait - has persisted. While this may save the authors from legal accountability, unfortunately, it also has the injurious effect of freeing them from moral responsibility. The culture of a free press can thrive and prosper only when the government is prepared to view it with tolerance and it in turn is ready to exercise its right with responsibility.

A few words finally on the international dimensions of the problem. More than any other country in Africa, Ethiopia has had the chance to develop on its own. It has had in short no significant colonial legacy. Many aspects of its modern history bear a stamp of this independent and organic evolution, the 1974 revolution probably being the most dramatic illustration of this fact.

But it would be naive to think that Ethiopian independence has always been absolute. The Italian occupation of the country, brief as it was (1936-41), nonetheless left behind some vestiges, not least of which was the birth - fostered by the British - of Eritrean separatism. Another aspect of the influence exercised on Ethiopian history by external forces is the support given by foreign powers to the domestic ruling class - the USA to the Haile Sellassie regime, the Soviet Union to Mengistu, and again the USA to the EPRDF led Government of Ethiopia.

The obverse side of this relationship is the zeal with which Ethiopian governments adopted essentially alien institutions more to impress foreign observers or allies than to bring about

genuine transformation in the country. This begins with Menelik's establishment of ministries in 1907, through the 1931 and 1955 constitutions, to the 1987 and 1995 constitutions. But foreign allies do not always bail out a government in its times of trouble, unless they have vital interests of their own to defend and protect. The foreign powers only scoffed at Menelik's ministries. The 1931 constitution did not save Ethiopia from Italian invasion in 1935. Nor was the United States prepared to go into any extra trouble to save Haile Sellassie in 1974. In the end, a government has to settle accounts with its own people. It survives or perishes by their judgement.

Ethiopia's recent political history is hence characterised by despotic and authoritarian rule. There has been very little public debate on the role of a constitutional state, which enshrines the principles of individual rights, constitutional democracy, separation of powers between the executive, legislature and judiciary, the rule of law and an independent judiciary. It is interesting to note that since the 1960's to the present, political discourse have been dominated by a vibrant and persistent concern with two rights, namely- land and the right of self-determination. The political canvass is also crowded with pictures of militarism, coercion, secrecy, internal political intrigue and sycophantic loyalty -- all of which embedded in an overall political culture of mutual distrust, indulgence and violence. Given this brief portrayal of a much more complex background, the challenge of unravelling, creating and nurturing democratic culture in Ethiopia becomes a difficult, but resolute task.

Transition to no where! The genesis of the current political wave

As the raging civil war was nearly over, the Government of the 'Dergue' sent a 13-man delegation to negotiate with opposition parties in London, in May 1991. The major Liberation Forces invited to the London Peace Talks were the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front (EPLF) and Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). Deliberations on the talks include the bringing into force of a cease- fire followed by the

establishment of a transitional government which will be entrusted with the task of a new political set up by either revising the existing constitution or replacing it.⁷ Following the collapse of the huge national army, the guerrilla army which has already surrounded the capital moved in without any resistance and controlled Addis Ababa on May 28, 1991. Soon after its seizure of power on an interim basis, the EPRDF was much preoccupied with the task of preparing conducive grounds for the convening of the then forthcoming 'National Conference on Peace and Democracy'. A Charter was drafted in accordance with the spirit of the London talks. Subsequently, several hastily organised ethnic-based political groupings began to crop up while at the same time expressing their desires to participate in the process. About 24 founding organisations representing 81 seats out of a total of 87 seats (of which 6 seats were reserved for late-comers) sat for deliberation on the Charter drawn by EPRDF. The conference was wrapped up by ratifying the Charter consisting of 5 parts and 20 articles. A Transitional Government of Ethiopia was proclaimed establishing the Council of Representatives with 87 seats with clear majority going to the EPRDF. The main features of the transition period can be summarised as follows

- Absence of Political Participation: A brief analysis of political institutions in Ethiopia would seem to indicate the absence of popular participation in state-society political interaction and in the creation of political institutions. A case in point is the pattern of constitution-making. Critics point to the fact that it is marked by the absence of an open ended deliberative process focusing on the composition and limitation of power as well as the process of negotiation and concession between contending parties that characterises the constitutional moment of other countries. They also underscore that parliament lacked the facilities, human resources and the constitutional powers to investigate government actions or engage in analysis

⁷ The Ethiopian Herald; Vol. XLVII, No. 218, 26 May 1991, p. 4.

of pending legislation. Not only was it characterised by the lack of deliberative activity, but it also lacked the means by which the state could be held accountable.

