Identity politics and the struggle for liberty and democracy in Ethiopia[1]
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Introduction

With the fall of the Soviet Union and the collapse of "communism" as an ideological project in the late 80s and early 90s, there was optimism that political liberalism will spread uncontested around the world. In the early 1990s the spread of democratic politics in what was dubbed "the third wave" of democratization[2] seem to have confirmed this prognosis. Authors such as Francis Fukuyama declared the end of history in the sense that the ideological divide within humanity has ended with the universal victory of Western liberal democracy.[3] While this prognosis largely holds in a number of countries in almost all the continents of the world, a shrewd and deliberate circumvention of the democratic process by an even larger number of countries particularly in Africa and the Caucus regions of the former Soviet Union has dampened optimism about the democratic resurgence. The ability of authoritarian regimes to conduct meaningless regular elections that they can easily manipulate in their favor while tightening their authoritarian grip on power have underlined the need to carefully consider the real substance of democratic governance beyond the mere conduct of regular elections. Accordingly, a more comprehensive accounting of democratization, that includes the degree to which these elections are genuinely free and fair in addition to the prevalence of the basic rights of citizens, and the limits on government power and its accountability to citizens have found the earlier triumphalism rather wanting. Furthermore, the emergence of identity politics on the basis of ethnicity, religion and other identity markers in post communist societies (in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Azerbaijan, Armenia…etc.) as well as in North Africa, the Middle East and Sub Saharan Africa (Algeria, Rwanda, Nigeria…etc.) and the prevalence of identity based politics in the form of race, gender and sexual orientation even in matured democracies have again raised the issue of the ability of liberal democracy to address these issues adequately or the mechanisms through which it can address them effectively.[4] All these issues have combined to dampen the excitement about the triumph of liberal democracy around the world. More recently, rather than an

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[1] Paper Prepared for the Oromo Studies Association (OSA) 24th Annual conference. Howard University, Blackburn Center, Washington DC, July 31st –August 1st 2010.

[2] Huntington used the term to describe a series of over 60 democratic elections that took place since the end of dictatorship in Portugal and the implementation of democratic politics following its "Carnation Revolution" of 1974. See Samuel P. Huntington "*Democracy's Third Wave*." The Journal of Democracy, 2(2) 1991.

[3] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man.* New York: Free Press, 1992.

inexorable move towards democratization, scholars talk about "the democratic roll back,[5]" the emergence of "hybrid regimes,[6]" and "Elections Without Democracy.[7]" According to the 2010 Freedom house survey " 2009 marked the fourth consecutive year in which global freedom suffered a decline—the longest consecutive period of setbacks for freedom in the nearly 40-year history of the report."[8]

The process of manipulation and reversal has become more or less universal and endemic particularly in Africa. Save for a handful of countries (such as Ghana, Benin, Botswana and South Africa) that made a successful transition to democratic politics, the great majority of countries that jumped in the bandwagon of election politics, have reverted back to their authoritarian selves. All the countries that former president Clinton praised as the young and democratic leaders of Africa in the early 1990s are confirmed authoritarian regimes today. According to the 2010 Freedom House survey "These declines were most pronounced in Sub-Saharan Africa, although they also occurred in most other regions of the world." [9] Only 9 countries with 19% of Sub-Saharan Africa's population live in a country considered free, while 39 countries with 81% of the region's population live in a "partially free" or not free environment. 16 countries with 33% of the population live in a suffocating environment of un-freedom.[10]

[4]On the theoretical debates dealing with the issue of democracy and identity politics see the collection of articles in Seyla Benhabib (ed) *Democracy and Difference:Contesting the Boundaries of the Political.* New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1996.

[5]See Larry Diamond, *The Democratic Rollback: The Resurgence of the Predatory State.* Foreign Affairs, March/April 2008.

[6]Larry Diamond, *Thinking About Hybrid Regimes.* Journal of Democracy, Vol. 13, no.2. April, 2002, pp.21-35.

[7]Andreas Schedler titled his article on this topic as "The Menu of Manipulation" to underline the kind of manipulations that take place to circumvent the democratic process and to show that these elections are conducted mainly to get temporary legitimacy, particularly in the eyes of the international community. See Andreas Schedle, *The Menu of Manipulation*. Journal of Democracy, Volume 13, no.2, April 2002, pp.36-50.

[8]Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2010 Survey Release.* http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=505.

[9]Freedom House, op.cit.

[10] See, Freedom House*, Map of Freedom:Sub-Saharan Africa*, 2010.
http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/fiw10/FIW_2010_Map_Africa.pdf. Last visited July 21, 2010.

The common response of African dictators when confronted with their earlier promise to establish democracy in their countries is that democracy cannot be rushed in Africa. It takes time. They tell their western interlocutors (who seem to agree with the story but are afraid of being labeled racists if they openly say it) that Africans are too primordial and fractionalized to live in liberty. They claim that politics of identity is more important than the issues related to individual rights and liberties emphasized by political liberalism. One of the most common justifications provided by African tyrants for staying in power for so long is the claim that real functioning democracy or more appropriately their departure from power will lead to ethnic chaos and instability in their countries.[11] It is truly bizarre to see African dictators use the dangers of ethnic based divisions as a justification for circumvention of democratic politics while they masterfully and cynically use ethnic cleavages to divide the population and weaken the resistance against tyranny.

The fall of the Mengistu regime in Ethiopia in 1991 brought hope that there is a possibility for the country to turn a page towards more stable and democratically accountable governance. Ethiopia was one of the countries praised by Clinton for its transition to democratic accountability. Although formal elections have been held every five years since the adoption of the new constitution in 1994, the country failed to transform its politics to a meaningful democratic system. In fact, instead of inching slowly towards democratic politics, the regime moved further away from democratic accountability and instituted a suffocating one party dictatorship. The political opening that ushered a meaningfully contested election in 2005, all but died with the death of over 200 unarmed civilians that peacefully protested the blatant stealing of the election by the ruling party. Election 2010 that gave the ruling EPRDF a 99.8% victory finally put the death nail on Ethiopian democracy under the current regime.[12]

While the 2010 election finally cleared any confusion that might have remained about the nature of the current regime in Ethiopia and hopefully puts to rest the delusion of some western analysts about the possibility of democratic transition under Meles, it still leaves a number of unanswered questions about how such a brutal ethnocentric tyranny was able to maintain its tight grip on power for so long. If the regime lacks democratic legitimacy as it has been obvious for so long, what explains its intolerably long tenure in a society where it is overwhelmingly unpopular? Is the regime's ability to deliver the economic

