

## **Changing Electoral System from First-Past-The-Post to Proportional Representation in Ethiopia: Its Outcome on Democratization, Legitimacy, Political Stability and Nation Building**

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### **Abstract**

*The selection of an apposite electoral system has an authoritative stimulus on the process of democratization, and has solemn political implications for representation, legitimacy of government, political stability and nation building. Since the adoption of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopian Constitution in 1995, Ethiopia's electoral system has been based on winner-take-all electoral votes (first-past-the-post/FPTP/) where the candidate who receives more votes than any competitors within a constituency is declared the winner. Following the 2016 political instability, nonetheless, the government had promised the electoral system to be changed albeit no measure has been taken so far. Little has been done whether changing the electoral system has a positive outcome on democratization, legitimacy of government, political stability and nation building. Even these few works have failed to consider the analysis of electoral formulas like the largest Remainder Method using Hare Quota which may have an impact on the proportionality of the outcome of the election result. Hence, this research aimed at investigating whether changing the electoral system from plurality to proportional representation has a positive outcome on the democratization process, political consequences for fair representation, legitimacy, political stability and nation building, by adopting the analysis of largest remainder electoral formula method using Hare quota. The research design is mixed and both descriptive and analytical methods were employed. Data were collected mainly from political parties and the Ethiopian Electoral Board. The study contends that albeit the absence of perfect electoral system, proportional representation (PR) can lead the country to a more open and participatory democratic multi-party system and ensure a fair representation of political and ethnic groups, enhance legitimacy political stability and nation building in a diverse Ethiopia in spite of its inherent weaknesses. By adopting PR electoral system, the pace of democratization process might be broadened thereby political stability, peaceful coexistence of groups and nation building might be enhanced.*

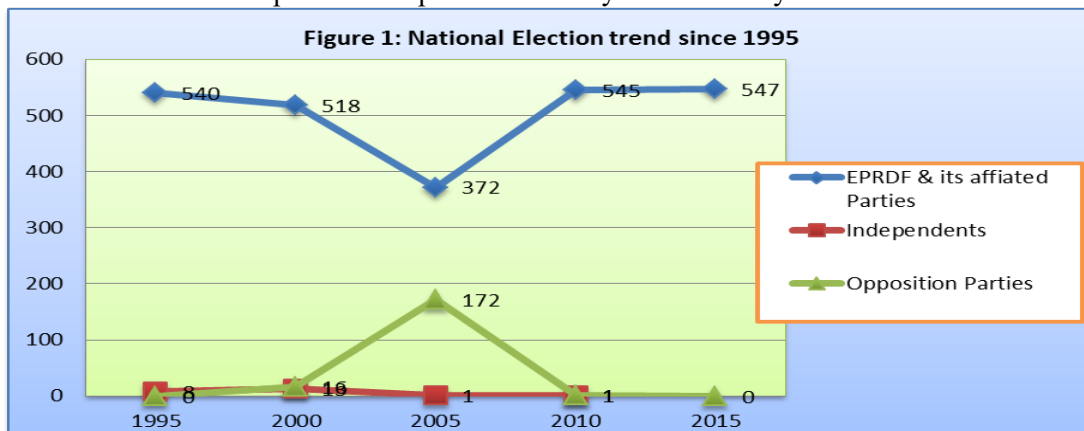
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### **1. Introduction**

Election is a keystone in the establishment of citizenry's political rights. The right to elect one's representatives is democracy's indispensable political foundation, albeit election alone is insufficient to sustain it (Bradley, 2005, p. 407). Hence, the principles of holding free and fair elections are essential elements of democracy. However, the design of electoral system, which translates of the results of an election into seats, is a key constituent of democratic election processes. As Dahl (2000, p. 130) aptly postulates, perhaps there are no political institutions that shape political landscape of a democratic country more than its electoral system and its political parties. Thus, the choice of an appropriate electoral system has a powerful influence on the process of democratization and has serious political consequences for representation, legitimacy of government, political stability and nation building. The design of an electoral system is always influenced by a country's particular conditions, including its history, culture, politics, demographic composition and the views and roles of key actors (Kadima, 2006). If it is done well, electoral system design can add to the

momentum of political change, encourage popular participation, and enable the emergence of legitimate representatives who are capable of handling a wide range of needs and expectations, immediately and in the future (Reynolds, Reilly, Asmal, Birch, and Carey, 2005, p. ii). On the contrary, if it is done badly, it can wreck progress towards democracy or even political stability.

With the coming to power, the EPRDF introduced a multi-party competitive election since 1991. Accordingly, local, regional and national elections have been held in 1992, 1994, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015 and 2021. These elections have been taken place based on winner-take-all electoral votes (first past the post/FPTP) electoral system where the candidate who receives more votes than any competitors within a constituency is declared the winner. In all elections that have been conducted since 1991, nevertheless, the EPRDF and its partners emerged as a single dominant party both at the regional and national councils (Abbink, 2009; Yilmaz and Venugopal, 2008; Olika and Abraham, 2007; Kassahun, 2010; Gudina, 2011). EPRDF's successor Prosperity Party (PP) appeared as a single dominant party at both councils as well. As can be observed from Figure 1, the seats of opposition and independents had been increasing till 2005 while the ruling parties and its affiliated parties decreasing. However, the shares of opposition and independents have been drastically dropped almost to nil in the aftermath of the 2005 election. The successive elections did not give the opposition a chance until 2005 where oppositions obtained substantial seats and won 100% of seats in Addis Ababa though contested. In 2010 and 2015 elections, the EPRDF and its partners controls about 99% and 100% of seats in the federal legislature, respectively, and the system denies the opposition to share seats. This is mainly because of the winner-take-all electoral system Ethiopia adopted that provides a huge and unfair advantage during elections. The ruling party, EPRDF, dominated the executive and legislative branches of the national and local governments and makes sure that there is no room for a real political competition at the national and local levels (Desta, 2017; Yilmaz and Venugopal, 2008). This has political implications that may affect the democratization process and political stability of the country.



