

Quo Vadis Ethiopia? Scenarios



Executive Summary

Content

Introduction.....	1
What are Scenarios?	1
Background and the Current Situation.....	1
Scenario I: The Dark Days of Winter (YeHamle Chelema).....	3
Scenario II: The Bumpy Road (Mangaragach).....	6
Scenario III: Spring (Tsedey).....	8

Introduction

Over the past half-century, Ethiopia has been at a crossroads more than once. The 1974 Revolution offered a clear break from the past. But the totalitarian dictatorship that ensued clouded the aspirations for a democratic order; the consensus of 1974 gave way to a bloody civil war. That dark period seemed to have ended with the institution of a new order in 1991, when an order that promised equality for the country's nationalities appeared to have dawned. Yet, the constitution that followed, much as it formally guaranteed civil liberties, opened a contentious chapter in the country's history that remains unresolved. The underlying tension between regional autonomy and central control inevitably led to the widespread protests of 2015-17, culminating in the change of government in 2018.

However, the euphoria that attended that change concealed an underlying tension between the old and the new order. This scenarios project was conceived at the dawn of the period of hope and executed during the troubled times that followed. It is the outcome of a partnership between the Forum for Social Studies (FSS) and the Society for International Development (SID) that began in 2021. Scenario building is a challenging undertaking, even under the best of circumstances. The Ethiopian case has had more than its fair share of challenges. This became particularly evident as the team shifted from the background study to drafting the scenarios. The uncertainty of the situation dictated a modest time frame of ten years for the projected scenarios. Anything shorter would be meaningless; anything longer would be unrealistic.

The findings of the background study, which was divided for convenience under the three significant rubrics of historical-cultural, political, and economic, were presented at a workshop held on 10 May 2022. Participants in this workshop came from a broad cross-section of Ethiopian society – academics, public figures, representatives of political parties, civil society, and the private sector, and youth.

What are Scenarios?

Scenarios are imaginative stories of the future that describe alternative ways the present might evolve over a given period. The best scenarios are based on strong research and acute intuitive insight from diverse people. They describe what must be faced in the future – things that are 'pre-determined' or 'inescapable' – but also identify what is most important and uncertain, describing how these uncertainties might evolve. Scenarios are increasingly created through collaborative learning processes and used to stimulate debate on important public issues.

Ethiopia is going through very changeable and uncertain times. Leadership at all levels is groping for new and durable answers to problems that have challenged its polity for decades. This need for new understanding and direction also comes when governments and politicians in Africa are mistrusted, a product of years of dictatorship, conflict, and failed policies that have left communities fragile and struggling to meet their development targets. Polarisation in society is likely to increase when there persists a distrust of government, a weak social fabric, and lingering perceptions of unfairness – all elements present within contemporary Ethiopia.

In this respect, the national capacity for political agreement is more important than ever. The ability to agree – hopefully through democratic processes rather than through coercive authoritarian rule – is the first critical foundation of the development process. For much of the past five decades, the capacity for political agreement has been missing in most African countries, Ethiopia included. Our history of strong-man rule, dominant one-party states, and highly centralized governments has weakened the natural capacity of society to negotiate priorities and shared resources. Scenario processes, which increase the skills and opportunities of dialogue, are one response. Previous scenario processes elsewhere on the continent have sown the seeds for broader personal and collective engagement by citizens in shaping their future.

In an Ethiopia that faces a challenging and potentially exciting future, the scenarios are perhaps a first step on what will certainly be an adventurous journey of exploration and discovery. In this study, three possible scenarios are proposed: YeHamle Chelema (the "Dark Days of Winter"), Mangaragach, suggestive of a bumpy course, and Tsedey ("Spring"). The central question our scenarios seek to respond to is: **how might the political transitions underway in Ethiopia turn out? And with what outcomes?** The draft scenarios were presented at a three-day workshop on 2-4 December 2022 at the Kuriftu Resort (Bishoftu). They are now presented in the hope that they will provide valuable inputs to decision-makers and all those who have a stake in the country's future.

