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*Antonio Poncela Sacho**

Ethiopia 2021: a new stage in the difficult journey from “Ethniopia” to “Pan-Ethiopia”?

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Abstract:

Ethiopia has many particularities, within the fragile regional situation in the Horn of Africa. The ethnic-based political system is being modified into a more centralized system. The struggle for power has new components since last November, when the disputes between *Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)* and the federal government turned into an armed conflict. Besides, Ethiopia is in a complex situation, as it has other issues in the region, such as his confrontations for the use of the water of Blue Nile, and its searches for seaports. While the escalation of the violence has already caused the exodus of thousands of Ethiopians to neighboring countries, the international public opinion is focused on the next general elections, scheduled for June 2021.

Keywords:

Water resources, ethnicity, exodus, elections, regional security.

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Introduction

Modern history of Africa is closely related to the word crisis. Its artificial borders – a direct colonial heritage - caused fragile geopolitical balances, where the instability of one State can be easily reproduced in neighbor countries. But it is worth mentioning that Ethiopia has some characteristics that make it a *rara avis*. Despite its situation in the Horn of Africa, it did not suffer from colonialism as much as other countries, and nowadays it has largely avoided jihadist terrorism. However, there are other factors that generate a constant source of instability, which influence the peaceful relations between its peoples, and also with its environment.

During the current year, Ethiopians will elect their new representatives in the federal parliament. The elections were scheduled for August 2020, but they were delayed due to COVID19¹. This decision generated a series of internal tensions, mostly with the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), predominant political party in the region, and which was confronted with the government since it abandoned the ruling coalition in 2018.

The increasing tension between both governments, federal and regional, resulted in the breakup of hostilities in past November. In response to an attack on a military base, the federal army carried out a military operation, allegedly made by the TPLF².

These events, together with other regional controversies, have tarnished the initial achievements of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the implementation of his reformist and inclusive agenda in 2018.

This article proposes a review of some of the main confrontations that take place in Ethiopia, which will determine the clues of the first time that Prime Minister Ahmed will go for elections. Some of them are the predominance of ethnic cleavages at the internal level, and the use of water resources, especially the desired access to seaports and the construction of the Great Renaissance Dam, at the regional level.

¹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/3/31/ethiopia-postpones-august-elections-due-to-coronavirus>

² <https://elpais.com/internacional/2020-11-04/etiopia-se-situa-al-borde-de-la-guerra-civil.html>

Geographical factor: the battle for water

The struggle for water is one of the main destabilizing factors in Ethiopia. Although it houses the source of the mighty Blue Nile, the constant droughts and “the lack of human and material resources”³ make Ethiopia one of the African countries whose water resources are scarcest. Besides, Ethiopia has no direct access to the sea since Eritrea achieved its independence in 1993.

The geography of the Red Sea, in between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, makes it one of the main world shipping routes. The great economic development of Ethiopia in recent years⁴ is hindered by the difficulties for engaging in to international trade, as it does not have direct access to conventional maritime traffic.

Nowadays, its principal seaport is Djibouti, which has become not only a hub for maritime transport, but also for regional security, as Western countries and supranational organizations have established military bases. China has also special interests in the zone, indeed it has invested in infrastructures for commercial and strategic interests. One of the main projects is the railway that connects Addis Ababa with Djibouti, the first finished within the modernization plans of Ethiopian government⁵.

On the other hand, Ethiopia has signed a peace treaty with Eritrea, but their relations are strongly conditioned by the Ethiopian desire to use Eritrean seaports. In fact, this necessity of access to the sea has been, in the past, one of the main arguments to justify a total annexation of the Eritrean territory⁶. These improving relations since Abiy Ahmed arrival to Ethiopian government have given Eritrean ports a high strategic importance, although a prior stabilization of North Ethiopia is required. The infrastructures that link

³ JARAMILLO-MARÍN, Ruby Stella, “Factores que Contribuyen a la Escasez del Agua en Etiopía y Somalia”, Saber Ciencia y Libertad 14, diciembre 2019. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338167501_Factores_que_Contribuyen_a_la_Escasez_del_Agua_en_Etiopía_y_Somalia, Consulted: 21/12/2020

