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*Examining the 2005 Ethiopian Parliamentary Election Results
Under Alternative Electoral Rules*

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As many scholars have noted, electoral systems exert a powerful influence on the process of democratization (Taagepera and Shugart, 1989; Horowitz, 1985; Ishiyama 1997). Indeed first competitive or “transitional” elections are crucial moments for newly democratizing countries. Although these elections mark only a beginning point in an often arduous journey, their outcomes crucially affect the future course of democratic transition and democratic consolidation (Olsen 1993; Schmitter 1992; Bermeo, 1987). Indeed, whoever wins the transitional election often has the opportunity to re-write the rules of the game to their advantage and, hence, significantly influence future political developments.

The electoral system affects the outcome of any election, advantaging some, while disadvantaging others (Lijphart 1990; Rae 1967). The kind of electoral system employed can also serve to promote or detract from the viability and legitimacy of a new regime -- it can prevent the excessive fragmentation of the party system, and hence contribute to the emergence of stable government; it can also provide representation for significant groups in society and help contribute to the legitimacy of the regime. It follows, then, that the rules governing transitional elections crucially affect the course of democratization.

In this paper, I conduct a hypothetical thought exercise of sorts regarding the 2005 Ethiopian parliamentary election—would the results have been different had different electoral rules been employed (as opposed to the single member district plurality system employed in the 2005 election)? Would the opposition CUDP and UEDF attained more seats if some variation of Proportional Representation system or mixed member district (MMD) system (similar to Germany’s) been employed, and if so how much more? Would smaller, regional or ethnic parties have gained greater representation if different electoral rules had been employed? In this paper I take the existing electoral returns (using only the results from districts which were not in dispute following the 2005 election) and subject these results to a variety of electoral systems (national PR list, PR list aggregated to the regions, a Mixed Member District system and a Block Plurality System). Finally, I discuss the possible impact of the use of alternative electoral rules in Ethiopian politics.

The Run Up to the 2005 Election

The overthrow of of the Communist Derg regime in Ethiopia in 1991 by the TPLF (Tigrayan Peoples’ Liberation Front) which was based originally on the idea of secession of the Tigrayan region, and its allies marked a new era in Ethiopian politics. Following the collapse of the Derg regime, the victorious TPLF (which was led by Meles Zenawi) moved quickly to establish its political dominance. The original aim of Tigrayan independence was abandoned by the TPLF when it formed the Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in order to depose the Derg regime it had fought since 1974. The core of the EPRDF party leadership was dominated by the "Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray" (MLLT), a once hardline pro-Albania splinter group that broke away from the Marxist EPRP (the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party) which was the leading leftist opposition to the Derg regime in the 1970s. It was an alliance of four other groups, including the Oromo Peoples' Democratic Organization, the

Amhara National Democratic Movement, and the Democratic Officers Alliance (later in 1993 the South Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Front was added to replace this group) and the Tigrayan Peoples' Liberation Front. All four regional-ethnic parties were created by the TPLF. In reality, members of parliament from these parties consistently voted with TPLF and have no real independence outside the direction of TPLF. In addition, the parties enjoyed no real support from the regions they were supposed to represent. As a result, real power and direction of EPRDF continues to be with members of the TPLF core leadership and more specifically with the Prime Minister Meles Zenawi.

Consequently, the EPRDF regime in the 1990s emerged as a one-party state. However, despite its spotty record on civil and political rights, the regime according to John Harbeson “has been a vast improvement over Mengistu’s regime and probably Haile Selassie’s as well” (Harbeson, 2005, p. 147). Nonetheless the regime is quite intolerant to criticism and had frequently imposed restrictions on the country’s private media. The regime also views with suspicion the activities of both domestic and international non governmental organizations. For example, the government, prior to the May 2005 election, prohibited thirty Ethiopian NGOs from monitoring the election process in 2005 simply because their charters failed to mention such election monitoring specifically. The regime expelled three US- based democracy promotion organizations, the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), for some unspecified concerns over the status of their registrations to work in Ethiopia (Harbeson, 2005).