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11 For a biting criticism of the numerous authoritarian regimes in Africa that have been touted as emerging democracies in the 1990s and some of the justifications given by their western supporters, See Jason McLure's recent article on News Week *Why Democracy Isn't Working: Despite an Economic Renaissance, much of Africa is drifting toward a new age of authoritarianism. News Week, June 18, 2010.*

12 The official figure announcing EPRDF's victory says that the ruling party and its allies won 545 out of 547 seats in parliament. However, only one seat is won by an official opposition to the ruling party. The other seat is won by an "independent" candidate who has officially declared that he is an alli of the ruling party and was only opposing the individual fielded by the ruling party in his constituency. Which makes the winning percentage of the ruling party and its allies 99.82%.

goods the main explanation for its stay in power as the regime and its supporters claim or is it the inability of its fractured opponents to mount a credible challenge that explains its durability? Is western financial support for the regime an important factor as some opposition analysts claim? If the problem lies in the weakness and division in the opposition camp, what explains this paralysis? How important is the ideological and/or ethnic division within the opposition to prohibit a unified and credible challenge to the regime? How much of it is simply a lack of strong leadership within the opposition? All these questions require a careful and detailed analysis that I will not be able to provide in any detail in this short paper.

Instead, I will concentrate on one important aspect of the political discourse in Ethiopia in the past couple of decades that, in my view, has contributed enormously to the weakness of the political opposition to the Meles regime and to the EPRDF's ability to stay in power for almost two decades. I will argue in particular that the prevalence of identity politics partly as a remnant of the socialist discourse of the 1960s student politics in Ethiopia, the inability of political regimes to effectively address the demands for political inclusion by various ethnic groups, combined with the failure of the democratic opposition to effectively articulate the legitimate concerns of ethnic communities within the larger context of liberal democratic politics has enabled the current regime to effectively divide and weaken the democratic opposition in Ethiopia. The false dichotomies between individual rights and group rights or between national unity and ethnic identity have been deliberately nurtured by the regime, and sadly uncritically absorbed by the opposition to make effective resistance against tyranny very difficult. I will further argue that the most recent, and probably the most obscene election of 2010 have brought the possibility of a more productive dialogue among a broad array of political forces to develop a shared vision for the country's future. Such a vision must necessarily provide for a more profitable compromise between the requirements of identity politics with that of the more universal desire for individual liberty and political equality among Ethiopian citizens. Forging such a common vision, I would further argue, can form an effective basis for a practical, coherent, and effective resistance against tyranny in order to usher a more stable, inclusive and democratic Ethiopia for future generations.

The remainder of the paper has five sections. The first section sets the stage with a brief background history to isolate the roots of the divisions that more or less inform the various currents in Ethiopian politics today. Section two discusses the background for the prevalence of identity politics in Ethiopia and its inability to incorporate the changing global and national political environment which prohibits a change in political attitudes and reformulation of its political strategy. This section also critiques the more defensive and reactive positions of Ethiopian nationalist forces for their failure to sufficiently appreciate the pains and concerns of historically oppressed and marginalized ethnic communities. The third section presents a discussion about identity politics and political liberalism. In the fourth section, I will present my own suggestions for establishing a common ground between the democratic forces that prioritize identity based politics and those that are genuinely committed to political liberalism within the framework of a shared political community in a rather diverse and complex web of cultural identities. Based on these suggestions, this section also lays out the lessons of the most recent Ethiopian election and the opportunity it created for a unified democratic resistance. The fifth section concludes.

The context: Ethiopia after 1941 and the nature of the opposition to the Monarchy

Ethiopia is a country that has never had a meaningful democratic politics in its history. The country's recent history has moved from a rather benign but centralizing monarchy to a variant of Marxist dictatorship to an overtly ethnocentric tyranny in a spate of a little more than seven decades following the restoration of the monarchy in 1941. For the purpose of this paper and to better clarify its central argument, it is useful to briefly summarize the main features of the post-occupation history with an eye on current political divisions in the country.

The first important point to note about the post occupation history of Ethiopia is that Haile Selassie's restoration more or less meant a continuation of the pre-occupation polity with all the contradictions that it contained. The power base of the imperial regime remained the powerful regional lords or their descendants that were instrumental in Menelik's expansion/centralization of the country to take its modern geographic shape. The agricultural economy, which was the mainstay of the country's economy with its moribund semi feudal ownership structure, remained unchanged. The ethnic, regional and other divisions and disparities with their pent up grievances were not addressed. The political and economic relations that obtained before the occupation were not in any meaningful way disturbed by the occupation and there were no political forces that emerged to challenge the legitimacy of the monarchy or demand any alternative socio political arrangement. Neither modernizing elites nor groups with ethnic based grievances pressured the monarchy to change its ways.

The second point to note about this early history is the failure of the ruling elite to introduce gradual reforms. Attempts at addressing some of these issues by introducing a new constitution in 1955 fell far short of what is needed to address the accumulated problems. The attempt by the more modern sectors of the aristocracy and the educated elite to transform the polity to a constitutional monarchy failed because of the resistance from the more powerful traditional power structures, including the emperor. The parliament established by the new constitution was too timid to check the power of the emperor and its more conservative allies. It miserably failed to even introduce minor reforms related to the obviously unjust and inefficient land holding system that subjected the great majority of the population to a miserable life of poverty and contributed to the country's underdevelopment.

The absence of credible reforms combined with the changing regional and international political environment contributed to radicalize the opposition to the imperial regime. The small educated class was disappointed with the perceived slow economic and social progress of the country even compared with other African countries. Educated elites from oppressed ethnic groups started to better articulate the concerns of their groups along nationalist lines and demanding social and political justice. Peasant unrests in various regions of the country started to question the legitimacy of the land holding system and in some places started to rebel against economic injustice and regional mal administration. While all these local grievances were brewing, the international environment was changing as radical movements started to gain momentum in various parts of the world including in western democracies and some of the newly independent African countries. These movements had significant influence in shaping the

ideas that informed the anti systemic movements that dominated both pan Ethiopian and identity based opposition politics in Ethiopia at the time.