⁴ BAQUÉS, Josep, “La (cruda) realidad del Cuerno de África: los problemas internos de Etiopía y Somalia”, Documento de Investigación del Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos, abril 2020. Available at: http://www.ieeee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_investig/2020/DIEEEEINV05_2020cuerno.pdf. Consulted: 27/12/2020

⁵ <https://thediomat.com/2018/02/china-and-ethiopia-part-2-the-addis-ababa-djibouti-railway/>

⁶ WIESNER, Verena, “Eritrea” Max Planck Encyclopedias of International Law, Julio 2009. Available at <https://opil.ouplaw.com/view/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e1281>. Consulted: 13/12/2020

both countries needs to be repaired, as they were severely injured during the war that took place between 1998 and 2000.

The second factor related to water that determines the regional stability, is the construction of the Great Dam of the Ethiopian Renaissance (GERD). "The importance of the water resources offered by the Nile has a paramount importance for all the riverside states"⁷ Ethiopia intends to become the main generator of hydroelectric power in the region with this vast project, but the neighboring countries have opposite opinions. There is no “legal framework accepted by all the riverside States”⁸, and some countries oppose to it firmly, such as Egypt, which could lose its status of main regional actor, as the water coming from the Blue Nile to its territory would be reduced drastically⁹.

In the last ten years, Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia have not been able to reach an agreement on the future exploitation of the resources of the Nile, and the trilateral dialogue without a common solution continues¹⁰. In the last ten years, Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia have not been able to reach an agreement on the future exploitation of the resources of the Nile, and the trilateral dialogue without a common solution continues. For Ethiopia and the coming elections, the GERD is more than an issue of electricity supply. The Great Dam is becoming a symbol of Ethiopian national pride, which helps to build a more united and cohesive Ethiopia¹¹.

⁷ TORRES AMURGO, Lluís, “Guerras hídricas: cooperación y conflicto en la cuenca del Nilo”, Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos, Documento de Opinión 37/2019. Available at: http://www.ieeee.es/publicaciones-new/documentos-de-opinion/2019/DIEEEO37_2019LLUTOR-Nilo.html, Consulted: 29/12/2020

⁸ HIDALGO, MAR, “La Gran Presa del Renacimiento: entre la sed de Egipto y el desarrollo de Etiopía”, Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos, Documento de Análisis 23/2020. Available at: http://www.ieeee.es/publicaciones-new/documentos-de-analisis/2020/DIEEEA23_2020MARHID_Renacimiento.html, Consulted: 29/12/2020

⁹ WHEELER, Kevin, et al., “Understanding and managing new risks on the Nile with the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam”, Nature Communication, 2020. Available at: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-020-19089-x>, Consulted: 30/12/2020

¹⁰ <https://dailynewsegypt.com/2021/01/04/sudan-boycotts-new-round-of-ethiopian-dam-talks-calls-for-greater-role-to-au-experts/>

¹¹ Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-internacional-43193863>



Figure 1: Main infrastructures of the Horn of Africa

Source : Le Monde Diplomatique. Available at: <https://mondiplo.com/el-cuerno-de-africa-en-la-orbita-de-la-guerra-en>

Anthropological factor: ethnicity as the center of a conflict

In Ethiopia there is a wide diversity of religious manifestations and ethnolinguistic varieties. The religious factor is not an important factor of conflict, Christian (63%) and Muslim (34%) confessions coexist in relative harmony with other minority communities which profess traditional local religions¹². Besides, there is not a relevant movement of radical Islamism, although lately there have been some movements of jihadist cells in Ethiopia, taking advantage of the Tigray conflict¹³.

The main factor that divides Ethiopian peoples is the ethnicity. As a result of an isolated geography, there has been also a social isolation for hundreds of years. This situation has turned into a spirit of independence, where the federal government has limited influence¹⁴. This ethnic disparity is reflected into the language. Although Amharic is the official language for administrative issues, the Ethiopian Constitution “recognizes the equality of all languages”¹⁵, so not every Ethiopians speak Amharic. In order to deal with this Tower of Babel, the government is promoting English as a way of communication for everyone.