Further, the regime has continued policies from the past Derg regime that facilitates its control over the country. For instance, the regime has retained the nationalization of all land, especially in the rural areas. The EPRDF also continues to employ the Derg created organizational structure that reaches down to kebelles (rural and urban dwellers’ associations). These give the regime considerable power to control at the grassroots (Harbeson, 2005).

The EPRDF since 1991 has pursued policies of economic liberalization and the promotion of ethnic federalism. The former has provided for the creation of a fairly vibrant market economy and rapid increases in foreign investment. However, liberalization, as in the case of post communist reforms in Eastern Europe, has also been accompanied by charges of favoritism and cronyism. As to the latter, the ruling EPRDF has defined post–Cold War Ethiopia as an ethnic confederation where ethnic groups can secede.¹ Many powers have been “devolved” to the regions, and the right to use the local language (such as Tigrayna and Oromifa) in official dealings has been guaranteed. According to Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, it is only through such constitutional guarantees for ethnic autonomy can the country be held together and future secessions be avoided.²

Critics, however, point to the fact that, despite the federal arrangement the EPRDF (made up of four constituent parties) govern the Oromo Regional State, the Amhara Regional State, the Southern Nations’, Nationalities’ and Peoples’ Regional State (SNNPR) and the Tigray Regional State. The five other states are governed by affiliate parties of the EPRDF, parties that the EPRDF itself created. As a result, similar to the Soviet federal practice of ‘democratic centralism,’ regional governments are, in practice, implementers of policies adopted by the EPRDF. Others have bemoaned both the financial costs of implementing parallel political and economic institutions across

Ethiopia's reorganized ethnic "states" and are concerned about the threat such ethnic divisions present to Ethiopian unity. There also remains considerable suspicion among Amharic speaking elites in the cities about the Meles government. For instance, it is widely suspected that Meles is more interested in forwarding the interests of ethnic Tigrayans (and by implication Eritrean interests) than he is in preserving Ethiopian unity.³

It was within this context that the current Ethiopian opposition parties have emerged. Although there are many parties registered at both the national and regional levels, only recently has the opposition coalesced into a viable opposition that could challenge the EPRDF. In 2003, the United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (or UEDF, sometimes known as Hibrit) was formed in Washington DC, USA and comprised five Ethiopia-based and nine exile opposition groups. These included widely disparate groups in ideological terms ranging from socialist, to liberal, to secessionist. The principal parties in the UEDF were the Ethiopian Social Democratic Federal Party (ESDFP – formerly the Coalition of Alternative Forces for Peace and Democracy in Ethiopia), the Oromo National Congress (ONC), the United Ethiopia Democratic Party (UEDP), the Southern Ethiopia Peoples' Democratic Coalition (SEPDC), and the All-Amhara People's Organization (AAPO).⁴ The UEDF chairman was the political scientist Dr. Merera Gudina, a member of the faculty at Addis Ababa University and chair of the Oromo National Conference. The UEDF vice-chair was Beyene Petros a leading figure in Council of Alternative Forces for Peace and Democracy (CAFPDE) and later the United Ethiopian Democratic Party.⁵

Generally UEDF is made of intellectuals and former bureaucrats, many of whom had been associated with MEISON, a socialist party that had collaborated with the Derg in the 1970s. The UEDF has campaigned to shift greater power to the various ethnic groups and the UEDF insists that the ethnic-confederation model (which other opposition parties most notably the CUD opposes) should not only be retained, but actually followed more faithfully (Harbeson, 2005).