When in 1995 the Constitution was adopted, most Ethiopians were little aware of the types of electoral systems nor were they cognizant of the effects of a given electoral system on variables such as political stability and representation. But being aware of the type of electoral systems EPDRF designed the electoral system that promotes its own partisan advantage (Desta, 2017). The winner-takes-all electoral system systematically empowers a single party and excluded opposition parties resulted in the emergence of a single dominant party both at the regional and national councils that has left no space for fair representation. The 100% EPDRF parliamentary is a clear demonstration of this fact. This has affected tremendously the functioning of the political system of

the country. Most of the major political parties such as OLF and CUD boycotted which has affected the legitimacy of the government resulting in unrest in some part of the country.

Few months after the EPRDF declared a 100% victory, wide spread opposition protests in some parts of the country were seen which triggered the government to declare a state of emergency. At the beginning, the EPRDF attributed the protest to the issue of good governance and the issue of justice and high expectation of development. However, later it openly admitted that the political platform has narrowed down over the years because of the first past the post election system the country used (Tesfay, 2016; Ethiopian Herald, 2018). Narrowing down the political space exacerbated the social frustration as people saw nobody representing their thoughts. Accordingly, in 2016 the government announced the electoral system to be changed albeit no practical action has been taken so far.

Changing electoral system is deemed to promote a more transparent and participatory regime that enhances democratization, and have political consequences for representation, legitimacy, political stability and nation building. Given the highly divisive nature of electoral competition, especially in a country where the state is increasingly the sole provider of resources, the engineering of an appropriate electoral system is of utmost importance (Kadima, 2006). The design of a suitable electoral system in the context of Ethiopia would constitute an indispensable step towards the creation of a truly democratic Ethiopia that broaden political space, where various interest and ethnic groups can live in harmony.

However, little has been done whether changing the electoral system would have a positive outcome on the democratization process; political consequences for representation and political stability (Desta, 2016; Tesfay, 2016; Kahsay, 2008, Amedie, 2016). Even these few works have failed to consider the analysis of electoral formulas like the largest Remainder Method using Hare Quota which may have an impact on the proportionality of the outcome of the election result. Hence, this research aims at investigating whether changing the electoral system from plurality to proportional representation would have a positive outcome on the democratization process, political consequences for representation, legitimacy of government, political stability and nation building, adopting the analysis of largest remainders using Hare quota.

This study is organized into four sections. The first introduces the paper. The second describes the types of electoral systems with an emphasis on the theoretical and empirical experience of some countries and their consequences on democracy and political stability, which may inform the choice of an electoral system for Ethiopia. The third section presents the outcome of changing the existing electoral system to PR on the consolidation of democracy, fair representation, legitimacy of government, political stability and nation building in Ethiopia. The last section provides conclusion.

## **Methodology**

Both descriptive and analytical methods are employed and data are analyzed through qualitative dominant approach. Both theoretical and empirical assessments of the types of electoral systems and their impacts on democratization process, political representation and stability are made with the objective of identifying the types of electoral system that is more suitable in the Ethiopian context. Some levels of quantitative data have been employed to analyze and interpret the results of the 2010 and 2015 general elections to assess the allocations of seats received by EPRDF and the opposition

parties, comparing FPTP and PR. The experiences of various countries are outlined to enable Ethiopians to draw lessons and expand their understanding of the political consequences of different electoral systems by considering some criterion applicable to the political, economic, cultural and social situation of the country.

## 2. Electoral Systems: Their Effect on Democracy, Political Stability, Nation Building, Legitimacy and Fair Representation

There are three broad families of electoral systems, namely, the plurality-majority, the semi-proportional, and the proportional. All these electoral systems have relative strengths and weaknesses. The best electoral system is one that suits the country's particular cultural, geographical and political conditions' (Dahl, 2000, p. 133). The choices that are made may have consequences that were unforeseen as well as effects which were predicted (Reynolds *et al*, 2005, p. 1). The choices may not always be the best ones for long-term political health of the country concerned. For the purpose of this work, only two main types of electoral systems – namely, first past the post (FPTP) used in Ethiopia and proportional representation (PR electoral systems and their consequence on democracy, political stability, nation building, legitimacy, and fair representation. are considered for comparison.

### 2.1 First-Past-The-Post (FPTP)

The FPTP falls under the plurality-majority family and is used in countries like the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Kenya, India, Canada, Botswana, Malawi, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe as well as Ethiopia. It is also known as 'Single Member Plurality, 'winner-takes-all', 'simple majority' or 'relative majority'. In this system, the winning candidate is the one who receives a minimum of one more vote than each of the other candidates in a given electoral district and does not require an absolute majority to be selected (Norris, 1997). The aim of plurality systems is to create a 'manufactured majority', that is to exaggerate the share of seats for the leading party in order to produce an effective working parliamentary majority for the government, while simultaneously penalizing minor parties, especially those whose support is spatially dispersed (ibid).

For comparison, let us consider a hypothetical election in the upcoming 2025 election in Ethiopia. Assume there are 12 parties registered to compete in a single constituency of 300,000 people; and six of them (parties A, B, C, D and F) obtained votes recorded in Table 1 below. Only candidate B will win the election that receives 31.67% of the votes, as it is not required to secure an absolute majority of the valid votes cast. In this electoral system, the other five parties such as A, C, D, E and F do not stand a chance of being elected albeit they get 68.33% altogether .