The fall of the Derg ¹⁶ regime and the establishment of a federal system in 1991 drew a political map of nine regional states (ten after Sidama's self-determination in 2019), based on the dominant ethnic groups in each territory¹⁷. The new system did not obtain a social consensus, and criticism grew up from the first moment. The composition of the institutions did not satisfy either those who considered that ethnic criteria was a multiplier of the divisions already existing, or the people who agreed with the new model, but denied the unequal and unfair distribution of power. Indeed, the principal beneficiaries were the

¹² <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/ethiopia-population>, Consulted: 2/2/2021

¹³ <https://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-detenido-14-miembros-grupos-yihadistas-preparaban-atentados-etiofia-20201115124043.html>

¹⁴ ADEJUMOBI, Saheed, “The History of Ethiopia”, Greenwood Press, Connecticut, 2006. Consulted: 02/01/2021

¹⁵ BARBOSA DA SILVA, Diego, “Política Lingüística en África: del pasado colonial al futuro global”, Estudios de Asia y África, Vol.46, 2011. Available at: <https://estudiosdeasiayafrika.colmex.mx/index.php/ea/issue/view/154>, Consulted: 3/01/2021

¹⁶ In Amharic language, "committee", Marxist military regime with Soviet influence that ruled Ethiopia from 1974 to 1991.

¹⁷ <https://elordenmundial.com/el-origen-del-nacionalismo-etnico-en-etiofia>. Consulted: 04/01/21

elites of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)¹⁸, dominated by the TPLF¹⁹.

In this sense, Ethiopian democracy can be considered one of those “hybrid regimes, which have combined democratic constitutions with authoritarian behavior by the ruling elites”²⁰. Furthermore, the intended economic and administrative harmonization became a clientelistic network between the central and regional parties²¹. The incorporation of the right to self-determination in the Constitution²² is another element that has alerted regional ethnic groups that enjoy broad autonomous powers, against the idea of centralizing power. They refuse the idea of a reorganization of regional powers.



Figure 2: Regional map of Ethiopia.

Available at: https://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=20888&lang=es

¹⁸ EPRDF was born by the union of organizations opposed to the Derg regime. Apart from the FPLT, it included also: Amhara Democratic Party (ADP), Oromo Democratic Party (ODP) and Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement.

¹⁹ VAUGHAN, Sarah, “Ethnicity and Power in Ethiopia”, PhD The University of Edinburgh, 2003. Consulted: 17-21/12/2020

²⁰ MAGNANI, Victor et VIRCOULON, Thierry, “Vers un retour de l’autoritarisme en Afrique?”, *Institute Français des Relations Internationales Politique étrangère* 2:2019. Available at: <https://www.ifri.org/fr/publications/politique-etrangere/articles-de-politique-etrangere/vers-un-retour-de-lautoritarisme>; Consulted: 23/12/2020

²¹ The Journal of Modern African Studies, Volume 45, Issue 3, 2007. Available at: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-modern-african-studies/article/abs/clientelism-and-ethiopia-post1991-decentralisation/01680AB1A660855C3B2025E8CCEEFDF6>, Consulted: 02/02/2021

²² Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (Art. 39.1: “Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession.”)

The rise to power of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, in 2018, appeared to be a kind of solution to the problem of ethnicity. He was the first “non-Tigrayan” to come to power since the fall of the pro-Soviet regime, and he brought a reformist and open-minded program. Besides, he had the support from international community and was even awarded the Nobel Prize in 2019. But all these changes were not enough: the instability has continued also with Abiy Ahmed, and the ethnic problem has not stopped. The pan-Ethiopian vision, within a multiethnic society, has not many supporters in the own country, and, in some ways, “ethnic confrontations throughout the country, as well as federal claims, have become deeper”²³.

War factor: the conflict in Tigray

Tigray ethnic group, one of the oldest in the Horn of Africa, is formed by approximately nine million people, distributed between Ethiopia and Eritrea, since the latter's independence in 1993. There are about six million of Tigrayans in Ethiopia, which represent 6% of the population²⁴. The rest live in Eritrea²⁵, where Tigrayan, together with Arabic, is the official language.