The other major opposition group in current Ethiopian politics is the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD—Kinijit). Kinijit was formed by four new political parties in 2004. It consists of the All Ethiopia Unity Party (AEUP), the Ethiopian Democratic League (EDL), the Ethiopian Democratic Unity Party-Medhin (EDUP-M), and the Rainbow Alliance/Movement for Democracy and Social Justice. The organization contains constituent groups with differing views regarding economic and political management ranging from social democrats to economic liberals.⁶

The CUD is highly critical of the EPRDF led government's policy of promoting ethnic federalism. Its leaders challenge the EPRDF's definition of the Ethiopia as an ethnic confederation and contend that it is a recipe for the disintegration of the country (Harbeson 2005, p. 149). Indeed, there is a very strong sense of Ethiopia irredenta in the CUD and there are those within the ranks of the CUD who in particular resent what they see as the "needless loss of Eritrea" and continue to press for Eritrean concessions so that Ethiopia may have unfettered access to the Red Sea.

The CUD has strong support in the Amhara region and Addis Ababa. It is led by Hailu Shawil who served as middle level official in Development Planning and road construction and had served as Minister of State Farms under the Derg regime. He was formerly associated with the AAPO. The three other parties in the CUD have primarily

urban memberships. The Rainbow Party of Berhanu Nega, former Chairman of the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce, represents the business community (Surafel, 2001, p. 1).⁷

These three parties were the main contenders in the May 15 parliamentary elections, the third such elections since the adoption of the EPRDF sponsored constitution of 1994. The Ethiopian elections were conducted using a Single Member Plurality formula with 548 districts in the country. The 1995 election had been largely boycotted by the opposition groups, and the EPRDF won an overwhelming number of seats in the parliament. In the 2000 election, the EPRDF again won an overwhelming number of seats (472), with the opposition parties (which competed as individual parties) winning only twelve seats out of the total 547.

Under considerable pressure from the West (particularly after Meles Zenawi's prominent inclusion in British Prime Minister Tony Blair's Commission for Africa) the ruling EPRDF took measures to reform the nomination and election procedure for the 2005 election. Earlier elections in 1995 and 2000 were marked by government harassment of opposition parties and a boycott of the polls by the most influential opposition organizations. In the lead-up to 2005, the EPRDF indicated that it wanted to run an election that was perceived as free and fair by the international community and that included greater participation by opposition parties within Ethiopia. The government agreed in October 2004 to meet some of the demands put forward by leading opposition groups, notably allowing international election observers and ensuring opposition access to state-run media. However, key demands by the opposition parties that the NEBE be reorganized and that the electoral system be changed to a proportional representation system were not accepted, the main opposition coalitions decided to participate rather than boycott.

The candidate nomination process was streamlined and the previous requirement of 500 signatures to be eligible for candidacy was eliminated (which had been a major barrier for many potential candidates) and reduced the residence requirement for candidates from five years to two. As a result there was a dramatic increase in the number of candidates from 1080 in 2000, to 1847 candidates in 2005 (a 71% increase). The number of women candidates, in particular, increased dramatically from 91 to 253 (178% increase) or 14% of all candidates (as opposed to a mere 1% in 2000). To a large extent, the increase in the number of women candidates reflected initiatives taken by some parties (mainly by the EPRDF) to boost women's participation through gender quotas. However the electoral system remained a single member district plurality system and not a variation of proportional representation as advocated by the opposition.

Further, the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) established a system of joint political party forums at the national and regional levels to provide for a means to resolve problems among the parties. Opposition parties were provided guaranteed (although uneven) access to state-owned electronic media. Also, a number of civil society organizations conducted civic education and organized a series of live televised debates. A relatively lively debate ensued and candidates were relatively free to express criticism of the ruling party. Finally, the electoral campaign climaxed in its final week with large and peaceful campaign rallies by major contenders in Addis Ababa.

On May 15, 2005, Ethiopia held its third general election for seats in national and regional parliamentary elections. Under considerable pressure from the international community, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi promised that this election would be fully

democratic and invited international observers from the European Union and the U.S.-based Carter Center. Turnout was around 90%. The National Election Board announced that official results would be released on June 8, and that initial returns indicated that the ruling EPRDF won over 300 seats, although the opposition parties won all 23 seats in the capital city, Addis Ababa.