**Table 1: Hypothetical Seat Allocation using FPTP**

Party Names	Number of votes	% of votes received	No. of Seats	% of Seats won
A	50,000	16.67	0	0.00
B	95,000	31.67	1	100.00
C	94,000	31.33	0	0.00
D	35,000	11.67	0	0.00
E	25,000	8.33	0	0.00
F	1,000	0.33	0	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>300,000</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100.00</b>

One of the arguments in favor of the FPTP is that it is the simplest system, as all voters have to do is to put an explicit mark next to the name of the candidate of their choice on the ballot paper. The system is said to be easy to use even in countries where the rates of illiteracy are the highest. The other argument in favor of this system is that it provides stable and effective government (i.e. government that is not shackled by coalition), and therefore stable political systems and regimes (Kadima, 2006). The “seat bonuses” for the largest party common under FPTP (i.e., where one party wins, for example, 31.67% of the national vote assuming similar result in most of the constituency but 100% of the seats) means that coalition governments are the exception rather than the rule. This state of affairs is praised for providing cabinets, which are not chained from the restraints of having to bargain with a minority coalition partner (Reynolds *et al*, 2005, p. 36), and be able to implement its manifesto policies without the need to engage in post-election negotiations with coalition partners (Lijphart, 1999, p. 63). FPTP is also commended for creating “geographic accountability” particularly important in developing countries as it produces a legislature made up of representatives of geographical areas, thereby offering a high level of geographical representative accountability (Reynolds *et al*, 1997, p. 29); and for excluding extremist parties from parliamentary representation, which contrasts with the situation under straight PR systems (Reynolds *et al*, 1997; 28-29; 2005:36-7; Norris, 1997), where a fraction of one per cent of the national vote can ensure parliamentary representation.

However, a number of deficiencies beset FPTP. The argument that FPTP ensures governmental stability is dubious. In the first place, this is a narrow concept of stability, which is defined only on the basis of elements such as changes in the composition of the governing party and changes of prime minister – where the perspective of coalition of government affects the longevity of the Cabinet. Coalition may also arise at national legislation even using FPTP. Secondly, as evidenced empirically coalition government may not necessarily lead to instability. The finding of the empirical study conducted by Arend Lijphart (cited in Kadima, 2006, p. 37) to determine the levels of stability in various countries using different electoral systems indicates that the level of stability between FPTP countries like UK, Canada and Jamaica are nearly as stable as countries such as Switzerland and Austria that use PR.

As Reynolds *et al* (2005, p. 11) note, the prospects for a stable and efficient government are determined by many factors. For example, whether people perceive the system to be fair and whether the system avoids discriminating against particular parties or interest groups is crucial. When people perceive electoral systems like FPTP are “unfair” they can produce political instability. In this respect, the disproportional representation generated by this electoral system led, in Lesotho, to the violent rejection by the losing parties of the electoral outcome, which was considered to be illegitimate (Kadima, 2006, p. 38). Similarly, the disproportional distribution of seats affected the legitimacy of institutions in Australia<sup>1</sup>. The existence of this system makes the

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the Australian Senate between 1919 and 1946 was elected by a highly disproportional electoral system, which produced lop-sided and unrepresentative results undermined the actual legitimacy of the Senate itself in the eyes of both electors and politicians and, some observers argued, also undermined public support for the institutions of federal government in general (Reynolds *et al*, 2005). However, after the system was changed to a fairer proportional system in 1948, the Senate began to be perceived as more credible and representative

peaceful transition of power in Cambodia much less likely than it would be in a system where an election loss didn't mean exclusion from government at all levels.

Hence, the FPTP electoral system is deficient in terms of representation because getting the support of the majority is not a necessity to win and sometimes candidates with minority votes take the seat if they get more votes compared to the other candidates as shown in the hypothetical case in Table 1 above. Such majorities are 'manufactured' – artificially created by the electoral system, which could end up with flawed results creating a minority government disregarding absolute majority of votes (68.33%). This manufactured majority in an ethnic based society also leads to weak legislature which can eventually result in violence and disaster when the contest is a 'winner-takes all' affair, the opposition resorts to violence as was the case following the 2007 elections in the Kenya (Kahsay, 2008); and also in 2013 and 2017. Partly, the violence is linked to the nature of the electoral system.

FPTP may also produce weak and ineffective oppositions. In young democracies non-proportional systems, such as the single member plurality (FPTP), are inherently destabilizing because a parliament and Cabinet that come to power by virtue of a simple majority may be perceived as illegitimate (Kadima, 2006). Subsequently, radical elements may resort to extra-constitutional means to overthrow such governments.

In a highly diversified society like Indonesia, the negative consequence is even grave in view of the democracy itself. It became evident that a plurality system almost involves considerable difficulty in Indonesia and certainly fails to reflect the diversity of the country (Reynolds et al, 2005, p. 68) that necessitated the change of electoral system to PR. Lewis (1965, cited in Kahsay, 2008, p. 27) strongly proclaimed "the surest way to kill the idea of democracy in a plural society is to adopt the Anglo-American system of FPTP."

Similarly, this electoral system has created the democratic cousin of Hobbes's all-powerful Leviathan state, thus leaning towards an ethos of exclusion in five Southern African countries – namely Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Kadima, 2006)

The argument that the FPTP ensures greater accountability because of the link between the elected representative and the constituency is debatable. For example, it is doubtful that 63.33% of the electors, in the hypothetical example given in Table 1, might perceive party B, who won with the support of only 31.67% of the constituency's electorate, as their own representative. This is more manifest in ethnically divided societies, where levels of hostility and mistrust between candidates from different parties are high, especially if those parties were engaged in acts of violence against each other

## **2.2 Proportional Representation (PR)**

Proportional Representation (PR) systems are designed to allocate seats to the legislature in proportion to votes received, in the hope that the composition of a representative chamber should closely reflect the viewpoints, interests and demographic composition of the electorate (Reynolds et al, 2005, p. 57). It is a common choice in many new democracies with some variant in Latin

America, Western Europe, and Africa. PR requires the use of electoral districts with more than one member, but the formation of multiple districts differ from state to state<sup>2</sup>.

There are two types of list PR systems – the ‘open list’ or ‘preferential’ and the ‘closed list’ or ‘non-preferential’. Closed list PR systems are not constituency-based, voting is party-based (not candidate-based), and party headquarters finalize the list of candidates and rank them. In the open list, each party presenting a list of candidates to the electorate, voters vote for a party, and parties receive seats in proportion to their overall share of the national vote. Winning candidates are taken from the lists in order of their position on the lists. This study is concerned with the open list PR.