The political force that has had a biggest impact during the last 50 years is the TPLF. From its origins, it has claimed that in the last centuries, the history of the tigrayans has been a history of submission, not only to the Derg regime, but also to the Amhara elites (as happened during the reign of Menelik II, or Haile Selassie²⁶). This was the reason to organize a resistance against the pro-Soviet regime, constituting, around their organization, the EPRDF. They began coordinating several skirmishes, and over the years they were able to create an army to fight against the government until they

²³ DÍEZ ALCAIDE, Jesús, “Primer ministro Abiy: del Nobel a la paz etíope y regional”, Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos, Documento de análisis 34/2019. Available at: http://www.ieeee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2019/DIEEEA34_2019JOSDIE_Etiopia.pdf,

²⁴ https://theodora.com/wfbcurrent/ethiopia/ethiopia_people.html; Consulted: 02/12/2020

²⁵ https://theodora.com/wfbcurrent/eritrea/eritrea_people.html; Consulted: 02/12/2020

²⁶ “People’s democratic programme of Tigray People’s Liberation Front”, 1983. Available at: <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ethiopia/tigray-program.pdf>; Consulted: 07/12/2020

overthrew it in 1991²⁷.

Neither the Tigrayan’s accession to the government nor the proclaimed new Constitution in 1995, did bring stability or equality. On the contrary, the new government imposed a new model, in which the ethnic matters were the principal element of disputes. They used ethnicity as a tool to make prevail their own interests, and to fight against their opponents²⁸. In the words of Anwar Hassen, “the TPLF promised freedom, democracy and ethnic devolution but became highly centralized and tightly controlled the economy and suppressed political, social, ethnic and religious liberties”²⁹. Although it only represented a minor ethnic group, the TPLF put the major groups Amhara and Oromo in the spotlight.

In this situation, a majority of Ethiopians felt discomfort with the governing elites that did not represent the interest of the population. The last years of the TPLF in the government of Addis Ababa were characterized by continuous skirmishes and violent clashes that were heavily repelled by security forces³⁰.

Finally, the pressure of the majority ethnic groups brought down the government and Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn was replaced by Abiy Ahmed, from the Oromo ethnic group, with reformist and pan-Ethiopian vision. Tigrayans elites were unhappy from the first moment of Ahmed leading the government. They did not accept the principal measures of the new executive, such as the prison policy or the agreements with Eritrea. The increasing erosion of the government coalition ended with the dissolution of the EPRDF. To replace it, the Prime Minister created the new Party of Prosperity, which continued maintaining the power but this time without the participation of the TPLF.

The changes in the ruling party, and the postponement of the federal elections, due to COVID19, were considered unconstitutional by the TPLF, which decided to continue with

²⁷ BERHE, Aregawi, “A Political History of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (1975-1991): Revolt, Ideology and Mobilization in Ethiopia, Amsterdam 2008. Consulted: 12-18/12/2020

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ HASEN TSEGA, Anwar, “The Tigray Identity and the Paradox in the Securitization of the Oromo and Amhara identities in Ethiopia”, *International Journal of African Development (IJAD)* Vol. 5.1, 2018. Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/ijad/vol5/iss1/1/>, Consulted: 05/12/2020

³⁰ DÍEZ ALCAIDE, Jesús, “Primer ministro Abiy: del Nobel a la paz etíope y regional”, Instituto Español de Estudios Estratégicos, Documento de análisis 34/2019. Available at: http://www.ieeee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2019/DIEEEA34_2019JOSDIE_Etiopia.pdf, Consulted: 27/12/2020

the elections within its territory³¹. It considered that the government of Addis Ababa was trying to perpetuate in power. The refusal of the Ethiopian parliament to validate the results of the regional elections in Tigray resulted in the parallel existence of two governments (central and regional) which did not recognize each other. In fact, for the TPLF, the negative to validate the elections could be considered as a "declaration of war"³².

November 4, the escalation of pre-war tension exploded, when the federal government decided to carry out a military operation in the Tigray region, blaming on TPLF forces the attack of a federal army base³³. After three weeks of combats, the federal government declared the situation under control. The central government thought to have concluded the mission with the control of Tigray's capital, Mekele, but it failed to take into account that the principal rebel leaders had escaped, and the conflict was not ended³⁴. The turmoil, clashes and fights have been constant this last period. In late December, the majority of Tigray's regional ministers (those who were members of the TPLF) were replaced by trusted people of the federal government³⁵.