Background and the Current Situation

Historical and Cultural

The Ethiopian state has shown remarkable resilience over millennia. It has weathered multiple stresses and strains to re-emerge in a modified form but with its essential features still recognizable. In more recent times, rising ethnic nationalism, conflicts and the weakening of the political centre brought anxiety about the continuation of Ethiopian unity. We could project three scenarios: political

fragmentation, weakened national unity with competing de facto authorities and strengthening of national unity. Closely related to this is the issue of identity, which has been a serious bone of contention in the past three decades or so.

Ethiopia is home to the two major religions: Christianity and Islam. Both trace their origins to the first millennium. Except for a decade of tumultuous civil war in the sixteenth century, Orthodox Christianity and Islam have co-existed peacefully. The relationship between Orthodox Christianity and Pentecostalism has been more adversarial than conflictual. Given this background, what are the possible scenarios that one could anticipate?

The Horn has been a sub-region of discord and conflict. Conflicting hegemonic aspirations, boundary disputes, irredentism and the GERD have all played their parts in breeding tension. Yet, its peoples have been so much interdependent. What does the future hold for this troubled sub-region?

Political

Ethiopian political history is rife with authoritarianism. Authoritarianism is embedded in the political culture of the country. The hierarchical and patriarchal characteristics of Ethiopian social and political organisations, including the family, as well as the absence of institutions that could restrain the excesses of government, continue in one way or another to contribute to the perpetuation of authoritarianism. Lack of a culture of compromise by the political forces and the failure to meaningfully address demands for structural changes continue to frustrate efforts of democratisation.

The conflict landscape in the country is complex. The civil war in Tigray, which started in November 2020 and later on expanded to Amhara and Afar regions, caused the death and displacement of millions of people. In addition, there is also an ongoing insurgency in Western and Central Oromia by the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA), dubbed Shené by the government and branded as terrorist. There are also tensions and conflicts in other parts of the country over a range of issues, including the formation of new regions (in the Southern Region) and contestation over territory and resources.

Ethnic federalism is one of the most controversial issues in Ethiopian politics. Corruption has reached unprecedented and almost uncontrollable proportions. Its intractability is attributed to the collusion of officials with merchants and brokers.

Economic

Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the world. Agriculture dominates the economy. But rural land holding, which is on average about half hectare, is declining and landlessness is growing. Conflict and natural disaster have resulted in huge destruction of productive human life and economic assets. On the positive side, after the 1991 regime change, encouraging developments (such as infrastructure and GDP growth) had occurred. Privatization of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) has also started. The move is designed to transfer, either partly or wholly, mega corporations to private ownership. The process has accelerated after the change of government in 2018, when what is termed as Home Grown Economic Reform (HGER) was initiated.

The negative impact of climate change on the economy is currently of growing concern. The areas receiving sufficient belg rains (traditionally occurring between the months of February and April) have contracted by 16%, exposing densely populated areas in the Rift Valley to chronic food insecurity. Moreover, the areas receiving sufficient rains during the main rainy season (between June and September) has also contracted, putting many of the same populations under stress. Poor crop performance in the south-central and eastern midlands and highlands could directly affect the livelihoods of many of these people and at the same time exert pressure on the national cereal price.

Another serious problem is inflation that is spiralling out of control, rising unemployment and increasing deterioration of living standards. Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Africa and has a population of over 120 million people, with an annual population growth rate of 2.5%. A huge investment on human capital development is needed to take advantage of the growing demographic dividend.



Scenario I: The Dark Days of Winter (*YeHamle Chelema*)

The prospect of disintegration

Frightening as the prospect is, the disintegration of the country into separate units is not beyond the realm of possibility. While the federal government's conflict with the TPLF is currently showing encouraging signs of peaceful resolution, the latter's ally, the OLA, is expanding its operations in different parts of the country, sometimes quite close to the capital, massacring both Oromo and non-Oromo. Nor does the ruling party, Prosperity Party (PP), have the necessary coherence to govern the country effectively and with one voice. In effect, the EPRDF legacy has endured and the various components of PP have started emphasizing their

separate identity: Amhara Prosperity, Oromo Prosperity, etc. There is a genuine fear that the future internal war will be between the Oromo and the Amhara.