Theoretically, the percentage of seats won by each party must equal the percentage of votes cast as seats are supposed to be proportionally allocated based on the votes obtained by each party. However, in practice, numerous factors distort the proportionality in all countries, among other may include electoral thresholds, the use of regions or provinces as sub-national constituencies, and electoral formulas used such as largest remainders and highest averages (Kadima, 2006; Norris, 1997).

The formula used to calculate the allocation of seats after the votes have been counted can have a marginal effect on PR electoral outcomes. Formulae can be either by “highest average” or “largest remainder” methods. This paper employs largest remainder using Hare Quota as it is simple to translate votes into seats.

The Largest Remainders or Quota System involves the calculation of a quota based on the number of the available seats and the number of votes cast. Each party is awarded as many seats as it has full quotas. If this leaves some seats unallocated, each party’s ‘remainder’ is calculated as follows: The number of votes that a party has already used to gain the seats is subtracted from the total votes as shown below. In the case of Hare or Natural quota, it is equal to the total number of valid votes cast ( $v$ ) divided by the number of the available seats ( $s$ ), in the district. Hare quota =  $v/s$ . The unallocated seats are awarded to the parties that present the largest remainders of votes.

Let us consider the earlier hypothetical example under Table 1 above in order to compare the seat allocation between FPTP and PR. Suppose that the total number of votes is 300,000 and there are 5 seats to be allocated to 6 parties A, B, C, D, E and F. Each one of these parties receives 50,000, 95,000, 94,000, 35,000, 25,000, and 1,000 votes. Hare quota is equal to  $300,000/5 = 60,000$ , and the allocation of seats remains. The allocation of seats by each party using Hare Quota is 0, 1, 1, 0, 0 and 0 respectively and the remainders of votes are 50, 0000, 35,000, 34,000, 35,000, 25,000 and 1,000 respectively. Thus, three more seats would be obtained again by parties A, B and D as shown in the Table 2. Party B achieved 31.67% of the valid votes cast and is entitled to two of the five seats (40%) in the chamber. To form the government, Party B will need to enter into a coalition with another party either with A, C or D. Hence, in this simulation example, not only the legislative, but also the executive power is shared.

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<sup>2</sup> Countries like Israel and the Netherlands, the entire country forms one multi-member district, in Argentina or Portugal based on provinces but in Indonesia the electoral districts are further divided and become smaller.

**Table 2: Hypothetical Allocation of Seats by Largest remainder using Hare Quota (V/S)**

Party	Votes Received	% of votes received	Seats					% of seats won
			FPTP	PR using Hare Quota	Remainder	Seats by remainder	Total seat won	
<b>A</b>	50,000	16.67	0	0	50,000	1	1	20
<b>B</b>	95,000	31.67	5	1	35,000	1	2	40
<b>C</b>	94,000	31.33	0	1	34,000	0	1	20
<b>D</b>	35,000	11.67	0	0	35,000	1	1	20
<b>E</b>	25,000	8.33	0	0	25,000	0	0	0
<b>F</b>	1,000	0.33	0	0	1,000	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>300,000</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100.00</b>

PR is mostly praised for a number of reasons. One of the strongest arguments for PR derives from the way in which the system avoids the anomalous results of plurality-majority systems and facilitates a more inclusive and representative legislature (Reynolds et al, 2005, p. 57), which could be an essential condition for democratic consolidation especially in diversified societies. As shown in Table 2 above, the five seats are fairly allocated to four of the parties (Parties A, B, C, and D) in proportion to the votes received. As far as the fair representation of majorities and minorities is concerned, PR is, thus, the most suitable system of representation.

Proportional representation provides ‘the foundational level of inclusion needed by precariously divided societies to pull themselves out of the maelstrom of ethnic conflict and democratic instability’ (Reynolds 1999, cited in Kadima, 2006). In the same vein, Lijphart (1991, p. 81) contends, “Divided societies not only need PR to minority interests, but that PR systems (in conjunction with parliamentary systems) almost invariably post the best records, particularly with respect to representation, protection of minority interests and voter participation.” South Africa used a classically proportional electoral system for its first democratic elections of 1994, and with 62.65% of the popular vote, the African National Congress (ANC) won 63% of the national seats (Reynolds et al, 2005, p. 57). Such experience suggests that PR gives the political space that allows parties to put up multi-racial, and multi-ethnic, lists of candidates.

In a divided society, Reilly (2002, p. 157) argues, especially where politicians often have strong incentives to “play the ethnic card” at election time, politics can quickly turn centrifugal, as the center is pulled apart by extremist forces and “winner-take-all” rules the day. The failure of democracy is often the result.” Hence, he contends PR is a key element of consociational approaches, which emphasize the need to develop mechanisms for elite power-sharing if democracy is to survive ethnic or other conflicts. It is said to be the most powerful electoral systems for encouraging accommodation.

Moreover, when well designed, list PR can be effective in nation building efforts as it tends to encourage political parties to seek votes and membership across communities; and this limits the attractiveness of mono-ethnic, racial or religious parties and prevents the political instability that would result from the de facto exclusion of some communities from parliament or government (Kadima, 2006, p. 43). Women and other underrepresented groups, such as ethnic minorities, are better represented in list PR systems.



The systems also lead to more efficient government and greater continuity and stability of policy assuming broader PR coalition governments help engender a stability and coherence in decision making which allow for national development as evidenced in Europe (Reynolds et al, 2005, p. 57-58). This suggests that policies supported by a broad consensus are more likely to be carried out successfully and to remain on course than policies imposed by a ‘decisive’ government against the wishes of important sectors of society.

Like all electoral systems, PR system has deficiencies; and most of the criticisms revolve around its coalition governments, which in turn lead to legislative gridlock and the subsequent inability to carry out coherent policies; and the failure of some PR systems to provide a strong geographical linkage between an MP and his or her electorate. But some mechanisms can be designed to address such problem. For example, in South Africa, to minimize the absence of formally established constituencies inherent to the list PR, the ANC and several other political parties have subdivided the country into ‘constituencies’, and attempted to maintain a regular link between the MPs and their supporters in those constituencies, thus ensuring some representative accountability (Kadima, 2006, p. 45).