In addition, the EPRDF could count on their "affiliated parties" (often referred to Ethiopia as satellite parties or "Quisling" or even "Condom" parties). Beyond the official EPRDF parties (TPLF, OPDO, ANDM and SEPDO) the EPRDF has its affiliates also in the other states and smaller ethnic groups, although they are officially not members. Thus, the Afar National Democratic Party, the Benishangul Gumuz People's Democratic Unity Party, the Gambela People's Democratic Front, the Somali Peoples Democratic Party and others are all members of the EPRDF block and closely controlled by TPLF. Their candidates are selected by EPRDF's agents, and these parties govern the remaining federal states on behalf of EPRDF. Thus the official results reported underestimate the true dominance of the EPRDF.

It is little wonder then, that the CUD and UEDF claimed massive electoral fraud and demanded an investigation of nearly 300 district elections. Anti-government demonstrations erupted in the capital in early June, and were met with violent suppression by security forces, resulting in the death of over 30 student protesters. On July 8, the NEBE released the first official results for 307 of the 527 national parliamentary seats. Of the 307 seats, the EPRDF had won 139, while CUD and UEDF won 93 and 42, respectively. Smaller parties and independent candidates (mostly EPRDF affiliated) won the remaining 33 seats. Both the CUD and UEDF, which had agreed in June to a truce with the EPRDF, continued to allege that massive electoral fraud had stolen the election. The opposition parties had decided to boycott the related August 21 elections in the Somali Region. On September 5, the NEBE released its final results, in which the EPRDF retained its control of the government with 327 seats. Opposition parties won 174 seats (up from 12 in 2000), with the CUD winning 109 total seats, and the UEDF winning 52, and minor mainly EPRDF affiliated opponents and independents taking the remainder. The CUD alone won 20 percent of the vote.

Alternative Electoral Systems

As mentioned above, the intention of this paper is assess whether the 2005 parliamentary election results had been different if different a different electoral system had been employed. However, there are certain limitations on what can be tested given the fact that this analysis can only be done *post facto* – i.e. I can only use votes that have already been recorded. Thus, for instance, since the ballot in Ethiopia was not ordinal (meaning no rank ordering was afforded to voters) I cannot assess popular alternative systems such as the Single Transferable Vote or the Approval Voting System both of which require a rank ordered ballot. Nonetheless, there are at least four alternative electoral systems that can be assessed using the available electoral data. The first is a plurality system called the **Block Vote**, which uses multi-member districts in which electors have as many votes as there are candidates to be elected. Counting is identical to a First Past the Post/Single Member District Plurality system (as was the system used in Ethiopia) with the candidates with the highest vote totals winning the seats. In this case I

use as the natural multimember districts the “zones” which made for districts as large as 20 seats and as small as 1 seat. The second system is the **Mixed Member/Parallel system** in which the choices expressed by the voters are used to elect representatives through two different systems - Party-list Proportional Representation and a plurality/majority system. Unlike in some countries (such as Germany) where the PR list compensates for the disproportionality in the results from the plurality/majority system, the Parallel system is a mixed system in which the two components are separated from one another (as is the case in Russia). In addition there are two kinds of **Party-List Proportional Representation** systems. Generally under this system, each party or grouping presents a list of candidates for a multi-member electoral district. The voters then vote for a party, and parties receive seats in proportion to their share of the vote. However there is a difference between systems where seats are aggregated nationally (such as in the Netherlands and Israel) or aggregated at the regional level (as in Belgium and Slovakia). Generally these types of systems are accompanied by a minimal threshold in terms of the percentage of the vote in order to qualify for seats (5%). There are several ways in which allocate the seats (and remaining seats from the votes for parties that did not pass the threshold) but the most common is the D’hondt method.

