

Measuring governance performance - Post 1991 Ethiopia

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Abstract

The new institutional arrangement, ethnic federalism, adopted since 1991, has helped nation nationalities and people of Ethiopia to administer themselves and develop; promote and protect their distinctive socio-cultural and linguistic identity. Parallel to the establishment of the federal system, various legal and other programs of reforms to enhance good governance and democracy have been initiated and undertaken by the government of Ethiopia. In effect, the objective of this particular paper is to critically analyze good governance performance as per the World Bank Governance Indicator Framework. To address this secondary data source-analysis of relevant documents-was utilized. The paper has found out the following results: Shrinking political landscape has made citizens to develop a kind of attitude that their vote has no power to bring any difference and the political culture “democratic centralism” has made elected government to be accountable for the party channels, instead of ensuring accountability for their constituencies. Perceptions of political and economic marginalization, the existence of huge youth unemployment and resource competition continue to spark conflicts across the country negatively impact peace & security and economic development. Huge interference of politics in the civil service, the highly politicized nature of the public institution, the lack of skilled human personnel, the prevalence of corruption and weak political commitment and weak and vulnerable governance institutions challenged government effectiveness. Poor regulatory quality coupled with state led development orientation has hampered the development and involvement of the private sector particularly in the manufacturing sector. Currently, at all levels of government there is subversion of judicial independence to political interests and in effect one can observe the prevalence of rule by law instead of Rule of Law. Due to lack of democratic culture, the erosion of the rule of law, party monopolization of the economy, as well as the politicization of the civil service, the incidence of grand and petty corruption is on the rise and it continues to be perceived as a pervasive problem. However, the new reformist government since April 2018 initiated ground breaking political, economic, administrative and legal reform to ensure democracy, good governance and development in the country. The paper has an important implication for stakeholders like policy makers, civil society and aid donors who recognize that the quality of governance is fundamental for the success of development program and livelihood improvements. Further, scholars can use the result of this study in their empirical research on the cause and consequences good governance in Ethiopia.

Keywords: federalism, world governance indicator, development strategy, reformist government.

1. Introduction

For centuries, Ethiopia was ruled by a highly centralized monarch and undemocratic governments in which the traditions of autocratic and hierarchical rule are long and deep rooted [1], [2], [3], [4]. Emperor Haile Selassie was the last king who took power in 1931 and deposed from power after popular uprising in 1974. Given the political vacuum, a provisional administrative council, known locally as the Derg, was established a military socialist government in 1974 but collapsed after bloody civil war in 1991. The new government led by EPRDF assumed political power and governance in 1991. The EPRDF has made a paradigm shift favoring federalism against the centralized hierarchical power structure with the view to better recognize and accommodate the country’s ethno-linguistic and cultural diversity. With the introduction of federalism, the new government began to implement concept of good governance and democracy [4], [1], [5], [2], [6].

The 1995 FDRE constitution guaranteed legal framework for equal access to political and economic resources for all parts of the society. This has led to the recognition that

democracy and good governance are necessary conditions for poverty reduction [7]. Hence, it is since 1990s that Ethiopian government has given a due attention on good governance, in the wider development policies, program and strategies including in ADLI, SDPRP, PASDEP and GTP as both intrinsic and extrinsic to create an enabling environment for accelerated development and attainment of improvements in the standards of living of the people [8], [9]. In addition to this, under the umbrella of PSCAP different reforms were carried out including Civil Service Reform, District-level Decentralized Service Delivery; Information and communications technology; Justice System Reform; Tax System Reform and Urban Management to further strengthen good governance and democratization [7], [3], [10], [11] [4], [1] In effect, relative to the past administration, it is widely believed that under the current administration Ethiopia has achieved substantial progress in political, economic, social and human development over the past decades [1].