For maintaining civil peace in divided societies, conciliation and compromise goals that require the greatest possible inclusion of contending groups in the decision-making process are probably much more important than making snap decisions. These counter arguments appear to be at least slightly stronger than the argument in favor of majoritarian government that is based narrowly on the speed and coherence of decision-making (Lijphart 1999, cited in Kahsay, 2008:31). This suggests that policies supported by a broad consensus are more likely to be carried out successfully and to remain on course than policies imposed by a ‘decisive’ government against the wishes of important sectors of society.

### **3. The Outcome of Changing the Existing Electoral System to PR in Ethiopia on Political Stability, Nation Building, Legitimacy and Democratization**

As discussed in section 3 above, the proportional representation electoral system is inclusive and can allow a more open and participatory democratic multi-party system by engaging the other smaller parties to participate in the election system and maximize their chance to participate into the Ethiopian parliament thereby broadening democracy. Redesigning the system into PR may also help avoid the future possible massive unrest that has been recently befallen in the country.

Democracy can be understood in various ways, but for this purpose it is destined for a system where legislatures fairly represent citizens (being inclusive) and oversee the executive that safeguard accountability, rule of the majority; the presence of debate, accommodation, tolerance and co-existence. Hence, the possible outcome of PR are evaluated against these basic principles.

#### **3.1 Inclusive and Fair Representation**

As David Beetham (cited in Goodwin-Gill, 2006, p. 80) notes, when an electoral system becomes so skewed, basic principles of fairness and justice have been compromised, and democracy diminished, perhaps gravely”. This is exactly what happens in Ethiopia because of the choice of an unmitigated version of the winner-take-all electoral system. The plurality electoral system as enshrined under Article 54(2) of the constitution is one of the mechanisms employed by the EPRDF to take all the

regional council and national parliamentary seats and deny the opposition to share seats. This is manifested in the last two elections, particularly in the allocation of the 23 parliamentary seats of Addis Ababa in 2010 where opposition parties were denied any seats as shown in Table 4 below.

As discussed earlier, several literatures acclaim PR for boosting fair representation of parties and the views behind the parties. Will there be any contribution to fair representation in Ethiopia if the electoral system is PR? Let us assess this by taking the recent two Ethiopian general elections of 2010 and 2015 where EPRDF its allied parties won 99.6 and 100 percent parliamentary seats.

**Table 3: The 2015 Election Allocation of Parliament Seats of by FPTP and PR using largest Remainder (Hare Quota)**

Party	Votes Received	% of votes received	Seats					% of seats won
			FPTP	PR using Hare Quota			Total seat won	
				Seats by Quota	Remainder	Seats by remainder		
<b>EPRDF and its allies</b>	31,285,051	94.17	547 (100%)	515	6,011	0	515	94.15
<b>EFDUF--Medrek</b>	1,093,999	3.29	0	18	751	0	18	3.29
<b>Blue Party</b>	309,385	0.93	0	5	5,705	0	5	0.91
<b>EDP</b>	73,123	0.22	0	1	12,387	1	2	0.37
<b>CUD</b>	71,711	0.22	0	1	10,975	1	2	0.37
<b>AEDO</b>	70,486	0.21	0	1	9,750	0	1	0.18
<b>GPDM</b>	47,754	0.14	0	0	47,754	1	1	0.18
<b>Unity</b>	37,997	0.11	0	0	37,997	1	1	0.18
<b>ATP – atpa</b>	21,791	0.07	0	0	21,791	1	1	0.18
<b>AGDP-Agediepa</b>	18,555	0.06	0	0	18,555	1	1	0.18
<b>Total</b>	<b>33,222,801</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>547</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>541</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>547</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 3 above illustrates how votes cast in the 2015 election are translated into seats in the FPTP system in comparison with PR using the Largest Remainder Hare Quota method. It shows that FPTP system even if the opposition parties won 5.83% of the national vote, they got no single seat in the parliament. However, had the system been PR using Largest Remainder Hare Quota method, they would have obtained 5.85% of the national parliamentary seats as per their share of vote received. In terms of number, the nine opposition parties which actually obtained no single seat would have secured 32 seats (EFDUF/Medrek/, Blue Party, EDP, CUD, AEDO, GPDM, Unity, ATP, and AGDP, 18, 5, 2, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1, and 1 respectively) in PR electoral system. Relatively speaking, this implies PR would have produced a fair representation in the House of Peoples' Representative.

Let us also investigate the fairness of the 2010 national election for Addis Ababa City Administration, which is represented by 23 seats at the national parliament. For the purpose of analysis, the 23 constituencies are categorized into three electoral districts; namely, Zone one and five, Zone three and four, and Zone two and six. In the three districts, the EPRDF emerged as a single winner.

**Table 4: The 2010 Election Allocation of National Parliament Seats of Addis Ababa City by FPTP and PR using largest Remainder (Hare Quota)**