While the opposition to the imperial regime during the two decades after the adoption of the new constitution in 1955 was rather broad and universal, it didn't mean that the reasons behind the opposition and the proposed alternatives were the same. In fact, at the expense of some over simplification and keeping in mind that there could be crossovers from one category to the other, we can categorize the opposition to the Haile Selassie regime into four distinct categories:

1. The liberal/traditional modernizing but pan Ethiopian nationalist opposition (exemplified by the Neway Brothers)
2. The Radical/socialist and pan Ethiopian nationalist opposition (gives primacy to Ethiopian nationalism although is deeply committed to socialism as well. Roughly exemplified by the leftist groups that joined the Derge and radicalized the military)
3. The Radical socialist "internationalist" opposition (The dominant current in the student movement exemplified by Walleligne's famous paper and organizationally gathered around the EPRP) and
4. The Radical socialist but "ethnic identity" based opposition (That essentially took the leadership of the ethnic based movements, including the TPLF, OLF...etc.)

One of the most puzzling aspects of the opposition to the imperial regime in Ethiopia by the late 60s and early 70s was the significant radicalization of the educated youth. Even by African standards, where the anti-colonial struggle took a radical anti capitalist posture in many places, the Ethiopian opposition to Haile Selassie was extremely radical.[13] Even more puzzling was the conspicuous absence of a moderate liberal opposition that could put its mark in the debate at the time. By the time of the 1973 famine, which marked the beginning of the end for the imperial regime, the liberal/traditional modernizing opposition to the imperial regime was largely gone, seemingly with the failed coup attempt of the Neway Brothers. The field was almost totally occupied by the radical Marxist left in terms of its ideology, but with crucial difference on how to handle the "national question" but even more importantly on the question of who has the legitimate right to claim political power within the ambit of leftist ideology. Political liberalism did not figure as a serious contestant in this ideological debate let alone in the more practical power struggle. In other words, a politics centered on individual liberty and justice along with market friendly economic policies didn't figure in any meaningful way in the debate to shape the future of the country. This absence was even more visible in relation to the debate on "the national question" at the time.

When the junior officers of the Derge finally made their move to overthrow the emperor, they were without any coherent ideology, but ready to be influenced by any group that can help them ride the

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[13] An old Ethiopia hand, Rene Lefort, I believe correctly, calls the student activists of this period "the strongest and most radically Marxist in all of black Africa." See, Lefort, op.cit.

wave of discontent among the population. The only political requirement for them was a clear position on Ethiopian unity and, of course, a limited political ambition in terms of not challenging the junior officers for power. Other than that, the officers were willing to take any radical "anti-feudal" and "anti-imperialist" policy measure as well as addressing some of the key cultural demands of hitherto oppressed ethnic groups. They made their willingness to radically depart from the ancien regime early on by promulgating a radical land reform program that established their radical credentials. Naturally, this position appealed to the radical pan Ethiopian left that sees the possibility of implementing its socialist program by allying with the junior officers, while at the same time ensuring the country's unity. It is important to note here that leaders of this group (some of who are from oppressed ethnic groups themselves) genuinely believed that the "nationalities question" in Ethiopia could be adequately resolved through the socialist programs they espouse. This position also appealed to some of the more moderate ethno nationalist forces from the South including some Oromo nationalists who saw the "land to the tiller" proclamation as a positive move in the right direction which can potentially destroy the economic base of ethnic oppression in the country.[14]   Accordingly, after two years of a rather murky but strictly political tug of war, the battle lines were drawn between the military officers allied with the radical pan Ethiopian left and moderate ethno-nationalists, on the one hand, against the radical "internationalist" left and the radical ethno-nationalist forces on the other.

Identity politics and the radical "internationalist" left in Ethiopia.

The brutality with which the Derge dealt with its political opponents along with the rigid ideological posture of the left opposition to the regime made any kind of rapprochement almost impossible once the political struggle between these forces took a violent turn. The rather opportunistic push by the Somali government to forcibly settle the border dispute between the two countries, the intensification of the resistance by Eritrean nationalist forces combined with the internal political opposition to the government created a siege mentality among the officers. The military and their allied left cadres violently lashed out against any one they suspected of opposing them by branding them as anarchists, reactionaries or secessionists. The indiscriminate killings of the red terror further alienated all kinds of forces even when they are not ideologically opposed to the regime or when they essentially support the economic policies of the regime. In the mean time, as the pressure on the "internationalist" left from the government intensifies, and the government officially joined the cold war by allying with the Soviet Union and Cuba, the anti-Derge left made a short term common cause alliance with left ethno-nationalist forces under the terms broadly outlined by Walleligne's famous 1969 paper "On the question of Nationalities in Ethiopia.[15]" A paper which served as the litmus test for genuine Marxist

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14 It is important to note that some of the top leadership of the OLF in the late 80s and early 90s were individuals who were in this category, including people like Abiyu Geleta, Ibbsa Gutema, Zegeye Asfaw, Dimma Negoo etc.

15 Walleligne Mekonnen, *On the Question of Nationalities in Ethiopia.* Arts IV, HSIU, November 17, 1969. http://walilegnfordemocracia.com/onationalqu.pdf. Downloaded, July 15, 2010.

internationalism as opposed to the "reformist" or "pseudo Marxist" position of the radical pan Ethiopian socialist forces.

Walleligne's paper is probably the most influential short paper that shaped both the views of the radical "internationalist" left and the ethno-nationalist movements in Ethiopia. As its recent distribution in some nationalist websites indicates[16], its influence in some quarters is still strong and for these reasons alone it merits a careful discussion. As the author himself admits, it was not a terribly analytical paper and it suffers from "Generalizations and inadequate analysis."[17]Neither did it bring a new analytical perspective on the question. In fact, analytically, the paper was fundamentally a rehash of the Bolshevik position on the issue uncritically adapted to the Ethiopian situation. The power of the paper, however, emanates from the boldness of its position, its willingness to tackle "very risky and inconvenient" issues and more importantly its very serious practical implications. Before I discuss the paper's practical implications let me summarize the basic points contained in the paper.

Walleligne's paper can be summarized in some seven interrelated propositions.