However another limitation on the using existing voting results to estimate alternative possible outcomes from the 2005 election, is that there remains considerable doubt as to the veracity of the election results. Indeed at least 139 districts were investigated for election irregularities, and there was some question of the results from the Afar region. Further the Somali region did not hold its parliamentary elections until August 21, 2005. In order to take the veracity of the election results into account (to some extent) I remove the voting results from 172 electoral districts from consideration that were either protested because of irregularities by the opposition, the governing party, or were from the Somali region. This left the voting tallies from 375 election districts.

Results and Conclusion

Table 1 presents voting results by percentage for the EPRDF and its allies, the CUDP and the UEDF (as well as an aggregated column for “others”) based upon the vote tallies from the non challenged results from 375 electoral districts. The EPRDF dominated in Tigray (93%) and did well in Benshangul, Gambela and Oromiya. The CUDP did well in the cities of Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa and the Amhara Region. The UEDF had its best showings in Oromiya and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region (SNNPR). Overall the EPRDF and its allies (based upon the results from the 375 non-challenged districts) won 59.5% of the national vote, the CUDP 21.9%, UEDF 10.9% and others (both independents and smaller parties 7.7%)

Region	EPRDF and allies	CUDP	UEDF	Others
Tigray	93.0%	1.7%	0.0%	5.3%
Amhara	36.0%	48.0%	2.0%	14.0%
Benshangul	65.0%	16.0%	0.0%	19.0%
Dire Dawa	43.0%	42.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Gambela	74.0%	25.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Oromiya	64.0%	10.0%	17.0%	9.0%
SNNPR	49.0%	22.0%	13.0%	16.0%
Addis Ababa	14.2%	74.0%	1.8%	10.0%
National Total (based on 375 non challenged districts)	59.5%	21.9%	10.9%	7.7%

Source: National Election Board of Ethiopia at <http://www.electionsethiopia.org/> accessed May 2007.

Table 2 first investigates seat allocations based upon the actual results (from the 375 electoral districts) under that “actual column” and when the seats are aggregated and allocated by region with a 5% threshold using the D’hondt method. As indicated the EPRDF would have received 6 fewer seats than it actually did, but the CUDP would have received 15 fewer seats and the UEDF 11 fewer seats. The biggest beneficiary from using a PR list system with seat allocations at the regional level would be the smaller parties that would increase their allocated seats from 12 to 44. These results do not differ significantly from the seat allocation results from those of a national PR list system.

Region	EPRDF and allies		CUDP		UEDF		Others	
	Actual	With 5% threshold	Actual	With 5% threshold	Actual	With 5% threshold	Actual	With 5% threshold
Tigray	38	36	0	0	0	0	0	2
Amhara	15	21	42	28	0	0	1	9
Benshangul	8	6	1	1	0	0	0	2
Dire Dawa	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Gambela	3	2	0	1	0	0	0	0
Oromiya	87	95	16	15	36	25	10	14
SNNPR	64	46	16	21	12	12	1	15
Addis Ababa	0	3	23	17	0	0	0	2
Total	216	210	99	84	48	37	12	44

Total seats = 375

Source: National Election Board of Ethiopia at <http://www.electionsethiopia.org/> accessed May 2007.

Table 3 reports results from a Block Plurality system with multimember districts based upon the zones for each region.