- Absence of political parties and secondary associations: Another striking feature of the Ethiopian politics is the recent emergence of political parties. Not only did Ethiopia lack a political party structure but also the autonomous space in which civil society could thrive and form the basis for emergent democratic institutions and demands. The Trade Unions, “Quebelles”, the Peasant Associations, Women and Youth Association were a façade of democratic institutions which masked the reality of authoritarian rule. Corruption pervaded all levels of public management. Neither the church nor the mosque acquired an autonomous role, which attempted to exert a check on the government abuse of power.
- The question of nationalities and ethnic based decentralisation: As has been discussed in Party III, Volume Two, the single most important influence over how democratic transition in Ethiopia has been conceived, initiated and has been constitutionally formalised is the politics of national self-determination and self-government. Although swiftly executed, the strategy appears to have been effective in allowing the transition period to carry out a specific political agenda and ideological goals of self-determination. It has also set the tone for institutionalising political organisation in the country and activities of alternative and opposition groups, i.e., in channelling their activities along specific social-anthropological formations and generally ethnic lines. In this sense, the transitional period leaders can be said to have instituted a new paradigm of political discourse and action in Ethiopia and Africa at a larger scale. But this is not to suggest that the strategy is uncontroversial or uncontested. On the contrary, it has provoked individuals and

groups who are equally convinced that, left unchecked, the strategy would lead to the disintegration of Ethiopia. For many of these, particularly but by no means exclusively the elite, the values, sentiments and symbols of Ethiopian unity they cherish and take for granted have suddenly become objects of controversy and deconstruction. The diverse ethnic communities do not necessarily agree within themselves on various social, economic political and cultural issues. Even if they agree on the definition of specific problems, their solutions will vary considerably. Which raises the questions:

- How and by whom are the issues of democratic transition framed and the boundaries of ethnic identity and difference set?
- What effects have EPRDF's revolutionary political ideology and practice on indigenous communities and cultures?
- Are nationalities subsumed by the leading party's own agendas in the very act of "determining themselves"?

Conflicts are part of the realities of multiethnic and pluralistic societies; yet the cardinal objectives of monitoring the peace and unity of the country were frequently jeopardised by the vicious Eritrean-Ethiopian border war and ethnic based movements. Economic deprivation, political alienation and social frustration are also major causes. Towards this end, the development of a national strategy for conflict management is recommended to involve the identification, categorisation, monitoring and management of conflicts.

- The Government, NGOs, business and the international community recognise that the most urgent task for democratising forces in Ethiopia are twin issues of pursuing the democracy agenda and the reduction of poverty. The entitlement of the poor to national and local resources is the subject

of dialogue among political groups and must be dealt with by society at large as a matter of urgency. Emerging out of many years of squandered national wealth, and a crippling debt overhang, Ethiopia, a country of 60 million people, requires massive international assistance and foreign direct investment.

- Another issue is the paradox broadly reproduced in the strengths and weaknesses of associative movements in Ethiopia, and the contestation that take place over social space, legitimacy, domination and resistance. Yet, the trends show a resurgence of civil society movements. The Ethiopian civil society remains relatively fragile in terms of its structures and organisation. It is susceptible to fractious politics proactively driven by personality differences, ethnicity, religious fundamentalism, and the struggle for resources, corruption and problems of accountability. The persistence of poverty disempowers the people, and makes them willing accomplices in their own marginalisation, exploitation, and pauperisation. Thus, at a broad level the processes of poverty alleviation cannot be separated from popular empowerment through democracy as the most viable path to Ethiopia's development. A priority area of support for the international community is, hence, the enlightenment of society through highly targeted programmes.
- Corruption, in all its manifestation, remains a major obstacle to efforts to install and consolidate democratic system. The organisational imperative of the massive bureaucratic machine was to command and control and was preoccupied with its own survival and enrichment. The state had proved to be the main channel for personal wealth accumulation and securing privileged position in society. The economic rewards of the public sector are so much that politics has become a much more brutal

struggle. It is unlikely that the neither powerful elite nor the highly insecure civil service will subordinate its control of the state apparatus to democratically elected political leaders or respect the institutional restraints of democratic rule without struggle. As the winner takes all and the loser is consigned to the political and economic wilderness, all the brutality and corruption of bitter fights ensure in every political competition. It is simply a zero-sum game where the loser has no refuge or alternative.