Not only have the constituent elements of Ethiopia's ethnic federation began to forge a separate identity but they have also established a sizable military force within their respective regions, in a situation somewhat akin to the Zamana Masafent. In the event of political disagreements spiralling into armed conflict, the country can be engulfed in a veritable civil war on multiple fronts. Although the Ethiopian state has been resilient in the past, this is no guarantee that it will continue to remain so in the future. We are witnessing the recurrent senseless killing of citizens and the government's

inability to protect them. In such circumstances, one cannot confidently predict the continued resilience of the nation.

On top of the political divisions, there are also religious divisions. For instance, the Orthodox Church in Tigray was trying to break away from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), just as there was an attempt earlier to create a separate Oromo Orthodox Church. The recent forays by the al Shabaab in Eastern Ethiopia, even if checked for now, could continue in different ways and threaten stability in the region. Due to all the above stresses, it is likely that the central state could collapse and warlords of different kinds could emerge. The collapse of the central state could inspire the formation of independent states following the boundaries of the existing regions. The whole situation is complicated by the strong interest of foreign and regional countries who think that their interest could be served well by a weaker and internally divided Ethiopia. Hence, there is the likelihood for direct and indirect intervention by foreign forces.

Accentuation of Ethno-nationalist identity

The general feeling is that ethno-nationalist identity has become too entrenched to be dismissed lightly. Regional states have been established on that basis and a governing elite has been created. The regional elites are determined to hang on to that power not so much to satisfy their quest for ethno-nationalist identity but because they do not want to relinquish the attendant privileges and perks. Ethno-nationalist movements have stuck to the principle of self-determination of nationalities primarily because they recognized its value in mobilising their respective constituencies in the struggle for political and economic ascendancy.

The outbreak of war in November 2020 and the atrocities that attended it accentuated Tigrayan nationalism even more. Conversely, the depredations that attended the TPLF offensive into the Amhara Region have ignited an unprecedented level of Amhara ethno-nationalism. This sentiment has been most pronounced among the paramilitary group known as the Fanno. In the process, the Oro-Mara (Oromo-Amhara) movement that had been the bedrock of the change of government in 2018 has come under severe test. The tensions have been exacerbated by the mass killings and displacement of Amhara in the Oromia Region by the OLA and the not so convincing steps

taken by the federal and the Oromia regional governments to put an end to these atrocities.

Under this scenario - the autonomy of the ethnic regions will be more enhanced and the federal government's powers will decline. Essentially, there are two factors that could make this scenario likely. The first is the wider autonomy that is given to the sub-national units by the federal Constitution. Second, the ethno-national character of Ethiopia's federalism could make such a scenario more likely. With the decline in the ability of the national government to provide security, ethno-nationalist movements could not only fill the security vacuum but also present themselves as guarantors of security to their ethnic constituencies and demand for more power from the federal government.

Clash of Religions

There are disturbing signs that inter-faith conflict could be a recurrent feature in the coming decade. A number of incidents that occurred recently have been adduced as corroboration: Motta town in eastern Gojjam in December 2019, Gondar in April 2022 on the occasion of the funeral of a venerated Muslim sheikh, and Addis Ababa soon after. These apparently isolated incidents presage a clash of religious fundamentalisms, both Islamic and Christian, with social media fanning and abetting hatred and discord. Religious holidays in particular have become flash points of inter-faith conflict.

Escalation of Conflict in the Horn

The Somali jihadist group Al Shabab, which exported its attacks to Kenya and Uganda, has of late started making incursions into Ethiopian territory as well. The war in Tigray has also cast a shadow over the relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea, which started with so much promise in the summer of 2018. While Eritrea has an interest in crushing the TPLF militarily, Ethiopia has compelling reasons to resolve the conflict peacefully, as demonstrated by the November 2022 Pretoria peace agreement. This peace agreement between the federal government and the TPLF could lead to tension between Isayas and Abiy and the possible unravelling of the highly personalized rapprochement. Another possible scenario revolves around the trajectory that a post-Isayas Eritrea will take. There is thus a possibility, however far-fetched it might appear now, of a Tigray-Eritrea alliance that could severely test Ethiopia.