- That Ethiopia is not one nation but a country made of a "dozen" nationalities. Each with its own language and cultural identity
- Ethiopian Nationalism is "fake" and advanced by the ruling class and "unwillingly accepted and even propagated by innocent fellow travelers." Furthermore, this "fake" nationalism is nothing but the supremacy of Amhara-Tigre. This is attested by the symbols of Ethiopian Nationalism such as Amharic music, Orthodox Christianity, the Amhara-Tigre Shamma, and the like
- The cultural and economic oppression of nationalities by the Amharas and their junior partners, the Tigres is not because Amharas and Tigres have inherent imperialist tendencies. Rather it is a historical accident. If the others (for example the Oromos or the Wolaytas) get a chance, they would have done it and they have tried to do so.
- Ethno-nationalist movements by themselves could not deliver the equality we seek, because these movements are exclusive in character and generally led by the bourgeoisie and/or feudal lords. So, we don't expect ultimate deliverance from them.
- Still, we should support these nationalist movements because they weaken the state and thus prepare the ground for a socialist revolution, even if they are secessionists.
- Secession is OK as long as it is led by socialists (workers and peasants) and "believes in its internationalist obligations." This is especially true if the rest of society is not ready for a socialist revolution.

16 Gadaa.com, for example republished it in its website on June 27,2010 with a short editorial comment saying "*it's probably the most famous article in Ethiopian politics." http://gadaa.com/oduu/?p=4613#more-4613.*

17 Walleligne, op.cit., p.1.

- The key issue is the commitment of the movement to socialist ideology, not national integrity. Because "in the long run, socialism is internationalism and a socialist movement will never remain secessionist for good." That is why, North Korea's secession from the South, for example, is supported by the left.

I don't wish to evaluate the accurateness of his historical presentation in this paper. What is important to note here is that his understanding of the national question is essentially utilitarian. Surely he, like all progressives of the time, was concerned about the national oppression that prevailed in the country. I suspect this concern for equality among cultural communities is equally shared by the pan Ethiopian socialists as well. Walleligne's willingness to accept secession clearly was conditional on its instrumentalist value in helping the socialist cause in Ethiopia. In other words, as we saw later with his followers in what I dubbed the "internationalist" left, when the limits of identity politics goes beyond its subscribed position or is led by "non-socialist" groups and starts to take its identity claims seriously, then the question of secession becomes undesirable or even reactionary.[18] This position, of course, is not unique to the Ethiopian left. The Bolsheviks which articulated the radical left's position on the national question have responded in an even more brutal manner when their power was questioned by nationalist forces; however legitimate the original source for their grievance. Stalin decimated the Georgian nationalist opposition to the Bolsheviks, when they asked for the right to secession that was clearly stipulated in the constitution.

What is extremely significant, and in the long run most damaging in this discourse, is its inability or unwillingness to engage identity politics in its own terms within the specific context of Ethiopia. Could such politics contribute to stability or breed instability in Ethiopia? Could it ensure or meaningfully contribute to broader freedom and justice in the country? Could legitimate ethnic grievances be used by unscrupulous politicians to further sow discord among communities for the sole purpose of gaining political power? If so, how could one check such potentially destructive ambitions? What cause is most important for the long run health of the political community? What are the practical lessons from countries that addressed the problem of identity politics from differing ideological perspectives?...etc. A discussion of these issues would have been more illuminating and thus productive. Instead, the debate, if one calls it that, deteriorated into the familiar polemical discourse where opponents were smeared with labels such as "chauvinists", "narrow nationalists" or even worse while wisdom and righteousness is supposedly assured by finding the appropriate quotation from the accepted dogmas enshrined in the "books" of the international socialist movement.

For the pan Ethiopian left the solution for the national question is not secession. In fact, toying with the question of secession in diverse multiethnic countries such as Ethiopia is playing with fire. In this position, it is in sync with all countries in Africa that emerged from colonialism, across the ideological

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18 Note the conflict between the "internationalist" left as represented by EPRP and the radical ethno-nationalist left in Tigray (both ardent followers of Walleligne), which led to an armed conflict that led to the ejection of the EPRA from Tigray in 1977.

spectrum. Rather, the solution is to be found by eliminating the root causes of ethnic oppression and establish a polity that is based on equality and class solidarity. An Oromo working class has a lot in common with an Amhara working class rather than an Oromo feudal lord or bourgeoisie and vice versa. Furthermore, the Amhara working class has no particular interest to culturally oppress the Oromo working class. It is only the ruling classes that benefit from ethnic based oppression and use these ethnic cleavages to divide the poor and rule. Thus, talk about secession within the socialist movement could be divisive and dangerous. It could even make the socialist movement vulnerable to a possible alliance of the bourgeoisie and the working class in some ethnic communities weakening the power of working people. In other words the difference between the Walleligne position and the pan Ethiopian position was one of tactic rather than strategic and substantial. The difference is that Walleligne and his group has confidence in the unifying power of Marxism and class solidarity even when confronted with identity politics. So, the promise of secession is useful in weakening the class enemy but ultimately undesirable or even downright distasteful under socialism. On the other hand, the pan Ethiopian left seems to appreciate the potential mobilizing power of identity politics and was not willing to take the risk of potential disintegration and civil war on the basis of ethnic identity by taking Stalin's theoretical prescriptions seriously. They felt Walleligne's position to be rather naive and reckless. This, of course, is not taking other doctrinaire differences between these different factions of the left in to account.

Contrary to its cool reception by the pan Ethiopian left, Walleligne's paper was overwhelmingly popular among those that give primacy to identity politics simply because it validated their position. For Marxist ethno nationalists who believed in the overpowering aspect of class conflict in the long run, the ethnic conflict and contradictions took precedence over class conflict at that particular juncture in Ethiopian history. For the non ideological ethnic movements Walleligne's paper provided protection from the leftist charge of "narrow nationalism" or tribalism. In either case, ethnic based politics was mainstreamed within the left movement. Those opposing ethnic based politics, be it from the pan Ethiopian left or from other Ethiopian nationalists are now categorized by the ethnic based movements as groups that are unsympathetic to their cause at best or, even worse, reactionary chauvinists. Along with this, opposition to secession became a test of one's commitment to ethnic equality in Ethiopia. As name calling and labeling took precedence over rational discourse in the heat of practical politics, and the multi-national left forces engaged in a rather destructive fratricidal war that decimated both the pan Ethiopian left and the "internationalist" left, the conflict within Ethiopia's body politics slowly moved from the class based political discourse of the 1960s and 70s to the dominance of identity politics at least in the opposition to the Derge regime. On the other hand, Ethiopian nationalism was unfortunately represented by the Derge regime, which was thoroughly discredited in the eyes of the Ethiopian public for the unmitigated economic and political disaster it brought on the Ethiopian population for some 17 years.