Electoral District	Party	Votes Received	% of votes received	Seats					% of seats won
				FPTP Actual	PR using Hare Quota			Total seat won	
					Seats by Quota	Remainder	Seats by remainder		
Zone One & Five (Wereda 3,4,5&6, 8,2/14, 25,10, &7)	EPRDF	160,663	54.70	8 (88.89%)	4	30,123	1	5	55.56
	EFDUF-Medrek	115,587	39.35	1 (11.11%)	3	17,682	1	4	44.44
	EDUP	8,488	2.89	0	0	8,488	0	0	0.00
	AEUP	2,420	0.82	0	0	2,420	0	0	0.00
	CUD	4,098	1.40	0	0	4,098	0	0	0.00
	AEDP	2,003	0.68	0	0	2,003	0	0	0.00
	EFDF	464	0.16	0	0	464	0	0	0.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>293,723</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Zone Three & Four (Wereda 19,17,28 18,12/13 1/9,11 15 &16)	EPRDF	242,011	54.80	9	4	45,747	1	5	55.56
	EFDUF-Medrek	160,058	36.25	0	3	12,860	0	3	33.33
	EDUP	19,917	4.51	0	0	19,917	1	1	11.11
	AEUP	9,630	2.18	0	0	9,630	0	0	0.00
	CUD	5,628	1.27	0	0	5,628	0	0	0.00
	AEDP	3,663	0.83	0	0	3,663	0	0	0.00
	EFDF	688	0.16	0	0	688	0	0	0.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>441,595</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Zone Two & Six (Wereda 24,21/22 23,20 &26/27)	EPRDF	162,304	56.29	5	2	46,976	1	3	60.00
	EFDUF-Medrek	104,730	36.32	0	1	47,066	1	2	40.00
	EDUP	11,381	3.95	0	0	11,381	0	0	0.00
	AEUP	3,580	1.24	0	0	3,580	0	0	0.00
	CUD	2,727	0.95	0	0	2,727	0	0	0.00
	AEDP	3,148	1.09	0	0	3,148	0	0	0.00
	EFDF	450	0.16	0	0	450	0	0	0.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>288,320</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Own calculation based on data from NEBE (2010 Addis Ababa election results)

As indicated in Table 4, there were 1,023,638 Addis Ababa electorates who casted their votes. In the first district, EPRDF received 160,663 votes, which accounts 54.70% of the total votes. Actually

using the FPTP electoral system, it won 8 out of 9 seats, that is, 88.89% of the seats, which displays disproportional distribution of seats. However, had the system been PR using Largest Remainder Hare Quota method, EPRDF would have obtained 55.56 % of the national parliamentary seats (5 seats) which is proportional to the votes received (54.70). Its seats would have been reduced by three seats. On the other hand, the EFDUF-Medrek who got only 11.11% of seats (one seats) would have received 44.44% of the nine seats (4 seats, i.e., three more seats), which is relatively proportional.

In the second and the third districts, the allocation of seats is even worse. For example, in the second and third districts, EPRDF received only 54.80% and 56.29% of the votes respectively but actually won 100% in both districts under FPTP system. This clearly illustrates the most striking weakness of FPTP electoral systems, in which all but ignored the choice of 45.20% of the two district Addis Ababa electorates. At the aggregate level, EPRDF received only 55.18% the Addis Ababa electorates but won 95.65% of 23 seats of House of Representative for Addis Ababa city Administration owing to FPTP electoral system, which is unfair representation.

However, had the system in place been PR using Hare Quota method, there would have been fair distribution of seats. For example, in the second district, EFDUF-Medrek and EDUP that received 36.25% and 4.51% of the votes respectively would have won 33.33 and 11.11 percent of the district seats (3 and 1 out of 9 seats). In the third district, EFDUF-Medrek which got 36.32% of the votes would have won 40% of the district seats (2 out of the 5 seats). That is, in the two districts, the two opposition parties which got no seat in the FPTP electoral system would have had secured six (6) additional seats (42.86%) in the PR system using Hare Quota method which is proportional to their vote received.

As a whole, EFDUF/Medrek and EDUP, which got 37.17 and 3.89 percent of votes of Addis Ababa electorates, would have received 39.13 and 4.35 percentage of seats (9 and 1 seats in number out of the 23 seats) respectively, which is proportional to their votes. The use of such “simulations” allow us to understand the positive contribution of PR to fair representation and inclusive system in Ethiopia.

Given other things constant, changing the electoral system from FPTP to PR using Hare quota method can result in a relatively fair representation in the House of Peoples’ Representative evidenced from the last two elections - 2010 and 2015 where EPRDF won 99.9 and 100 percent parliamentary seats respectively. As evidenced from the tables, the existing electoral system benefits the big party EPRDF awarding it more seats than it deserves and harms relatively the smaller parties by denying them the chance of getting seats proportional to the popular votes they get which would have provided them with a wider political space to expand their influence. The PR system has its role in ensuring the incorporation of not only the less populous ethnic groups and people, which the FDRE constitution alleges to empower and protect but also the various views of political parties which represent the various segments of the electorate in the decision-making processes.

Opposition parties believe that the existing electoral system leads to the frustration of the parties and the electorate behind the parties. Similarly, Desta (2016) asserts that the opposition groups described the outcome of all elections that happened during the EPRDF period as too narrow and a failure to render the democratic space needed for a successful election. Changing the electoral system can thus

be one of the factors, which give political space to the opposition parties at least in one of the branches of the government - the legislature.

### 3.2 Accountability and Effective Government

The existing electoral system does not only misrepresent the allocation of fair seats among parties but also affect one of the basics of representative government – accountability. As revealed in section three, the argument that the FPTP ensures greater accountability because of the link between the elected representative and the constituency is debatable. In the first place, as illustrated in Table 4 above, it is unlikely that 44.82% of the Addis Ababa electorates perceive EPRDF, which won with the support of only 55.18% of the city voters, as their own representative as it failed to reflect the diversity of the city. This in turn endangers democracy by disregarding important opinions and sectors of the society at least in the legislature.

Secondly, because of loyalties and patronage of the members of the parliament rested on their political party, geographical accountability may not be practical. For example, as Desta (2016) argues the candidate in the 2015 election had proven faithful and accountable to their political party, rather than the constituent units because s/he was the endorsee of the ruling party; hence, some elected members of parliament in Ethiopia felt that they did not have any obligation to the Ethiopian people.