The occupation of the disputed boundary zone between Ethiopia and the Sudan by Sudanese forces in December 2020 opens a new chapter of confrontation that could escalate into full-scale war. Coupled with this is the controversy around the GERD. Egypt's abiding strategy has been to destabilise Ethiopia by all means, particularly after GERD became a reality. It does not wish to see Ethiopia emerging as the hegemon in northeast Africa, thereby relegating it to secondary status.

The Spectre of Authoritarianism

It is plausible that the country will witness the emergence of authoritarian rule in the next decade. The country's political culture, the inability of political leaders to develop the art of political compromise and their failure to address demands for structural changes will all contribute to this end. The political openings that happened after the 1974 revolution and the 1991 change of the regime were closed down, and new forms of authoritarian rule emerged. Likewise, it is plausible that the post-2018 political reforms, which initially generated strong optimism, will revert to the country's long-standing authoritarian tradition. Institutions that could restrain the power of leaders are lacking. Few CSOs could challenge the authoritarian tendencies of the government. Ethnic division, which prevents the development of wider solidarity across ethnic lines, also reinforces authoritarianism.

Authoritarianism is being presented as an antidote to the turbulence and instability that political transitions inevitably bring about. The post-2018 opening of the political space appears to be closing down and the government has reverted to the old tactics of cracking down on opposition voices, particularly the media. State-owned media more or less echo the viewpoint of the ruling party. In such a setting, personalised authoritarianism could be a likely scenario.

Widespread Extreme Poverty

Past governments have shown little readiness to eliminate the barriers to a peaceful and inclusive development system, which could have facilitated sustainable economic growth and development. Widespread conflict and failure to implement development projects have been obstacles to economic growth. The suspension of the country from the African Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA) that gives duty-free access to the American market and the EU's cessation of budgetary support to the Ethiopian government have exacerbated the shortage of the much-needed foreign exchange. Unemployment, especially urban youth unemployment, will continue to rise to unbearable levels. These undesirable conditions will create further deterioration, likely resulting in expanded poverty as the number of people living below the poverty line might increase to well above the current rate of 23.5%.

Overwhelming climate change

Due to uncertainties, no global mitigation target can be met in the next ten years. There is, therefore, the likelihood of a severe climatic change in the form of prolonged flooding or severe drought that will negatively affect the economy. This will result in large human, livestock and production loss. Mass displacements and migration will be the outcome.

Inflation

At the current inflation rate, one will have to pay 1400 nominal Birr after a year for an item which costs 1000 Birr today. Intermediaries will continue to syphon off the surplus, impoverishing the farmers and the urban poor. The failure to contain inflation will aggravate corruption as one of the contributory factors for it has been the desire to cope with the spiralling prices of goods. In a worst-case scenario, it might even lead to the collapse of the government, as happened in Brazil and Chile in the 1960s and 1970s.



Scenario II: The Bumpy Road (*Mengeragech*)

A second scenario is the continuation of the current uncertain situation for the next ten years as the country's problems are too intractable to find immediate resolution. Although a peace deal has been brokered between the TPLF and the federal government, some thorny issues still remain. These include contested claims over Walqayt (or Western Tigray in TPLF parlance) and the Rayya region. The instability created by the OLA in the Oromia Region is also likely to continue.

The Government's measures to check inflation amount to little more than palliatives. And the powers that be are implicated in that speculation, making it well-nigh impossible to control inflation. It is conceivable, therefore, that inflation will continue to make life difficult for most Ethiopians, resulting in lower living standards, or even starvation in extreme cases. It will also make the checking of corruption well-nigh impossible.

Decentralised despotism

In this scenario, a different kind of authoritarianism in which the regions play a pivotal role will emerge. As a result of the strengthening of the powers of the regions and the emergence of regional and sub-regional political forces outside of the government, there is a high possibility of the emergence of a new type of authoritarianism which is decentralised. The central state continues but its power and influence over the

regions are minimal. A likely outcome is the continuation of the ruling party in power at the centre with the support of the federal army. But conflicts are going to continue.