 Ethiopia Under EPRDF: Identity politics and Dictatorship

So, when the TPLF came to power in 1991, it came with a determination to make identity politics the mainstay of Ethiopian politics. Its Marxist ideology always secondary to its Tigrean identity and with Marxism going in disrepute after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the only thing left was to pursue the ethnic agenda with a pseudo democratic mask. In addition to creating allied ethnic organizations

representing various ethnic groups, it invited primarily ethnic based groups to discuss and determine the future of the country during the conference establishing the transitional government. [19] Being an ethnic based organization representing a small minority, the TPLF was conscious of two potential dangers threatening its power. The first was the emergence of any kind of pan Ethiopian nationalist politics. The second was the emergence of a strong ethnic based organization that is independent of TPLF influence in the sense of having its own ambitions for power both at the national or regional level.

In relation to the former, it started a very vicious propaganda campaign against any form of Ethiopian nationalism. Taking its cue directly from Walleligne, it used the mass media that it controlled to push the line that there is no Ethiopian nationalism as such. It is a fake nationalism. Any one speaking in the name of Ethiopian nationalism is simply an Amhara chauvinist (or a Neftegna) that is trying to reinstate the old order. In pursuing this line, the TPLF used not only the other ethnic organizations that were allied with it, but also the independent ethnic organizations, who believed that the main enemy against their ethnic aspirations was still "Amhara chauvinism" although that political current has been out of power for a very long time. In other words, this assessment essentially asserts that the 17 years of Derge rule is simply a continuation of the imperial period when it comes to the issue of ethnic oppression. The various measures taken by the Derge to address the economic and cultural basis of ethnic oppression,[20] in this view, have not changed one iota the fundamental structure of Ethiopian politics. Furthermore, the TPLF worked diligently to ensure that identity is defined in one and only one form in its legal and political manifestations; that of ethnic identity with language as the primary marker. This position was pushed to such an absurd level, that citizens with mixed ethnic heritage were forced to choose one of them to get official identification in places like Addis Ababa.[21] In making this identity as supreme, this position also relegated other competing identities (for example class, gender, religion...etc) to a meaningless secondary role. The propaganda was so relentless and the political marginalization for those who refuse to play this game so serious, that some Ethiopian nationalists decided to organize as Amharas to participate in the political process.[22] This part of TPLF's activity can be seen as largely successful, at least till the 2005 election.

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[19] Only a handful of the 27 organizations represented in the transitional conference were pan Ethiopian. The rest were all ethnic based organizations.

[20] These measures include the land reform that totally abolished the "neftegna" system, the purposeful cultivation and promotion of ethnic music, tolerance, if not active promotion, of non Amharic languages including Oromiffa and Tigregna radio programs, even changing the names of regions to reflect local language such as Arsi, a much more forceful implementation of religious equality...etc. Not differentiating these issues with the larger question of power and discussing its implications to identity politics in Ethiopia is one of the lacunae in the debate about identity politics in Ethiopia.

[21] The confusion created by this policy of singular identity, led to the absurdity of the formation of a political party representing people with mixed heritage during the first election in 1995.

Among the many things that changed in 2005, probably the most important for our discussion here is the emergence and articulation of a liberal politics for the first time in the country's history. As I suggested earlier, although there were liberal opponents of both the imperial and Derge regimes, they were almost totally muffled by the dominance of radical Marxist and ethnic political discourse.[23] This liberal political plank took advantage of the relative opening of the political space and presented its case to the public effectively exploiting the opportunity presented by the election.[24] What is important about this position was that it brought two critical issues to the forefront. The first was the issue of individual rights while also respecting the concerns of identity based groups. This was presented along with respect for human rights, political equality, justice…etc. as an important requirement for a genuinely democratic politics. As rights issues, these were issues that even those that give primacy to identity politics can easily relate to. The argument that respect for individual rights does not and should not conflict with group rights and that on the contrary those that claim to respect group rights will not genuinely commit to such rights without accepting individual rights had resonance to a wide audience including those that were intensely partisan to identity politics, but who suffer abuses from the TPLF regime. The second plank, that of national integrity within a democratic framework, was also presented in a more sensitive and practical manner rather than as a rigid dogma that supersedes the respect for basic rights and the political equality of citizens. The secession of Eritrea and the numerous internecine conflicts among ethnic groups even after the official acceptance of ethnic based self rule, the endless fratricidal conflict within the same ethnic group in neighboring Somalia, clearly revealed the dangers and the potential rough edges of identity based politics. For many ethnic minorities, it was very natural to feel more secured within the ambit of the broader nation/polity than with a multiplicity of ethnic based states. Accordingly, the increasing hostility towards the EPRDF regime, combined with the appeal of these liberal positions to a larger than expected populous mostly in urban areas but also in rural regions heralded the serious ideological and political challenge to identity based politics in Ethiopia since the 1970s. To be sure, this presentation of the liberal position in the 2005 election has served as a broader tent to disparate groups to come together to challenge the EPRDF rule. Some in this broad coalition

22 It is to be noted that most of the members, including those in the leadership of AAPO, have repeatedly argued that they were forced to take the Amhara label to protect Amharas and other settlers in the south from persecution rather than believing in the Amhara political identity as such. This sentiment was strong enough to finally force the organization to adopt an Ethiopian nationalist posture when it changed its name to AEUP in 2003?. Of course, this was taken as a confirmation of the charge by ethnic nationalists that Ethiopian nationalism was nothing but Amhara nationalism.

23 One such early intervention, was Haddis Alemayehu's *Ethiopia Men Ayenet Astedader Yasefelegatal.* Published in Amharic, in Addis Ababa, 1975.

24 I have written in detail elsewhere how and why this political opening was made available by the TPLF/EPRDF. See, my Amharic book, *Yenetsanet Goh Siked, Addis Ababa*, 2007, and my more recent article *Ethiopia's Despair.* Current History, Vol.109, NO. 727, May 2010.

might espouse more radical positions towards the question of integrity or might have very little tolerance to identity based politics. Some could even be down-right chauvinists covering their deeper identity based positions under the ambit of liberalism or national integrity. The fact remains, however, that in the realm of ideas the liberal ideas I presented above were the organizing ideas of that movement.