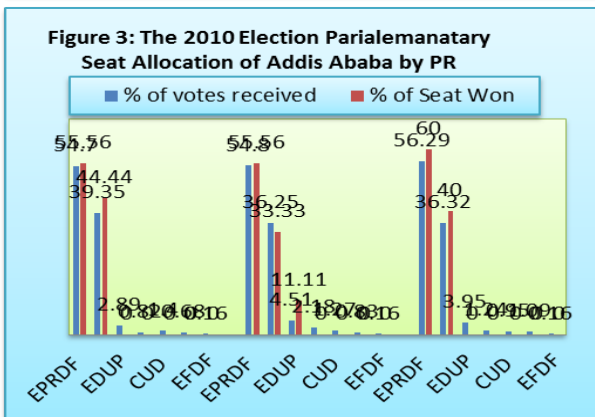
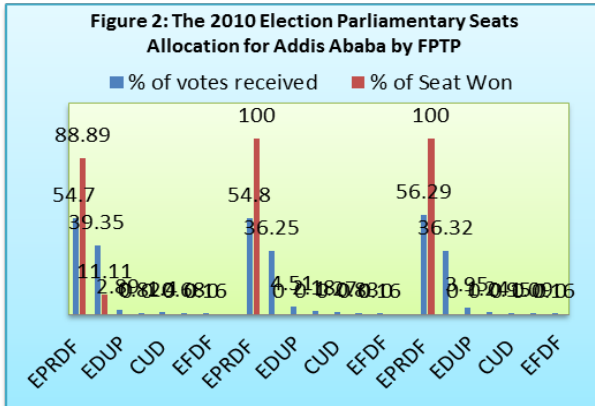
To date, in most instances bills proposed by the executive have been endorsed in parliament without much challenge and scrutiny owing partly to FPTP system where it denied any share of seats to opposition parties.

Albeit PR electoral system does not cure all these democratic problems, it may contribute towards more accountability compare to FPTP. As Reynolds *et al.*, (2005) aptly note, effective governance relies not only upon those “in power” but, almost as much, on those who sit in parliament but are out of government. They further point out that the electoral system can help ensure the presence of a viable parliamentary opposition grouping which can critically assess legislation, safeguard minority rights, and represent their constituents effectively. Long-term democratic consolidation requires the growth and maintenance of strong and effective political parties and the electoral system should not promote party fragmentation. As illustrated in Table 3 and 4 above, PR system would help nine opposition parties to obtain 32 seats in the 2015 election, which actually obtained no single seat in FPTP system, has positive implication on accountability. Hence, the PR electoral system that provides the presence of available opposition in the HPR may help have critical assessment of legislation, questioning the performance of the executive, safeguarding minority rights and representing its constituency effectively. These in turn help reduce the mix of restrictive laws such as the civil society and charities, media and Anti-terrorism, and selective political co-optation as well as the level of corruption.

The presence of opposition parties in the legislative, thus, may help critically assessing of legislation, questioning the performance of the executive, and thereby fighting corruption, which is crucial for sustaining the economic development of the country.

### 3.3 Legitimacy

In addition to the problem of unfair representation, FPTP can create a ‘manufactured majority’ which cannot, at least, represent the diverse views of the electorate and which can affect the legitimacy and credibility of the government. For the last twenty-seven years the EPRDF has dominated the legislature; and currently, it controls 100 percent of the seats in the House of People's Representatives. The plurality electoral system favored the ruling party to win the landslide victory against the other candidates’ disproportionate to the votes casted in favor of it (Amedie, 2016, p. 178). Such skewed and unrepresentative results tend to undermine the actual legitimacy of the HPR itself and the ruling party in the eyes of both electors and politicians. This also created dissatisfaction and destabilized the country, especially in the urban centers, claiming the lives of ordinary citizens in the violence following the 2005 election (Kahsay, 2008, p. 75). Thus, the current electoral system enacted can make not only the opposition reluctant to accept the outcomes but also the people to be doubtful, prepared them to be swayed into violence, and created an unstable situation at that time.



Source: Own calculation Based on Electoral Board Result

As depicted in Table 3 and 4 as well as in Figure 2 and 3 above, the PR system would guarantee opposition parties some seats in the HPR. As it did in Australian Senate in the 1948, changing Ethiopia’s electoral system to PR, which would bring a fairer representation of political parties as shown in Figure 3, the HPR as well as the ruling party may be perceived as more credible and representative, and thus respect for it and its relative importance in decision-making increased.

### **3.4 Co-existence, Reconciliation and Political Participation**

As stated earlier, in young democracies non-proportional systems like FPTP are inherently destabilizing because a parliament and Cabinet that come to power by virtue of a simple majority may be perceived as illegitimate.

The political parties in Ethiopia, including the ruling party, are the outcome of the longstanding backward political culture. Political parties consider each other as enemies and not allies due to the winner take all nature of the FPTP electoral system, (Kahsay, 2008: Tesfay, 2016, pp. 8-9). They see and preach themselves as ‘good’ and their opponents as ‘evil’ in their campaigns and campaigns tend to fail in being competitions among programs. The plurality electoral system is a system where the winner takes has its share to make the campaign a feature of ‘a life and death struggle’ among the contending parties (Ibid). For example, during the eves of election campaigns, especially at the later three elections (2005, 2010 and 2015) both the ruling and the opposition parties tried to use scare-mongering campaigns rather than their alternative policies (Tesfay, 2016). If this is taken back to the political history of the state, it is adding fuel to the already polarized political culture.

On the other hand, a PR system tends to shape the behavior of parties to compromise in not only creating a coalition to produce a grand majority that can run a government, but also developing the culture of peaceful debate and negotiation as the system give the chance opposition parties to assume some seats in the legislature. PR recognizes and promises harmonious relationships to exist among ethnic, religious, or linguistic factions. Had Ethiopia employed PR or other democratic electoral system in the national elections, there might be a chance of alternative parties come to power, pluralism, and multiparty system would have been promoted smoothly (Amedie, 2016, p. 179).

Ethiopia’s history has been characterized by political disturbance, massive violations of human rights, civil wars, lack of tolerance and concession manifested in the white terror and its counterbalance the red terror. Having a huge and much diversified community, democratic elections in Ethiopia should be capable of bringing a government that is efficient and at the same time representative enough in a way it reflects the diversity of the society (Kahsay, 2008). Unlike FPTP, which provides disproportionately exaggerated seats to the incumbent party as evidenced in the 2015 100% win that penalized other parties at the same time, PR provides an opportunity to secure seats proportional to the votes parties have obtained. As evidenced in the simulation election of 2015, PR would provide the nine parties; namely, EFDUF/Medrek/, Blue Party, EDP, CUD, AEDO, GPDM, Unity, ATP, and AGDP, eighteen, five, two, two, one, one, one, one, and one seats respectively. This would help develop the culture of co-existence.