However, Ethiopia's social and political institutions as well as wealth and income distribution have not fully kept pace with the past decade of economic growth which is among the top ten fastest growing economies in the world [12], [13], [14]. Indeed, there is growing discontent with the EPRDF's ethnically defined state and rigid grip on power and fears of continued interethnic conflict and in effect political instability across the nation [15],[16]. Moreover, Ethiopia, continues to rank near the bottom of the UNDP's HDI, scoring 174th out of 188 countries in 2015 [17]. The Mo Ibrahim Foundation's IAG measures governance in Africa across four pillars: safety and rule of law, participation and human rights, sustainable economic opportunity, and human development, Ethiopia ranks 41st out of 54 African countries in 2016 and only showed insignificant improvement in 2018 scoring below 50% - at 46.5- and ranked at 35. Therefore, this particular research has attempted to critically analyze the quality of governance performance in Ethiopia in the light of the World Bank's six major parameters: voice and accountability, Political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption.

2. WGI and Post 1991 Ethiopia's governance performance analysis

The 1991 government change in Ethiopia has ushered in a decentralized system of governance. The Government initiated successive rounds of deepening decentralization, devolving powers and mandates to regional states, and then to woredas or district authorities which is an outcome of the adoption of a federal system of government in Ethiopia [3]. To this end, the new government by the year 2002 has initiated the so called DLDP with core objectives such as institutionalizing viable development centers at local levels, deepening devolution of power, enhancing the democratization process through broad-based participatory strategy, promoting good governance and improving service delivery [3].

Being aware of the fact that governance matters for development, the Ethiopian government has integrated good governance in its all four development policies and strategies since 1995 ; i.e. SDPRP; PASDEP; GTP I and GTP II. Particularly, in GTP II the government has given huge emphasis to the promotion and implementation of improved democratic governance, decentralization and reform of the justice system [9], [18].

Therefore, here below attempts was made to critically discuss, analyze and evaluate post 1991 governance performance in Ethiopia as per the WB's six major principles of good governance commonly called WGI which includes Voice and Accountability: Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism; Government Effectiveness: Regulatory Quality; Rule of Law and Control of Corruption [10]. Indeed, many policymakers and civil society groups use these indicators to monitor performance and advocate for governance reform. The WGI are also used by aid donors who recognize that the quality of governance is an important determinant of the success of development programs. Scholars, too, use the indicators in their empirical research on the causes and consequences of good governance [10].

2.1. Voice and accountability

This indicates the extent to which “a country’s citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media” [10].

The FDRE constitution guarantees the right of every one in Political participation. Particularly, Article 38 states that every Ethiopian citizen has the Right to Vote and to be elected [19]. Ethiopia has held five national elections since the new constitution was adopted. EPRDF has won all by landslides given its political domination which paralyzed opposition political parties in the country [15], [5], [20], [6]. Particularly, following the 2005 Ethiopian elections, the adoption of the Charities and Societies Proclamation no 621/2009 and Anti-terrorism Proclamation no. 652/2009 has undermining the activities of CSOs working on good governance and human rights issues and silencing the media and opposition members [21], [15], [22]. Hence, due to the shrinking nature of the political landscape citizens do not have the opportunity to choose the type of political parties that truly represent their needs and interests and in effect they lost appetite to involve in political election.

With regard to accountability and transparency, the constitution provides for checks and balances between the executive and other branches of government [19], yet in practice the executive branch in Ethiopia has tended to wield greater powers vis-à-vis other branches of government [15], [5]. Further, Though Article 12 states that “public officials should be answerable for government behavior and responsive to the entity from which they derive authority” [19] but in practice the EPRDF political system called “democratic centralism” made elected officials accountable for the party channels instead of their constituencies [15], [5].