The lack of truthful information, caused by the blackout coming from Addis Ababa has created confusion in the international media, which has difficulties to access reliable information. But it is already verifiable that the short-term consequences of Tigray crisis are devastating. First of all, there is an enormous humanitarian crisis. Ethiopia was traditionally a host country for Eritrean refugees, but now several thousands of Tigrayan population are carrying out an exodus, mainly to Sudan. In addition, the war has aggravated the ongoing famine produced by the drought and the plagues, which have highly reduced cultivations and harvests. Another factor of this situation is the effect of

³¹ “Ethiopia's Tigray Crisis: Domestic and Regional Implications”, Arab Center for Research and Political Studies, 2020. Available at: <https://www.dohainstitute.org/en/PoliticalStudies/Pages/The-Conflict-between-Tigray-and-the-Ethiopian-Federal-Government.aspx>, Consulted: 03/01/2021

³² <https://addisstandard.com/news-tigray-warns-against-obstructing-its-upcoming-election-says-its-tantamount-to-declaration-of-war/>

³³ <https://elpais.com/internacional/2020-11-04/etiopia-se-situa-al-borde-de-la-guerra-civil.html>

³⁴ “La guerra inacabada de Etiopía”. Available at: <https://elpais.com/internacional/2020-12-04/la-guerra-inacabada-de-etiopia.html>

³⁵ <https://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-etiopia-anuncia-composicion-parte-nuevo-gobierno-tigray-ofensiva-contra-tplf-20201224230838.html>

COVID19, as it has caused a decrease of farmers able to work³⁶.

Far from finding a quick solution, the conflict is evolving and transforming every day. Once the regional government has been replaced to restore constitutional order³⁷, the arrests of high-ranking members of the TPLF have become common, as well as the exodus of Tigrayan population to Sudan, and the TPLF claims to an open armed conflict. If the conflict does not terminate soon and in a sustainable manner, Ethiopia’s security is in risk, but also the stability in the whole region. Firstly, Eritrea, whose bilateral relations with Ethiopia have improved over the past two years. Its capital, Asmara, has been bombed while the actual conflict take place, accusing the TPLF of these actions. But Tigrayans blamed the Eritrean government for having crossed the border with its territory in order to participate in the Ethiopian military campaign³⁸. Secondly, Sudan, the country that is hosting the Tigrayans refugees, has exceeded its maximum capacity of reception³⁹. Moreover, there have already been some clashes within the border between Ethiopia and Sudan, and there is a risk of an expansion of the hostilities. Lastly, Egypt, which is facing Ethiopia over the use of Nile waters, has shown its support for Sudan in case the conflict is extended.

Elections 2021: voting in a growing instability

Ethiopia is a federal republic with a bicameral political system and separation of powers. Each Ethiopian region has a similar system to the federation⁴⁰. This system was constituted in 1995, with the promulgation of a new Constitution. Since then, the regular elections have been won by the coalition formed by EPRDF and led by Tigrayan elites, which has had large majorities and the control of most of the regional states⁴¹.

³⁶ Three consequences of the ongoing crisis in Tigray, Ethiopia’s Tigray Crisis: Why Nobel laureate Abiy Ahmed sent his troops to battle”. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55145827>

³⁷ <https://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-etiofia-anuncia-composicion-parte-nuevo-gobierno-tigray-ofensiva-contr-tplf-20201224230838.html>

³⁸ <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20201129-rockets-target-eritrea-capital-after-ethiopia-declares-victory-in-tigray>

³⁹ <https://www.efe.com/efe/espana/mundo/sudan-dice-que-mas-de-50-000-refugiados-etiofes-cruzan-la-frontera-al-huir-tigray/10001-4416796>

⁴⁰ Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, Unión Europea y Cooperación, http://www.exteriores.gob.es/documentos/fichaspais/etiopia_ficha%20pais.pdf. Consulted: 4/01/2021