The South African ANC would have been better off with single-member districts, although by supporting proportional representation during the constitutional negotiations this provided not only enough “voice” to the opposition to keep the varying political interests attached to the incipient political system, but also co-existence and reconciliation (Ishiyama, 2009, p. 40). That may also hold true if Ethiopia employs PR. Had the system been PR, for example, as depicted in Table 3, currently the HPR would have had nine more opposition parties that might have provided not only some “voices” to the opposition to keep the varying political interests attached to the incipient political system, but also co-existence and reconciliation. PR may open a window of opportunity for the expression and mobilization of grievances, which in turn defuse of grievances.

### **3.5 Political Stability and Nation Building**

Even though the prospects for stability of the country are not determined by the electoral system alone, the results of a system can contribute to stability in some respects. The current Ethiopian electoral system, which is disproportionate, leaving aside various opinions and interests of other political parties and the community could build up and create grievances and frustration among voters through time (Kahsay, 2008, p. 4). The artificial majority that the FPTP creates may undermine the interests of minorities, which in turn might backfire by denying the country a stable government. This problem can even go to the extent of undermining the federal arrangement by circumventing the decentralized system by bringing a centralized form of government through internal party mechanisms (Ibid). In fact, there has been a visible political apathy following the 2005 elections that saw the death of hundreds of Ethiopians in its aftermath.

As Arriola and Lyons (2016, p. 79) postulate, the EPRDF's retrenchment strategy would produce its own challenges for long-term political stability. With the complete expulsion of all opposition from the formal political arena, the regime may find that discontent increasingly would be channeled into social movements or spontaneous protests that may not be mollified by promises of economic development. Narrowing down the political space exacerbated the social frustration as people saw nobody representing their thoughts. This feeling of hopeless has led to the recent violent and destruction in some part of the country over the past three years (Ethiopian Herald, 2018). The government has conceded that the political platform has narrowed down over the years because of the first-past-the-post election system the country uses. From this, it is clear that the FPTP system has negative consequence of political stability.

Unlike FPTP, the proportional representation system can give more concern for the opposition and the minority through allocations of seats in proportion to their votes received as indicated in Table 3 and 4 above. This process can bolster the interests of minorities, which in turn might create co-existence and accommodation.

In Ethiopia, proportional systems may contribute to stabilizing the political system because the HPR that encompasses some opposition parties may be perceived as legitimate. Consequently, it may minimize radical elements that resort to extra-constitutional means to overthrow the government such as Ginbot 7 and OLF. Such groups might be encouraged to take part in the electoral competition.

In addition, when the PR is well-designed and operative it may tend to encourage political parties to seek votes and membership across communities. This as Kadima (2006) aptly notes limits the attractiveness of mono-ethnic, racial or religious parties and prevents the political instability that would result from the de facto exclusion of some communities from parliament or government. Elections are a key benchmark in any nation-building project, allowing failed states and divided societies to reconstitute a source of commonly accepted authority (Dobbins, 2004). PR can also be effective in nation building efforts as it accommodates different interests and opinion at least in the legislature. PR can help ensure the presence of a viable parliamentary opposition grouping which can critically assess legislation and the promulgation of good laws, safeguard minority rights, and represent their constituents effectively which would ensure for the country's political stability, the rule of law, good governance, the protection of human rights and peace.



#### **4 Conclusion**

The choice and design of a suitable electoral system for Ethiopia is one of the matters that warrant special attention, given the lasting political consequences of electoral systems for political stability and consensus building objectives. It is crucial that discussion and negotiation about the electoral system take place in a non-partisan, dispassionate, impersonal, disinterested and unbiased manner for the benefits of the country as a whole. It is good to involve all concerned political leaders, electoral scholars, civil society and informed citizens in the negotiation process in the light not only of the past Ethiopia's experience but also of the rapidly expanding body of knowledge gained from the experiences of other democratic countries.

Ethiopia comprises a diversity of ethnic groups, languages, cultures and religions. Its history has been characterized by political tension, institutionalized corruption and mismanagement, massive violations of human rights, civil wars, rebellions and secession wars. Such a diverse and divided country needs an electoral system which ensures a fair representation of political and ethnic groups, political stability and nation building. As evidenced from the 2010 and 2015 elections, PR has a positive contribution to address the political problems of the country in terms of ensuring fair representation and political stability.

The exclusionary nature of plurality systems would exacerbate the divisions in Ethiopia. We have seen how the disproportionate representation generated by the FPTP led to violence and serious political instability in 2005 when the supporters of the losing parties rejected the electoral outcome as illegitimate. It was also evidenced after few months of the 2015 election. Hence, if Ethiopia employs proportional representation, it provides the initial level of inclusion needed by federal and perilously divided Ethiopian societies to pull themselves out of the turbulence of political conflict. PR gives the political space which allows parties to put up multi-ethnic, diverse ideologies lists of candidates. This in turn leads the country to a more open and participatory democratic multi-party system and ensure a fair representation of political and ethnic groups, political stability and nation building in a diverse Ethiopia in spite of its inherent weaknesses, for which corrective provisions may be developed. For example, to minimize the absence of formally established constituencies inherent to the list PR, it is possible subdivide the country into small 'constituencies' like depicted in Table 3 at sub-city or Zonal levels, and can uphold a regular link between the MPs and their supporters in those constituencies, thus ensuring some representative accountability as stipulated in Article 12 of the constitution.

By opting for PR electoral system, Ethiopia would attain enormously as regards broadening the political space and the pace of democratization process thereby political stability, peaceful coexistence of groups and nation building, which are all key political prerequisites for sustained economic and social development

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