The Continuation of Ethnic Federalism

Under this scenario, the federal system will be maintained but without reforms. Ethnicity will remain the key organising device of the federal system, albeit without its destabilising impacts. Demands for creating new regions and sub-regional entities and disputes over territory, boundary and identity between neighbouring regions will continue to cause tensions and violent conflicts. Inability to protect the rights of intra-regional minorities will persist and inter-ethnic tensions within the ethnic regions will continue. Acrimonious relations between or among the three larger regions – Oromia, Amhara and Tigray – will continue to affect stability in the country significantly. Regional states would strengthen their autonomy but allow the continuation of the national government. One reason that would militate against the complete disintegration of the country is the impossibility of gaining international recognition.

Continued Tension between Ethno-nationalism and pan-Ethiopianism

Ethnic identity will likely continue to prevail for some time to come, thereby putting pan-Ethiopian identity

under severe test. Therefore, it would be very difficult to see pan-Ethiopianism being ascendant any time soon. Any attempt to dismantle the current ethno-federalist structure overnight might well be a recipe for further cycles of violence. The incumbent regime could use ethno-nationalism and pan-Ethiopianism conveniently to mobilise popular support. The problems that citizens face living and working in different parts of the country will continue. Hence, the aspiration for an overarching Ethiopian citizenship reconciled with ethnic identity will not be realised.

Continuation of the Current Inter-Faith Tension

This scenario envisages the continuation of the current tension without necessarily sliding into an all-out religious conflict. What strengthens this speculation is that the tension is isolated rather than generic, sporadic rather than sustained. It is mainly instigated by individual acts, sometimes intended to provoke widespread confrontation.

Continued Stalemate in the Horn

The rapprochement between Eritrea and Ethiopia has brought too many dividends for both parties to be reversed completely. Relations with Somalia would probably not see any dramatic developments for the worse. The unprecedented incursions of Al Shabab into Ethiopian territory also pose a new danger. On the other hand, it might well augur the debilitation, if not the end, of the terrorist organisation. The Ogaden, far from being the springboard for Somali irredentist aggression (as in 1977), has now evolved into a bulwark of Ethiopian sovereignty.

It is also unlikely that Ethiopia and the Sudan will go into full-scale war on the issue of the boundary or GERD. The Sudanese incursion in December 2020 was an opportunistic act resorted to while Ethiopia was embroiled in the Tigray conflict. Its ongoing political turmoil will also prevent it from venturing into more adventurous acts. So, the current stalemate will likely continue for some time. Nor is the GERD likely to lead to a full-scale war between Egypt and the Sudan on the one side and Ethiopia on the other. In any case, Sudan has not been as vocal and vehement as Egypt in its opposition to the dam. Even the Egyptians have slackened in their diplomatic offensive. With three fillings of the dam already executed, GERD seems a fait accompli. None of the anticipated injurious effects of the filling have materialised. Egyptian concern will be less about the hydroelectric use of the dam and more about the possible use of the waters of the Nile for irrigation purposes.

Business as Usual in Economic Management

The current inflationary situation and the challenging economic reality might not move the people into mass

protests, and the country might continue with the current situation. The economy might show some progress, but uncertainty on the part of investors and all economic agents might result in sluggish growth. Still, higher poverty, low per-capita income, lower economic well-being and dependency on foreign aid might remain the country's main economic characteristics over the next ten years.

Land privatization is implausible because the land issue has been evolving in a complex way. Thus, land tenure reform subsequently resulting in sale and purchase is an unlikely policy option in the coming decade. It is also argued that wealth creation through land privatisation will be inequitable. Even a change of government may not bring about the privatisation of land. Few opposition political parties advocate a policy of privatisation of land ownership.

Ineffective Privatisation of Mega Companies

In recent years, the government has shown an inclination to privatise some of the major state-owned enterprises. These moves will be accelerated with the ongoing Forex crunch and the rapprochement with the Western powers that the recent peace deal envisages. However, these privatisation moves are not without their problems. Privatisation will create massive unemployment and will create more inequality. Thus, it is highly probable that existing state enterprises will remain in the hands of the government during the coming decade.