⁴¹ Centro de Estudios Internacionales Gilberto Bosques, Opinion Paper 20/2021

The situation changed in 2018, with the access to power of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. He is the first Oromo to reach the head of government within the current system. He has changed the balance of power within the governing coalition, finishing with the hegemony of the TPLF, in favor of the Amhara and Oromo elites. His reformist ideas translated into a program favoring economic openness by seeking international support and foreign investment and trying to diversify Ethiopian economy. The constant disagreements with the TPLF, still in the coalition, culminated in 2019, when Abiy Ahmed created the Prosperity Party. This new political option had a pan-Ethiopian ideological basis with the prioritization of centralism over the ethnic model. The TPLF did not adhere to this new party -with the consequent government crisis- and became to be part of the political opposition.

In spite of all these internal destabilizing factors and regional constraints, Ethiopia is beginning to prepare for the federal elections. As indicated above, the vote should have taken place last year but was postponed as a result of COVID-19. As it has already been illustrated, this change in the elections date has also been used as a weapon in the confrontation between Tigrayans elites and the federal government that acceded to power in 2018. Indeed, as Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came to power after the resignation of his predecessor - caused by the massive protests in Oromia and Amhara regions⁴²- he has not run yet for an election himself.

<https://centrogilbertobosques.senado.gob.mx/diplomacia/ficha-pais-mundo>. Consulted: 4/01/2021

⁴² <https://www.lavanguardia.com/internacional/20180215/44800195096/dimite-primer-ministro-etio-ia-hailemariam-desalegn.html>

Antonio Poncela Sacho

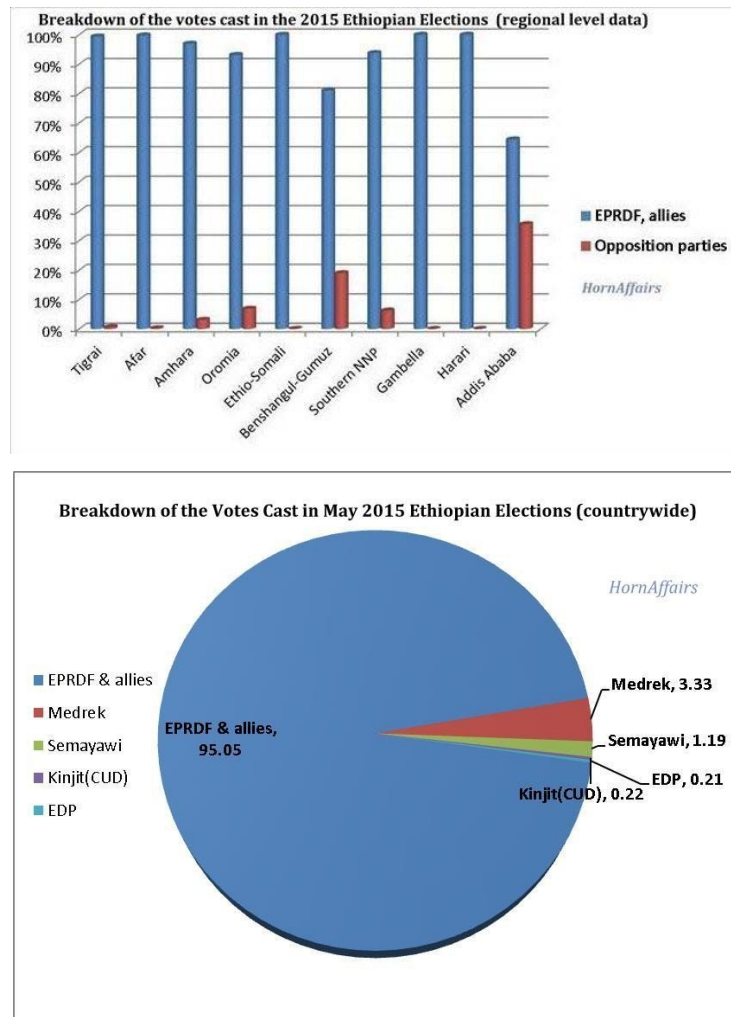


Figure 3: Results of Ethiopian elections, 2015.
 Fuente: Infographics: How Ethiopia voted in 2015. Available at: <https://hornaffairs.com/2015/06/26/charts-ethiopian-elections-popular-votes-countrywide-regional/>