The constitution guaranteed freedom of the press, access to information of public interest and prohibition of censorship [19], but in practice government engaged in censorship, restricted access to the internet and blocked various opposition Websites and this aspect of governance remains challenging [23], [24]. The CPJ claimed that the media in Ethiopia is not free, and the independent press is subject to frequent government crackdowns [25]. The USDOS reports that in Ethiopia journalists, publishers, and editors continue to be subjected to intimidation, arrest, harassment, detention on charges of defamation and prosecution by the government [17]. Further, Freedoms of assembly and association are guaranteed by the

constitution but are limited in practice [24]. Markakis concluded that “the ruling front makes full use of the state machinery and resources including its monopoly of mass media and instruments of repression, to relentlessly and ruthlessly harass ‘political opponents’ [26].

However, the reformist government led by Abiy Ahmed (Dr.) has vowed to ensure enhanced citizens’ participation and government transparency and accountability to help improve development outcomes. In effect, his government has reformed laws that restrict access to information, released bloggers and activists detained due to their free expression, lifted ban that put to various social Medias and opposition websites. Particularly, his government carried out radical reform with regard to gender participation & empowerment where the appointment of a 50 per cent female cabinet and of the country's first female president and Supreme Court judge, have all painted a pretty picture for the future of the country.



Fig. 1. Abiy Ahmed, PM of Ethiopia
Source: <https://fanabc.com>, 2018



Fig. 2 Gender participation and empowerment
(a) Ms. Sahle-Work Zewde, FDRE president (b) 50% female cabinet
Source: <https://fanabc.com>, 2018

Political stability and absence of violence

This means “Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism: the likelihood that the government will be destabilized by unconstitutional or violent means, including terrorism” [27]. Ethiopia’s recent history has been characterized by periods of violent internal conflict as well as ongoing external clashes with neighbors [28]. Nevertheless the force (EPRDF) that toppled the military government installed ethnic federalism in 1991 with the view to end internal conflict by recognizing and institutionalizing diversity and engaged in positive regional relations [1].

USAID has claimed that compared to its neighbors, the social magnitude of war in Ethiopia has declined significantly since 1990 helping relative economic development [29]. Yet despite the institutional mechanisms developed in recent years, widespread and growing discontent with ethnic and political marginalization, repressive rule by the EPRDF, political and economic injustice, rampant corruption and rent seeking behavior at state level, unfaithfulness of the EPRDF to its own constitution, massive youth unemployment continue to spark conflicts across the country, particularly since 2015 [30], [31], [21], [32], [33], [34], [5], [20]. Therefore, the political; economic and socio cultural situation of the state and its people is currently at grave risk and above all the future looks worst unless the government practically implement democratic federalism which must be supported by constitutionalism.



Fig. 3. 2015/16 Youth Protests against economic and political injustice and bad governance
Source: <https://www.google.com/search?q=Violent+ethnic+conflict+locations+in+Ethiopia&safe>



Fig. 4 Police Brutality against the protesters, 2015/16

Source: <https://www.google.com/search?q=Violent+ethnic+conflict+locations+in+Ethiopia&safe>





Fig. 5 Ethnic based violent conflict, displacement 2017/18

Source: <https://www.google.com/search?q=Violent+ethnic+conflict+locations+in+Ethiopia&safe>

Consequently, the reformist government led by Dr. Abiy Ahmed since early 2018 has figured out that economic and political injustice, human and democratic rights violation, lack of good governance and huge youth unemployment are the fundamental causes of ethnic violence and political instability and voiced to work hard to ensure justice and good governance across the nation. Efforts started with the establishment of a new ministry called ministry of peace, responsible for peace and security to nation while promoting coexistence, peace, democracy, and development, as well as carried out heavy crackdown on corruption hunting top officials, military general, security personnel, regional chiefs across the country. With the view to expand the political landscape and bring national consensus, the government has carrying out political and legal reforms like releasing political dissidents, removing political organization from the terrorist list, inviting all opposition political parties including the exiled ones, reformed laws that limit human and democratic rights. The reformist government has made wide discussion and dialogue with different section of the society and stakeholders to figure out and address root causes of mismanagement to the end ensure good governance. To address the huge youth unemployment problem, the government has taken economic reforms which include partial privatization of state owned enterprise like Ethiopian airline, Electric Corporation, Telecommunication and expanding irrigation and small scale enterprise.