Inability to sufficiently counter climate Change
Many areas of Ethiopia will maintain moist climate conditions, and agricultural development in these areas could help offset the decline in rainfall and reduced production in other areas. Adaptation is limited and no global targets of mitigation have been achieved. The recurrent drought and flooding might continue in Ethiopia. Thus, owing to these uncertainties, the negative impact of climate change will, at best, stay at the current level over the next ten years.

Ineffective Policy against Inflation

In Ethiopia, inflation is a structural problem and requires approaches different from the usual aggregate demand/supply model. The Ethiopian economy is still characterised by backward subsistence agriculture, weak institutions, underutilisation of natural resources, and frequent conflict. It is to be recalled that, over the past decades, inflation was in double digits for several years. Inflation is a phenomenon embedded in the Ethiopian economy. It is caused by structural factors such as violent conflict, resource gap, low food production, foreign exchange and infrastructural bottlenecks, excessive aggregate demand and speculation. The scenario envisages that curbing these structural elements will take longer, and inflation will continue.



Scenario III: Spring (*Tsedey*)

Resurgence

The third scenario is the resolution of all the stresses and strains that have bedevilled the country and the emergence of a resilient Ethiopia. The problems that the country currently faces might seem dire. But, in the longer perspective, they are not insurmountable. Contributing to that re-emergence would be the faith of its people in the country's endurance quality and the building of a national army that is reflective of its diversity and yet determined to ensure its essential unity. Another significant development is the establishment of a National Dialogue Commission. The care and method with which the Commission has set out to execute its mandate seem to augur well for its success. Already, government

and non-governmental agencies, including Civil Society organisations and foreign donors, are organising activities designed to provide valuable inputs to the Commission's deliberations.

The Pre-eminence of Inclusive Pan-Ethiopianism

The country's historical experience suggests that pan-Ethiopianism will eventually re-emerge triumphant. The legacy of the Adwa victory, the national rallying to reverse Somali aggression in 1977/78, during the Ethio-Eritrean War of 1998-2000 and again in 2020-21 during the federal government's confrontation with the TPLF, are clear demonstrations of this. Pan-Ethiopianism may be battered under the barrage of ethno-nationalist assault. But it tends to rise once again from the ashes.

Three of the athletes who raised the Ethiopian flag high on the global stage at the 18th World Athletic Championships hail from Tigray, the hotbed of the recent crisis in the country. Just as generations of Oromo athletes have succeeded in putting Ethiopia high on the pedestal of global athletics, a generation of Tigrayan athletes is raising the country to new athletic heights. What the performance of Ethiopian athletes throughout the years underscores is the gap between the perceptions of the elites and the commoners. Ethno-nationalism has generally been the preserve of the political elites.

However, pan-Ethiopianism is bound to re-emerge in a redefined shape. Rather than the strident form in which it manifested itself in the past, it will accommodate ethno-nationalist sentiments. One can thus visualise a scenario where the contradiction between the two apparently antithetical sentiments will be resolved through mutual accommodation. Accordingly, the federal Constitution will be revised to engender an inclusive pan-Ethiopianism that enshrines overarching citizenship while acknowledging the rights of nationalities to exercise their languages and cultures freely and to enjoy self-administration. Regional constitutions will be revised so that they recognise the rights of minorities to reside in peace and to work freely.

That sanity could prevail amid ethnic discord was demonstrated by the Gamo Elders of Arba Minch in September 2018. Their success in averting a vengeful bloodbath and destruction of property won the elders universal accolade. Nor are such traditional methods of conflict resolution unique to the Gamo. Many Ethiopian nationalities have a rich tradition of governance and conflict resolution. These are assets that will help to resolve the inter-ethnic tension that is prevalent now.