Table 3 : Hypothetical Block Plurality Results by Zone				
Tigray	EPRDF	CUD	UEDF	Others
Central Tigray	14	0	0	0
East tigray	8	0	0	0
Mekele	1	0	0	0
South Tigray	6	1	0	0
West Tigray	8	0	0	0
Amhara				
Age Awi	0	4	0	0
East Gojjam	1	0	0	0
North Gonder	6	6	0	0
North Shewa	2	8	0	0
North Wello	1	0	0	0
Oromiya	1	0	0	0
South Wello	0	6	0	0
Wag Himera	3	0	0	0
West Gojjam	2	13	0	0
Beshangul				
Asosa	4	2	0	0
Kamashi	1	0	0	0
Metekel	1	1	0	0
Diredawa	1	1	0	0
Gambela				
Gambela Medebegna	1	0	0	0
Godere	1	0	0	0
Larei	1	0	0	0
SNNPR				
Alaba Liyu	2	0	0	0
East shewa	1	0	4	0
Ameya	1	0	0	0
Basketo Liyu	2	0	0	0
Bench Maji	4	1	2	0
Dawro	2	0	0	0
Gamo Gofa	6	6	0	0
Gedeo	7	1	1	0
Gurage	3	9	1	0
Hadiya	3	0	7	0
Keffa	5	0	0	0
Kembata Tembaro	1	0	5	0

Selti	4	0	0	0
Sidama	6	1	0	0
South Omo	5	1	1	0
Welayita	5	0	0	0
Oromiya				
Arsi	10	1	7	0
Bale	4	1	1	4
Borena	2	0	2	1
East Harege	4	0	3	9
East Shewa	7	2	4	0
East Wellega	4	3	4	2
Guji	3	0	0	1
Illubabor	6	0	0	0
Jimma	5	1	0	0
North Shewa	7	0	0	0
Southwest Shewa	2	1	6	0
West Harage	10	0	1	0
West Shewa	0	1	11	
West Wellega	10	0	0	7
Addis Ababa				
Zone 1	0	4	0	0
Zone 2	0	4	0	0
Zone 3	0	4	0	0
Zone 4	0	4	0	0
Zone 5	0	5	0	0
Zone 6	0	1	0	0
	195	94	61	25

Total seats = 375

Source: National Election Board of Ethiopia at <http://www.electionsethiopia.org/> accessed May 2007.

As indicated in the table, the number of seats for the EPRDF is reduced considerably to only 195 seats, the CUDP seat total amounts to 94. The greatest beneficiary from the Block Plurality system is the UEDF which increases its seat total under this system to 61 seats.

Finally Table 4 below summarizes the seat allocations for each party by electoral system, comparing across the single member district plurality system, the National PR list with D'hondt with a 5% threshold, the Regional PR list system with D'hondt and a 5% threshold, a Mixed Member District-parallel system with the 375 seats and 100 National PR list seats (for a total of 475 seats) and finally the Block Plurality system based on the zones. As indicated in the table the EPRDF does best under a national PR list system (but so do the smaller independent parties). This is because the EPRDF received an overwhelming majority in Tigray, and substantial majorities in Benshangul, Gambela, but

also Oromiya. The CUDP victories and the UEDF victories were by smaller margins, hence they did better in systems that used plurality competitions (the actual system used, the MMD/parallel system and the Block Plurality system. The UEDF did particularly well under a Block Plurality system, especially since the lost several close single member district competitions (but had relatively high vote totals), and the EPRDF won some seats without a majority of the vote. This meant that in a multi member plurality competition the UEDF might have come in 4th or 5th in a five seat district and won seats, although in the actual election they may have lost each of the individual district competitions.

	SINGLE MEMBER DISTRICT PLURALITY (ACTUAL)	NATIONAL PR LIST WITH 5% THRESHOLD	REGIONAL PR LIST WITH 5% THRESHOLD	MMD-parallel WITH 5% THRESHOLD (out of 475 seats, 375 SMD seats and 100 PR seats)	BLOCK PLURALITY BASED ON ZONES
EPRDF	216 (57.6%)	223 (59.5%)	210 (56.0%)	276 (58.2%)	195 (52.0%)
CUD	99 (26.4%)	82 (21.9%)	84 (22.4%)	121 (25.5%)	94 (25.1%)
UEDF	48 (12.8%)	41 (10.9%)	37 (9.9%)	59 (12.4%)	61 (16.3%)
Others	12 (3.2%)	29 (7.7%)	44 (11.7%)	19 (4.0%)	25 (6.7%)

Source: National Election Board of Ethiopia at <http://www.electionsethiopia.org/> accessed May 2007.