The new date of the elections has been established on June 5 by the National Electoral Board⁴³. The electoral process is starting, the candidatures are being validated, and political parties have a long pre-electoral campaign. But the evolution of the Tigray conflict is now the main issue. The United Nations is claiming the restoration of the rule of law and reconciliation between Ethiopian peoples⁴⁴ but Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed denies the possibility of negotiating with the leaders of TPLF, as has been suggested by the

⁴³ <https://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20201225/6148795/etiopia-celebrara-elecciones-generales-proximo-5-junio.html>

⁴⁴ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1079472>

African Union⁴⁵. The European Union, besides its urge for dialogue, has decided to suspend the planned economic aid for Ethiopia, until the access to Tigray is restored for all humanitarian reasons, the hostilities are ended, and the informative lockdown is finished⁴⁶.

The elections are the first opportunity for the Party of Prosperity to check its popular supports. As a result of the vote, there might be a continuity of the political model based on ethnicity which has endured for the last twenty years, but has not reached the pretended levels of equality. But it can also prosper the emergence of this new pan-Ethiopian model, which implies more centralism.

The initial point indicates that the Prosperity Party has a strong political majority, supported by the strength of the parties that have been integrated in its lists. But the increasing internal problems in recent dates - such as the Tigray conflict - jeopardize the consensus of the respect about the results of the elections.

Conclusions

Ethiopian economy has growth much quicker than civil and social achievements in the last twenty years. The creation of regions based on ethnic divisions has increased the differences between territories. Popular pressure of the majority ethnic groups against the Tigrayan ruling elites had important consequences that finally ended in a change of the leadership in the government of Addis Ababa. The main variation involved the establishment of a pan-Ethiopian vision characterized by an evolution from an ethnic model to a more centralized and cohesive model. In the regional context, Ethiopia made also some improvements with its neighbors of the Horn of Africa, principally with Eritrea. The agreement to end the hostilities between the two countries, and the new neighborhood agreements, were fundamental for Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to be awarded with the Nobel Prize.

But this idyllic vision of the new government of Ethiopia has changed with the daily

⁴⁵ <https://www.efe.com/efe/espana/mundo/el-primer-ministro-etiope-rechaza-negociar-para-acabar-la-guerra-de-tigray/10001-4405758>

⁴⁶ <https://www.reuters.com/article/ethiopia-conflict/eu-delays-90-million-euros-in-aid-to-ethiopia-over-tigray-crisis-document-shows-idUKKBN28Q17C>

exercise of power. The intense regional policy to open new seaports for the Ethiopian trade, the long dispute over the use of the Nile water, and the consequent lack of agreement with Egypt and Sudan regarding the exploitation of the GERD are having an impact in the government. The internal situation is not promising either. While the turmoil of the main majority ethnic groups, mainly Oromo, have not disappeared, the situation in Tigray has gradually become worse. At this point the federal and regional government broke their relations, and Ethiopian army entered into Mekele, the Tigrayan capital, to fight the rebels

The elections that will take place next June are a big question mark. First, Ethiopians have to confirm or deny the new majority of the Prosperity Party. Moreover, with the growing instability, principally in Tigray but also in other regions, there are uncertainties about the respect to the results of the vote.

Leaving aside the question of the electoral result, a wide consensus of all ethnic groups about the cease of the violence is needed. The use of struggle clashes and guerrilla methods to press the government must be avoided. For that reason, it seems necessary to find a constructive role of the TPFL in the new Ethiopian political reality. In any other way, there is a certain risk that the conflict may become international. The crossed accusations between Tigray and Eritrea, or Sudan and Ethiopia, regarding border incursions are clear examples of the escalation of the tension.

The actions taken by international organizations are crucial for the stabilization of Ethiopia. Their decisions to support peacekeeping in the Horn of Africa have an enormous importance. The African Union is pushing hard to be the main mediator of African conflicts, so it is trying to open the negotiations between the federal government and its opponents. But other institutions, such as the European Union or the United Nations, may also take a more active role, with the establishment of non-executive operations that contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights and democratic principles.

*Antonio Poncela Sacho**
Diplomado de Estado Mayor