Inclusive and participatory political settlement

An authoritarian system – be it personal or decentralised – is untenable at present because of a range of factors. The post-2015 chain of events in Ethiopia shows that authoritarian rule cannot guarantee long-term stability. Another feature of the current political landscape that makes the formation of inclusive politics likely is the inability of one political group to impose its will on others. Such a settlement is likely to involve power sharing arrangements which could either be based on electoral results or could emerge without elections. The type and essence of inclusive political settlement that could emerge in Ethiopia in the next ten to twenty years will be determined by the power dynamics on the ground. As the ability of one party to win and take all the spoils of victory is limited, both the ruling party and the major contending parties may enter into negotiation.

Several factors reinforce this scenario, including the dire state of the economy, international pressures and public fatigue.

Peaceful Coexistence of Religions

Contrary to the grim first scenario, there are indications that the long history of peaceful coexistence and inter-faith harmony will prevail. The country's experience indicates that a clash of religions on a grand scale is unlikely. Even amidst the current tense relations, there have been remarkable examples of inter-faith harmony. Another encouraging development is the emergence of inter-faith institutions designed to resolve religious disputes. The existence of these institutions will contribute to the fostering of harmony and the peaceful co-existence of religions.

Multinational Federalism

Under this scenario, the federal system will be maintained but with essential reforms. The reforms could address the design and implementation challenges of the federal system. Democratisation of state-society relations would have a salutary effect on federalism, as genuine federalism cannot be imagined without democracy. Two significant reforms under this scenario would help bring about a multinational federal system and promote overarching national unity and citizenship. The first is the removal of the secession clause from the Constitution. The second would be the breaking up of the larger ethnic regions into several smaller units. The reduction of the asymmetry of power between the ethnic regions through reform would help to bring greater stability.

Sub-regional Integration

Under the best of circumstances, the Horn of Africa has all the ingredients for sub-regional integration. Many of the peoples of the sub-region have cross-boundary affiliations. In addition to the linguistic and ethnic affinities, the countries of the sub-region are economically interdependent. It is not surprising, therefore, that the idea of a confederation of the Horn was mooted more than once. In 1977, Fidel Castro, a friend of both Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia and Siyaad Barre of Somalia, envisaged a tripartite federation of Ethiopia, Somalia and Yemen. Much more recently, Prime Minister Abiy initiated a tripartite rapprochement between Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia. Although not clearly articulated, the idea of a confederation of the Horn, or at any rate of the three countries, appeared to be on the agenda.

Economic Prosperity

Ethiopia achieved one of the fastest growth rates globally from 2010-2019, showing its potential for continued fast economic growth. Enhancing agricultural productivity is one of the major focus areas of government policy, and the current expansion of irrigated wheat production and mechanisation of farming is one of the positive contributions to food security and improved well-being. The Green Legacy project, which has resulted in the planting of billions of trees so far, will counter adverse climatic change and contribute to sustainable development. Moreover, the efforts to build national consensus through the National Dialogue Commission and the resolution of conflicts can create the highly-needed peace and stability for investment and free movement of factors of production and trade. Ethiopia will attract more internal and external private investment, employment opportunities will be expanded, technological development will be enhanced, environmental protection measures will be effectively implemented, trade and foreign cooperation will be strengthened, and there will be a fast overall economic growth.

The Private Sector will become a Driving Force

The Government could provide more support to the private sector to facilitate the conditions for a competitive

economy. The government could, for instance, facilitate the establishment of public-private partnerships (PPPs) which, if properly implemented and regulated, could result in improved performance and development. Better diplomatic relations will ease the negative international pressure. The government will get much-needed foreign exchange and investment, and there might be a substantial economic upturn. The government might effectively pursue an inclusive economic reform, implement an effective anti-corruption policy and strategy, improve incomes, particularly for those at the lower end of the wage spectrum and stabilise the economy.

The Grow Green Drive

The Ethiopian Government has already put in place several policies, strategies and programs aimed at enhancing the adaptive capacity and reducing climate variability and change. Application of new environmentally friendly production methods will put the economy in a more resilient and robust industrial position. Concerning macroeconomic stability, the Government would successfully counter inflation with improved public budget management, improved monetary and trade policy, and peaceful settlement of all domestic conflicts.

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