The second part of TPLF's activity aimed at weakening or even eliminating any kind of independent ethnic politics that it cannot control. After eagerly pushing the independence of Eritrea to eliminate a potentially powerful rival for power if it stays within the union, it didn't wait long before it pushed the OLF and the small agglomeration of Southern parties out of the transitional government. [25]Other ethno-nationalist forces such as the ONLF quickly followed as it became clear that their aspiration is not going to be achieved under TPLF. It more or less decimated the unprotected army of the OLF by force and made it clear that it has no tolerance to any one, no matter what their ideology or political views that can challenge its power and the control over resources that this power bestows on it. Showing footages of the brutality allegedly committed by OLF activists, it presented the OLF as a reactionary secessionist force bent on dismantling the country and brutalizing all other ethnic groups if it gets a chance. Since, in addition to the conscious promotion of cultural communities that started after the revolution, the TPLF also provided pseudo "self government" for ethnic groups, it couldn't see any legitimate reason for complaint against its rule. Secession is a legitimate issue only when it is a response to ethnic oppression. Under a "progressive" regime that recognizes ethnic rights including self government, the constitutional right to secession is there to appreciate the generosity of TPLF to oppressed ethnic groups but not to be seriously practiced.

We now have the rather odd situation where by the political organization that firmly established the primacy of identity politics in Ethiopia and that characterized Ethiopian nationalism as a reflection of Amhara chauvinism brutalizes ethnic groups that wish to genuinely administer their own affairs, in the name of national integrity in order to protect its power and continue pillaging the country. Its brutal actions in the Ogaden, Oromia, Gambella, Keffa-Sheka, Afar, Amhara, Sidama, Benishangul and other ethnic communities where there was some challenge to its rule or some semblance of independent activity, confirms that when it comes to its power, it has no mercy. With a voracious appetite to pillage and benefit a narrow group that it claims to represent, it cannot settle for equitable share of national resources that genuine equality would necessarily imply. What is made clear from this experience is that such regimes could bring all kinds of opportunists from all identity groups to share the loot, it could even allow cultural communities to develop their cultural heritage, but it will never provide the liberty for individuals to live in freedom or for groups to genuinely administer their own affairs. This is because these two rights are interrelated and that both rights emanate from a broader understanding of the sovereignty of citizens in a political community. As I will try to argue later, only a meaningful liberal democratic politics is capable of weaving through the maze of conflicting identities and provide

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25 In June 1992 the OLF left the transitional government and in March 1993, members of the Southern Ethiopia Peoples' Democratic Coalition left the government.

individual liberty while also protecting and nurturing diversity. But, for that to happen in Ethiopia, a real meaningful and sensitive conversation has to take place between those that espouse political liberalism with those that prioritize identity politics as their destiny is thoroughly intertwined.

For such a conversation to occur and hopefully lead to a profitable cooperation, it is important to take stock of the past difficult relationships between these groups that make constructive engagement near impossible. In my view, the difficulty emanates from both the underlying inherent conflict between these two positions and more practically because of the dominance of the more extreme views in each category to dictate the tone of the debate. I will briefly discuss these two issues next.

Political Liberalism and Identity politics: Conceptual Issues and Practical Problems.

The myopic and rather destructive politics of TPLF in the past 19 years has brought havoc to the country's body politic and alienated a large section of the population. Organized opposition to the TPLF led regime comes from a variety of groups and a multiplicity of political views and positions. For our discussion, we can categorize them into four major groupings:

1. Ethnic based political groups that have maintained the old and more extreme position of secession as a solution to the ethnic problems of the country. In other words those who do not see any change in the nature of the political question in the country since 1974, save for the replacement of the Amhara by a Tigrean ruling elite;
2. Moderate ethnic based political groups that wish to renegotiate the nature of the political community to address ethnic based concerns, particularly related to the implementation of genuine federalism within the context of Ethiopia as a political community;
3. Political moderates who are uncomfortable with identity politics and are very much concerned with the integrity of the nation but feel that the solution to the country's problems can be addressed within the framework of political liberalism that acknowledges the diversity of the country but that wishes to build the political community within the framework of citizenship and:
4. Radical integrationists who feel vindicated by the mess that is created by the TPLF and contend that the experience of the last 19 years is nothing but a confirmation of the dangerous nature of ethnic politics. Even more, in its extremist version, it is a position that rejects the claims of ethnic oppression by ethno-nationalists. This voice simply rejects any kind of ethnic based political engagement including ethnic federalism. It also rejects any cooperation with such forces as it sees such cooperation as a recipe for the future disintegration of the country.

This, of course, is not an exhaustive categorization. But I believe it is sufficient for the purpose of this paper. There are variations within each group and there might even be groups that might be difficult to put under any one of the above categories. But, for a variety of reasons, not least of which is their relative insignificance both in the debate that is shaping contemporary politics and their practical

political significance, we can concentrate on the four categories above without losing much by way of clarity or practical import.

Of the above four political positions and persuasions, the first and the last are, in my view, more ideological than practical political propositions. I say this not because of a total rejection of the validity of their claim, although there is quite a bit in their respective positions that are intellectually disagreeable. A selective reading of history that exaggerates their own claim while totally ignoring or rejecting relevant history that counters their position is a very common feature of these groups. Instead, it is their limited practical value in resolving the political conflict that reduces their practical import. Their fixation with history and their unwillingness to look forward; their inability to empathize with the concerns of the other and their almost total obsession with their own pain make it very difficult to find common ground for solving contemporary, practical and urgent political problems. Their willingness to sacrifice the interest of the current and future generations for the purpose of settling historical scores; their almost religious like certainty about the rightness of their positions and their unwillingness to entertain solutions less than their ideologically defined optimum prohibits a rational give and take politics that the time requires. A politics dominated by such extremes will never lead to an amicable solution. Since my ultimate concern in this paper is to outline the possible route for constructing a more peaceful, tolerant and free political community in Ethiopia, I will not spend time in analyzing these extreme positions. Instead, in the remainder of this paper, I will concentrate on the two moderate positions and try to address both the theoretical and practical impediments that hitherto prohibited the possibility of a unified action against tyranny despite the fact that they are all victims of the same political system.