Among key elements of the business community additional fear is also perpetrated due to the growing proliferation of non-governmental-party business and humanitarian and NGO entities that allegedly dominate the private sector ensuring political, social, cultural and humanitarian support dominance of the ruling elite. The international community needs to encourage stakeholders in the Ethiopian political scene to investigate this to dispel the fears of important constituencies in the Ethiopian business sector.

- Livelihood security: Environmental development, economic reform, entrepreneurship development, employment promotion, food security, water resources development and poverty alleviation are high in the agenda of the government. This must be encouraged, as they will certainly reinforce the democratisation process.
- The Legislature, Judiciary and Executive. The traditional role of the public domain in formulating and implementing government policies have been seriously undermined by the politicisation of the service at the top level and consequent poor leadership. The non-observance of laid down rules and procedures and disregard for financial accountability and probity, combined with the low morale as a result of poor remuneration, insecurity of tenure has

virtually institutionalised corruption at all levels of the service. There is a need to build a new civil service that is efficient, innovative and flexible. There is also a rare consensus that these three arms of the state are underdeveloped and do not match the democratic demands of the third largest country in Africa. The capacity of the legislature to articulate the constitutional, legal, economic and political governance issues must be supported. The judiciary and the executive would also require capacity-building programmes aimed at enhancing their effectiveness in administering justice and law enforcement. The relationships between the three arms of government can be streamlined through highly targeted technical capacity assistance. The civil service, the police, the military, both at the federal and at the state and local governments level, will benefit from a well thought out capacity building programmes to enhance their effectiveness and efficiency.

- Development of the business, private and the informal sectors. Ultimately, the road to governance can only be paved if economic means exist to support social development. The contrary happens in Ethiopia. Since the modernisation efforts of the administrative and economic mechanisms of Ethiopia, business elite, private and the informal sectors sector has been confronted with various legal and regulatory problems. The dominating policy influences in the different historical periods have had in large measure negative impacts on its development, depending on the philosophical orientation of the regimes in power. The policies and administrative procedures during the feudo-capitalist era relatively favoured private enterprise initiative while during that of the “Dergue” era, private sector was the most neglected and suppressed in favour of public sector development. Now, in this period of transition from the command and control system of economic

administration to a free market competitive economy, people openly question if the necessary groundwork is being laid to facilitate the growth and development of the private sector. It is agreed by many that promulgation of policies and legislative measures alone is not enough to encourage the development of the private sector. Implementation of the policies in favour of the sector is very important. In this regard, the many assert that business, private and the informal sectors has only enjoyed the privileges on paper and a lot remains to be done in practice to remove the legal and regulatory constraints that would adversely affect its development. Therefore, measures needed to alleviate the fundamental and pressing political, economic and social

- The role of the international community: Multilateral, bilateral and non-governmental external agencies have in recent years taken a large number of initiatives aimed directly or indirectly at helping Ethiopia "democratise" its way out of economic chaos and political instability. In doing so, they rely on a wide variety of programmes, institutional mechanisms and policies. Indeed, growing external involvement in Ethiopian projects of democratisation and economic recovery has resulted in increasingly challenging problems of conceptualising and understanding the role and function of international agencies.

The growth of foreign interventions seems in marked contrast to the limited thought and effort exerted by democratisers of Ethiopian polity to put the interventions in coherent theoretical or strategic perspective. Why is the overall rationality or significance of the great traffic of international programmes and projects of democratisation and development in Ethiopia, the proliferating activities that seem to show little regard for economy of coordination? This is not to mention new forms of `participatory

research' into social engineering that seems to haunt the rural landscape indefinitely? How far and in what ways do various international agencies, programmes, mechanisms, forms of knowledge and technical assistance feed on one another in helping set the boundaries of democratic reform in Ethiopia?