In sum, then, despite the opposition’s call for the adoption of a proportional representation system prior to the 2005 parliamentary elections, the above results suggest that the opposition would have performed better under the conditions where some form of district plurality competition took place (either the SMD plurality system, the MMD-parallel system, and the Block Plurality system). The CUDP performed best under the actual system, and the UEDF would have performed best under the Block Plurality system. This may be due, perhaps, to the regional concentration of electoral support for both the major opposition parties, the CUDP in Amhara and Addis Ababa, and the UEDF in Oromiya and SNNPR. The EPRDF and its allies, on the other hand, seemed to perform generally well across all regions, even when excluding the votes from districts where the results were challenged.

However, these results should also be taken with a large “grain of salt.” Although in this study I did not include districts whose results were officially challenged (or from the Somali region), it is likely that the voting results in many districts and regions are highly questionable and may affect the results. For instance, the overwhelming voting returns for the EPRDF in Tigray (in some districts the returns for the EPRDF reached or

exceeded 100%) can be viewed as quite questionable. Nonetheless, even when excluding the 38 seats from Tigray, the EPRDF retains its majority of seats in the “final” seat count, although the EPRDF majority is most drastically reduced under the Block Plurality system. Under this system the combined opposition seat count would only be two less than the EPRDF’s (157 excluding the 38 seats from Tigray as compared to a combined total of 155 for the CUDP and UEDF). Thus if the opposition really wanted to adopt an electoral system that would give them great advantage, the Block Plurality System would appear most attractive.

The above paper sought to reexamine the 2005 parliamentary election results in under electoral systems different from the Single Member District Plurality system that was employed. As indicated above, and contrary to the opposition’s general expectation that they would perform better under the conditions of a proportional representation system, the opposition parties would have performed best in terms of seat allocations under the existing system or a Block Plurality system. This is largely due to the regional concentration of voter support for the CUDP and the UEDF and the more diffuse support for the EPRDF and its allies.

Although the above paper is a tentative first step at re-examining the electoral data from the 2005 parliamentary elections, the use of such “simulations” allow us to understand the possible consequences of reforming the electoral system in Ethiopia. It is an issue to which all parties should give their fullest attention prior to the 2010 legislative elections.

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Notes

¹ The constituent parts of the Ethiopia Federation include 9 ethnically-based administrative regions (*astedader akababiwach*) and 2 chartered cities: Addis Ababa, Afar, Amhara, Benishangul/Gumuz, Dire Dawa, Gambela, Harar, Oromiya, Somali, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region and Tigray.

² Harbeson 'Ethiopia's Extended Transition'.

³ The President of Eritrea, Isias Afewerki, is said to be a distant relative of Meles'. Meles hails from Adwa in northern Ethiopia and his mother was from Adi Quala, across the border in Eritrea.

⁴ Other parties that joined to create the UEDF are: Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front (ARDUF), All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement (MEISON), Council of Alternative Forces for Peace and Democracy (CAFPDE), Ethiopian Democratic Union - Tehadiso (EDU Tehadiso), Ethiopian National United Front (ENUF), Ethiopian People Federal Democratic Unity Party (HIBREHIZB), Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), Gambella People's United Democratic Front, (ONC), Oromo People's Liberation Organization (OPLO - IBSO), (SEPDC), and Tigrayan Alliance for Democracy (TAND).

⁵ Beyene Petros and Merera Gudima alternated as chair and vice chair of the UEDF in half year cycles.

⁶ CUD Electoral manifesto at <http://www.kinijit.org/static/KINIJIT-MANIFESTO-English-ver-1.0.pdf> accessed March 1, 2006.

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