In the realm of ideas, the first and important point to note is the inherent exclusiveness of identity based politics. By definition, identity politics is a politics of difference. Its very existence requires defining itself in opposition to the other. And its political claims are always presented in the form of protecting or promoting the rights of a particularly defined group in relation to the larger political community. The reason for particularly defining that group as opposed to another could be based on a particular historical event, a uniquely defined cultural tradition, a result of the economic position of the group or whatever. We can agree or disagree on the basic premise of the issue that caused it. The important point is that it is uniquely defined and can be presented in separation to the other. On the other hand, political liberalism presumes political communities that are essentially diverse and different on most basic and fundamental values, and hopes to create a political community on the basis of citizenship, where every individual in that society is presumed to be equal in politics and in law. These conflicts in the realm of ideas present a host of issues that are practically relevant in establishing stable functioning democracies. In the introduction to a book entirely dedicated to this topic Seyla Benhabib presented this politics of difference and the problem it poses to democratic politics in the following way:

> "Since every search for identity includes differentiating oneself from what one is not, identity politics is always and necessarily a politics of the creation of difference. One is a Bosnian Serb to the degree to which one is not a Bosnian Moslem or a Croat…What is shocking about these developments is not the inevitable dialectic of identity/difference that they display but rather the atavistic belief that identities can

be maintained and secured only by eliminating difference and otherness. The negotiation of identity/difference…is the political problem facing democracies on a global scale". [26]

For liberalism, the first challenge that identity politics presents is the choice of identities and the value that one gives to the multiplicity of identities that we all possess. In fact, the real issue is the degree to which an individual human being can be uniquely categorized to belong to a single identity (be it on the basis of religion, ethnicity, gender…etc.) or the rationale behind picking one particular identity and provide it with a privileged position compared with other competing identities. This "solitarist approach" according to Sen, emanates from the "odd presumption that the people of the world can be uniquely categorized according to some *singular and overarching* system of partitioning."[27] But such partitioning will not help us to understand fully the real identity of a person. In fact as Sen put it:

> "A solitarist approach can be a good way of misunderstanding nearly everyone in the world. In our normal lives, we see ourselves as members of a variety of groups—we belong to all of them. The same person can be, without any contradiction, an American citizen, of Caribbean origin, with African ancestry, a Christian, a liberal, a woman, a vegetarian, a long-distance runner, a historian… Each of these collectivities, to all of which this person simultaneously belongs, gives her a particular identity. None of them can be taken to be the person's only identity or singular membership category. Given our inescapably plural identities, we have to decide on the relative importance of our different associations and affiliations in any particular context…Central to leading a human life, therefore, are the responsibilities of choice and reasoning."[28]

This of course is an issue that requires deep understanding in relation to specific conditions. The existence of multiple identities in Ethiopia is obvious. For moderate pan Ethiopian nationalists the primacy of ethnicity based on language (as opposed to religion or even specific cultural practice for example) is problematic as it will not answer the whole question of identity that prevails in the country. Such definitions of identity, when insisted upon as a political basis, say for self government, then bring a host of questions related to practicability. Why should we have nine ethnic based federal regions, when there are over eighty different language based identities in the country? Why is a Sidama with 3.5% of the population or a Gurage with 4.3% of the population is not a federal region with self government rights while the Afar, (1.9%) the Benishangul Gumuz, (0.9%) the Gambella (0.4%) or the Harari (0.2%) have their own self administrative regions?[29] What would it mean if people want to categorize their identity on the basis of religion than ethnicity, for example? These are thorny practical questions. To raise these issues is in no way to undermine one's ethnicity or to belittle the identification of the group.

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[26] Seyla Benhabib *"The Democratic Moment and the Problem of Difference.* In Seyla Benhabib (ed) "Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political". New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996. P.3-4

[27] Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*. New York: Penguin Books, 2006, p.xii.

[28] Sen, ibid, pp.xii-xiii.

It is only to raise the complicated nature of the issue we are dealing with and even more to emphasize the need for choice and reasoning to tackle these issues.

To raise the theoretical and practical problems related to identity should, of course, not lead to summarily dismiss the problem altogether. It is equally a mistake to presume that this complexity means that we are all the same and that we should simply ignore our differences. Just as the insistence on a singular identity diminishes us by forcing us to give up all the richness that other identities provide us, the alternative categorization that we "are all the same" and thus we should not even talk about identities is patently not true. Ethiopia is a society with diverse identities both in terms of differing cultural communities and in terms of differing identities within each cultural identity. It is, however, equally important to recognize the fact that multi ethnic national identities could be important markers for individuals over and above narrowly defined ethnic identities. In fact, that is why all multi ethnic communities seek to forge a national identity that supersedes ethnic identities. One aspect of our identity could prove to be more important than another aspect of our identity depending on the circumstances. In periods of war, for example, national identities take overwhelming importance compared with narrowly defined cultural identities. The task for moderates from both sides is to identify the common elements that we share while also acknowledging and respecting the differences that we surely have.

The other issue that comes to the fore when we try to address the question of identity politics within a liberal political project is the potential conflict between individual rights and group rights. If we accept groups as specific categories with uniquely defined rights, what is the relationship between the rights of the group as a whole and the rights of the individual within the group with multiple identities? For example, if a group is provided with rights to practice its culture without impediment, what happens when an individual in that group or a group of individuals with a different identity feel that their rights are trampled upon by this cultural practice by an identity group that they also belong? What if the culture that defined the identity group, for example, is hostile to the rights of women? Who has priority when these rights clash? These are very important issues that define the nature of the political community. If the ultimate solution to the political problems of the country is to come from a renegotiation of the political community as Lencho Letta[30] suggests, these negotiations must address and settle these problems embedded in the politics of identity squarely. Political liberalism does not have much of a problem with these issues as it is based on providing primacy to individual rights, in the sense that respect for group rights are valid only in so far as they don't trample upon the rights of individuals or groups with different identity markers. For liberals, a genuine respect for individual rights

29 I am aware of the contentions about the reliability of the most recent Census data. This, however, will not affect the point I am making. For data on the most recent (2007) census see *Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Population Census Commission: Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census.* Addis Ababa, December 2008, Table 1.2, p.11 and Table 2.2, p.16. http://www.csa.gov.et/pdf/Cen2007_firstdraft.pdf. Last visited, July 25, 2010.

30 See Lencho Letta's recent interview on ESAT television. http://www.ethsat.com/ Last viewed, July 27, 2010.

and liberties is the only guarantee that ensures the respect for group rights. In the Ethiopian context, these issues are not entirely settled because they are not carefully discussed. Only reasoned discourse and sensitive negotiations among moderate forces could help us move forward on these issues.