The important issues that these questions suggest are that they are not sufficiently addressed, or even raised, in much of the current discussion of political transitions. Insofar as the activities of external agencies in Ethiopia are not understood and engaged in partly as indigenous societal potentialities developing gradually into actual structures, functions and characteristics of government and societies, their democratic impact may diminish with their proliferation. This can mean little more than a weakly co-ordinated multiplication of programmes and projects which have immediately recognisable or measurable effects in limited areas, but which seem to suspend rather than serve the ultimate goals of democratisation of Ethiopian political systems. The strategic co-ordination of diverse international activities supportive of democratic transition can become a challenge both for the international agencies involved and for the Governments.

External promoters or supporters of governance in Ethiopia often do not efficiently realise in practice the potential of the ideas and goals they promote and that the volume of their interventions is not nearly proportional to their impact. This raises the issue of whether the ideas in question are fundamentally constrained at the moment of their conception and implementation by the very institutions and technocratic structures that ground their articulation.

The explicit concept of capacity building for good governance that current international initiatives operate in Ethiopia may be consistent with goals of "empowerment" of indigenous communities and individuals, of enhancing local institutional and human capacities. The initiatives, nevertheless, tend to work toward these goals in narrow economic and technocratic terms.

The initiatives seem to equate technocratic rationality and capacity with totality of institutional purposefulness and strength. However, as important as it is, this is only one context or level of analysis on the breadth and depth of process on the terrain of self-directed governance. There is another level of analysis. This is concerned with the extent and nature of openness of distinct ideological constructs, with modes of articulation of given sets of ideas and values and of representations of specific issues relative to others. The concern here is not so much of the number and diversity of ideas, values, and opinions allowed to gain currency as to modes their competitive and co-operative articulation.

Yet it must be recognised that external support creates problems as well as opportunities for democratisation on Ethiopia. In confronting the imperatives of political change, nothing is more challenging for our polities than the strategic co-ordination of diverse global and local elements, relations and activities within themselves, nor has anything greater potential for enabling them achieve

Section IV

AREAS OF STRATEGIC SUPPORT IN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

successful transitions to democracy.

Within democratic political governance, The Commission should provide services of strengthening democratic governing institutions

(parliaments, elections, judiciary), promoting human rights, supporting decentralisation and local governance, building capacities of civil society, advising in public sector management (civil service reform, anti-corruption and aid coordination) and facilitating governance in pre-crisis and post-conflict countries.

- **Strengthening a rights culture and democratic institutions:**⁸ Democratic and governing institutions include legislatures, legal and judicial systems and electoral bodies. Legislatures (parliaments) mediate differing interests and debate and establish policies, laws and resource priorities that directly affect the political environment and encourage and support sustainable human development. Electoral bodies and processes ensure independent and transparent national and local elections, ultimately securing political legitimacy. Independent judiciaries uphold the rule of law, bringing security and predictability to social, political and economic relations and assuring the protection of human rights. The programmes will build capacity in governing institutions and support the development of democratic, transparent and accountable processes. It will provide self-sustaining assistance to legislatures and judiciaries, assisting in the training of Judges, election officials and others involved in running governance institutions. Good governance requires respect for human rights - freedom from discrimination and violence, equal opportunity, due process, freedom of expression and organisation, and transparent, accountable government. These rights include not only political and civil rights but also the right to development. It will provide support for strengthening human rights legal frameworks, institutions, civic education,

⁸ In providing technical cooperation within the above areas, The Commission will work with a wide range of partners at the country, regional and global levels, and the UN system and with international NGOs and the IFIs. At the country level, The Commission works with national and local actors, both governmental and non-governmental, to identify entry points for the formulation of new policies and programmes. In this way, it functions as change agent with all actors –government, civil society, private sector and other donors.

policies and programmes at local and national levels. It will help the Government recognise civil and human rights and ensure equal protection under the law for all citizens.