Finding a workable solution to the thorny political problems of our country is not going to emerge from an academic settlement of the issues that I outlined above. Given the nature of our collective misery, developing a workable theoretical postulate to address the conflicting claims of identity politics and political liberalism will not be extremely hard especially within the two moderate forces that I outlined above. The issues that elude solution are the practical and behavioral problems that these long conflicts have engendered. Although we are all victims of oppression by brutal tyrannies, the various political traditions that emerged out of the struggle against tyranny, the divisions and hatred deliberately fomented by those in power for the purpose of divide and rule, the petty politics that permeated our politics in the past, the unsavory characters that resided over opposition politics...etc. have all taken their toll in creating a rather hostile environment for constructive discourse and cooperative action.

Probably the most important of these behavioral damages, in my view, is the complete lack of trust within the larger Ethiopian community. Trust, as we all know, is a very important social capital that societies need for any kind of constructive action. Although the declining level of trust is apparent even within particular cultural communities, it is obviously at its lowest level across cultural communities. Even meaningful dialogue has become increasingly hard seemingly with the intensity of the repression by the regime. For a long time, there hasn't been any meaningful intellectual engagement between ethnic communities in the Diaspora for example. There is a manifest inability to try to understand the problems of the other. Part of the reason for that, I believe, is the dominance of extremist positions in the oppositional discourse. As reasoned engagement is pushed out of stage by passionate sloganeering, as reasonable intellectuals and thinkers get pushed to the margin by simple minded extremists, as politicians learn that it is much more profitable to appeal to peoples' passions rather than their heads, these positions end up dictating not only the tone of the debate, but also the course of practical politics. In this kind of political environment, finding common ground becomes near impossible. If we are going to develop and strengthen the level of trust in our communities, one of the immediate tasks that moderates from both sides have to do is to reclaim the tone of the debate and put it firmly in the realm of rationality and within the ambit of what is achievable and what has been achieved so far.

Political Liberalism and Identity Politics: Looking Ahead

One of the great achievements of the 2010 elections, in my view, is its almost total obliteration of the illusion of change that might come from the regime in power. This illusion is destroyed both for moderate liberals who hoped for a smooth transition to democratic politics within the existing structure and those that are organized around ethnic identities who hoped that the regime might live up to its claims of ethnic equality and genuine self governance. More than anything else it proved that in the Ethiopian context (as in other places) the issue of individual liberty and cultural freedom are inextricably linked. One has no basis to expect a settlement of the legitimate aspirations of cultural groups including freely administering their own affairs, in an environment of tyranny. A respect for individual freedom is a

necessary condition for respecting group rights. This means, Ethiopians across the broad spectrum of their differentiated identities have very strong conceptual and practical reasons that unifies them. This unity is forged not only because of geography and collective suffering. But also because of the commonality of the solution to their anguish. It is not only the despair of the past that unites them, but also the hope of the future.

In other words, it is only through a coordinated multi pronged struggle that people in Ethiopia can achieve their liberty. A call for a unified struggle against tyranny is now so common that it is a cliché. The discussion has now moved to the more appropriate and practical question of defining the objectives and modalities of this unified struggle. It is also clear that a meaningful and effective unified struggle has to incorporate both the moderate forces of unity and those that insist on identity politics. It is amply clear by now that the extreme radical ideology that informed opposition politics in the 60s or the moribund politics of the imperial era cannot provide for a hopeful future.

What is needed is a careful and rational negotiation about the country's future. The starting point, in my view, is a clear definition of the political community that citizens wish to construct that can address the concerns of the country's diverse communities. How can political forces construct a well ordered society? What are the minimum requirements for constructing a viable, free and peaceful community? I strongly believe that political liberalism provides the initial basis for such an agreement. I believe it is only on the basis of justice and equality that one can hope to construct such a political community. As John Rawls succinctly put it:

> "Although a well-ordered society is divided and pluralistic…public agreement on questions of political and social justice supports ties of civic friendship and secures the bonds of association."[31]

That political and social justice should be the basis upon which the future political community in Ethiopia must be based should not be very controversial, at least in theory. It can also be agreed that political power at every level should emanate from the will of the people. These are issues that both sides of the moderate political forces can surely agree. These are the basic premises of liberal politics. On the other hand, liberal politics is also struggling in addressing the issue of how to appropriately incorporate the demands of identity politics. The idea of creating a political community on the basis of particular identities, within the process of forging a larger political identity on the basis of citizenship is not an easy task. But, we must understand that the very appeal of liberal politics comes from its explicit recognition of difference. This difference is not on the basis of some minor issues, but in fact on most substantive issues. We can't ignore the presence of deep rooted identity based loyalties, by exclusively concentrating on individuals. It requires careful negotiations between these contending claims till we achieve the right

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31 John Rawls, *Kantian Constructivism in Moral Theory,* quoted in Will Kymlicka's *Three Forms of Group-Differentiated Citizenship in Canada*. In Benhabib (ed), op.cit., pp.163-164.

balance. It is going to take time. But it should be taken as an objective that can be achieved if democratic forces are committed to lay the theoretical, institutional and behavioral grounds for its success today.

This ground work for the community's collective salvation can begin in the unity that is forged during the ensuing bitter struggle for liberty. This is the arena where contending political forces can communicate better, they can listen to each other and can even learn to share each other's pain. It is through this collective struggle that they can develop the trust that is crucial for success. It is only when there is trust that all their efforts are to forge a better future for their children rather than to settle past scores or to open old wounds that they can effectively begin their march to genuine liberation.

My argument for forging a viable political community within the framework of political liberalism should not be mistaken for an attempt to impose some Western political ideas on a fundamentally non western African community. Far from it. As Amartya Sen said there is "nothing exclusively "Western" about valuing liberty or defending public reasoning…there is, in fact, a long tradition of participatory governance in Africa as well"[32] This certainly is not a debatable point for the Oromo community as the Gaada is the perfect example of this tradition in our own region.[33] That is why I am optimistic that children who came from this tradition will not find it difficult to forge such a unity for this lofty purpose.

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[32] Sen, op.cit.,p.99.

[33] For a detailed treatment of the Gaada system and the participatory democracy practiced by the Oromo, see Asmarom Legesse, *Oromo Democracy:An Indigenous African Political System*. Trenton: Red Sea Press, 2006.