- **Local governance and democratic devolution of power:** Decentralising governance - from the centre to the regions, districts, local governments and communities - can be conducive to good governance and linked to sustainable human development. Decentralisation refers to restructuring or reorganising authority so that governing institutions at the central, regional and local levels share responsibility. Local governance concerns the strengthening of local authorities, CBOs and local firms involved in service delivery, policy formulation and resource management. The Commission will support national decentralisation efforts to enable people to participate more directly in governance processes and decision-making and to encourage the formulation of development programmes that are tailored to local needs and priorities. The Commission will focus on developing the capacities of civil society organisations concerned with local governance issues, strengthening local authorities in both urban and rural areas, implementing local pilot projects and evaluating, documenting and disseminating best practices in decentralisation.
- **Civil society and its organisations.** The Commission will help these groups become stronger, self-sustaining and full participants in the political decision-making process. The Commission will support national efforts to improve legislative and tax frameworks for these organisations and help to improve their relationships with governments. The Commission programmes will bring government and civil society together to discuss policies and programmes and to help create a safe and impartial space that encourages trust and lasting relationships.
- **Developing core business of government:** Public sector organisations and institutions worldwide are being challenged to abandon

central planning in favour of strategies that encourage private sector activity and increased investment,

reward good organisational and individual performance, increase productivity and use and manage resources more efficiently. Governments are recognising that they need to enable rather than control, to facilitate rather than interfere, to manage less but more effectively. In many developing countries, the state sector is large, politicians and civil servants have limited accountability, and there is little transparency in government. Raising the standards of governance is key to a country's political development. The Commission will provide support for civil service reform programmes that strengthen rather than weaken the government's ability to serve people and ensure equity of opportunity. It will also support training, technical assistance and advice to government administrators to improve their own accountability and transparency and to fight corruption.

- **Ethnic conflict management processes:** Dramatic changes affecting economic, social and political systems throughout the world since the 1980s have brought crisis and conflict to many countries. The magnitude and complexity of such changes have led to a loss of state legitimacy, increases in the numbers of failed States and a resurgence of ethnic violence. The Commission will assist Ethiopia by initiating reconciliation and consensus-building efforts and by building national capacities to avoid, manage and mitigate crisis. The premise for successful alternative conflict management relies on the participation of all parties. Since decision-making is centralised in the hands of a political or technical elite, this premise of inclusiveness, participation and broad representation can imply major challenges to the established order. A very serious and clear analysis of stakeholders is therefore necessary that may lead to the multi-track conflict management process.

Section V

STRATEGIES AND MODALITIES OF SUPPORTING GOVERNANCE IN ETHIOPIA

The Commission of the European Union is the biggest donor to Ethiopia. It works with all sectors of society; has a lower threshold for involvement; has catalytic resources attached to little or no conditionality. It has also cultivated the relationships; and has the multifaceted expertise to approach governance holistically rather than in a specialised manner. The Commission democratic governance programmes should be carried out within the following modalities.

1. **Sustainable conflict management process.**
2. **Governance programmes promote poverty eradication linked to policy reform**
3. **Develop a core of national and local level think tanks.**
4. **Achieve greater results and measure them against results**
5. **Management system supported by information technology**
6. **Regional and global programmes on democratic governance**

The need to take urgent measures and steps begin the process of building the political culture that would underpin this rich cultural resource is key to enhancing the democratic process and a window of opportunity for peaceful co-existence. The process of peaceful dialogue which characterised the transition from one-party to multi-party system of democratic rule must be constantly resuscitated and incorporated into the system of governance as means of alternative conflict management. This involves tolerance of opposing viewpoints and the acceptance of divergent view with the intention of reaching an acceptable compromise. Insofar as existing perspectives on political reform neglect to pose the problem of articulation of democracy as a relatively autonomous mode of analysis in which democracy projects impose ideology upon governments and societies from the outside; democratisation would consist of a set of activities in which "universal" concepts and standards of governance are merely "applied to", as distinct

from produced or re-produced in, Ethiopian contexts and conditions.

Even at the level of application alone, it is largely overlooked that international models may enter societies through a proliferation of programmes and mechanisms that hinder the growth of open and effective transition process, retarding the development of indigenous democratic-system experience and capacity. The main strategy for participatory and inclusive democratic development will therefore largely depend upon a consideration of the mechanisms that must be framed, structured and negotiated, and eventually and hopefully accepted. The main areas of support as detailed in Part III of the document focus on developing

- Social governance: essentially supports and promotes civil society as the set of processes by which norms, mores, values and beliefs guide a society's decision-making and behaviour through education, culture and religion. These underlying values and beliefs are formulated and promoted by the institutions of the family, school, media, arts, advertising, entertainment, sports, the State and a huge array of civil society organisations, and in a profound way by cultures and religions themselves. The international community's conditionality has little to do in this arena except exasperating the plight of civilian victims.
- Political governance as the range of processes through which a society reaches consensus on and implements regulations, rights, laws, policies and social structures, as well as justice, order and the welfare of the people is another set of support that EU can provide. Policies and laws are agreed up and carried out by institutions such as the legislature, judiciary, executive branch, elections, political parties, lobbyists, the police and a large variety of civil society organisations.
- Economic governance is the mix of processes by which a society and

government manage the production and distribution of goods and services and the management of natural, fiscal and human resources as based on the agreed upon values and rules of a society. The institutions and organisations that carry out these functions include private businesses and corporations, the informal sector, state-owned firms, local authorities, public-private joint ventures and many organisations of civil society.

The European Union can have significant impact on the way politics is run and administered in Ethiopia. The great strength of PLURALISTIC good governance over other political systems is it encourages the expression of different points of views, and all ideas and beliefs are constantly subjected to review and criticism. In this way errors in policy and programmes are exposed and greater accountability is achieved. The values of tolerance are also emphasised by the consideration that good governance is not merely a matter of majority rule. The majoritarian principle is important to establish which party has the right to manage government and administration, but it does not vest it with the authority to disregard the views of minorities and social movements.

The first requisite of good governance as a precursor of democracy is hence a spirit of tolerance. Good governance requires that political and policy differences are resolved in a spirit of respect for the views of others, more specifically, citizens. The spirit of tolerance is particularly important during a period of transition to good governance to entrench democratic values and practices at a time when a new political order is being established. The spirit of tolerance is enhanced if there is a proper recognition of the right and responsibility of the government to run the administration of the country. It also entails the recognition by the government of the right and responsibility of the opposition and organised civil society to criticise and influence government policy and administration and to offer alternative ideas and policies, and to lobby for them.⁹ Two

⁹ One way to achieve the diffusion of power and sustenance of rights is through the establishment of independent institutions for the performance of certain state

rights are particularly valued in good governance,

- Right of association. The right of association is essential for the vitality of civil society as well as of political organisations. An active and vigilant civil society is necessary for the participation of groups in policy debates, for the promotion and protection of special interests, for the protection of vulnerable members of society, and for the accountability of government and other institutions.
- Freedom of expression is indispensable for the dissemination of ideas and policies of individuals and groups and the accountability of state institutions and other organisation, which wield power of others. This right requires access to the media for all points of view.

Good governance is a consensual system. Its legitimacy comes from an acceptance of the fairness and transparency of its procedures for elections to state offices and for policy making. The sustainability of good governance depends on the maintenance of public confidence as well as the confidence of political groups in the fairness of these procedures. If a group considers that rules and procedures have been designed or manipulated to its disadvantage, it would withdraw its loyalty to the constitutional and political system and regard itself justified in ignoring or breaking the law in promoting its interests. Elections are the most striking manifestation of the sovereignty of the people, who would feel cheated if the value of their vote were distorted or negated by unfair electoral system. Consequently one of the greatest threats to good governance arises from unfair or manipulative electoral systems.

The disenchantment with the ruling parties among the broad spectrum of civil society groups who had very high expectation at the beginning of the end of the Cold War is understandable. There is considerable consensus that issues such as the mode of adopting constitutions, management of

functions: the judiciary, ombudsman, human rights commission, public service, electoral commission, etc.

the electoral process, the Bill of Rights, strengthening the independence of the Judiciary, capacity building of political parties, dialoguing with opposing factions and the need for national Think Tank Resource Centre are primary targets of development to enshrine the principles of good governance among all stakeholders.

Communities, associations of people and political groups are vehicles through which good governance is practised. In readopting the multi-party system, people had vowed against the one party system and underscored that good governance is best practised where power is not concentrated in the ruling party or under the one-party state. This logic should have made the acceptance of the civil society a sine qua non. Unfortunately, the tendency to disregard civil society and its associations has disempowered the most important stakeholders to participate meaningfully in building national consensus. It is therefore neither unusual nor surprising that situation is one of acrimony rather than reconciliation between the State and civil society.

There are many windows of opportunity here. The process of dialoguing which characterised the transition from one-party to multi-party system of democratic rule must be resuscitated and incorporated into the system of governance as means of alternative conflict management. This involves tolerance of opposing viewpoints and the acceptance of divergent views with the intention of reaching an acceptable compromise.