2.2. Government effectiveness

It means “the quality of public services, the capacity of the civil service and its independence from political pressures; and the quality of policy formulation” [27].

Since 1991 Ethiopia has made considerable efforts to strengthen democratic governance and improve basic service delivery which includes Civil Service Reform focusing on building core state capacity and Justice System Reform with the objective to ensure a fair, efficient and accessible system of justice delivered by competent and independent and accountable institutions [3]. In effect, Ethiopia's performance in government effectiveness was relatively better than the rest of Sub-Sahara Africa [4].

However, government effectiveness in Ethiopia is challenged by huge interference of politics in the civil service, politicized nature of the public institution, the lack of skilled human personnel, the prevalence of corruption, weak political commitment and poor stakeholders and public involvement. Observation and studies shows that EPRDF party member civil servants are acting above the law and interest of the institution and not accountable to the hierarchy's but rather they are accountable to the party channels which harmed the public sense of service delivery [35].

2.4. Regulatory Quality

It implies the "ability of the government to provide sound policies and regulations that enables and promotes private sector development" [27].

In Ethiopian since 1991 the government has made a transition from a command economy to market friendly in an attempt to liberalize its economy. This urged the government to carry out substantial changes in the legal and regulatory framework governing socio-cultural, economic and political environment. This includes enacting rules on property rights, various proclamations on investment, laws governing civil and commercial behavior, and limiting the power of the state with the view to enhance political, economic and social development [36]. In effect, the World Bank described Ethiopia positively with respect to starting a business, trading across borders and enforcing contracts in its doing business 2018 report [37].

Despite the government's efforts in designing legal framework to promote and protect private investment, the development and involvement of the private sector particularly in the manufacturing sector is found low, 5.5 % to the GDP in 2011. This is mainly due to the fact that major pillars of the economy like Banking sector, Airline, Telecommunication, Electric Corporation are controlled by the state and state controlled and affiliated institutions like METEC, EFFORT- guaranteed unfair advantage and support from the government that made the private sectors paralyzed and incapable of completion. In Ethiopia economic growth achieved at the expense and cost of the active involvement of the private sector in the economy. That is why the reformist government has decided to partially privatized state owned major pillars of the economy to let private sector play their own role in economic development of the country.

2.5. Rule of Law

It entails "the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rules of society, including the quality of contract enforcement and property rights, independency of the Judiciary; the police, and the courts, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence" [27].

As a supreme law on the land, the constitution in Ethiopia established a constitutionally limited government and in effect denies effect to “any law, customary practice or a decision of an organ of state or a public official which contravenes” constitutional provisions shall be of no effect [19].

Despite the theoretical description of the constitution in guaranteeing basic human and democratic rights, practically the government has established rule by law and undermine rule of law and the democratic system itself by entrenching the ruling party [15]. There are two fundamental factors for the deterioration and gradual absence of the rule of law in Ethiopia; these are the EPRDF’s political monopoly and weak institutional arrangement [38], [33]. Beside this, the EPRDF government is not faithful to its own constitution and common to observe government officials at all level violating constitutional values & principles as well as associated laws of the land. This has led to grave violation of citizen’s basic human and democratic rights causing violent ethnic crisis and political instability across the country. In effect, the country is facing alarming crisis and in effect the federal constitutional system and rule of is under imminent threats as revealed even in the government security evaluation document [16].

However, the popular uprising across the nation that started since 2015 has ended up April 2, 2018 by removing conservative and rigid members of the government while installing reformists. Since then the EPRDF government is under taking a comprehensive assessment of the performance of judicial institutions, law making process, and the laws and regulations governing judicial institutions, removing the Anti-terrorism Proclamation with the view to guarantee the effectiveness and efficiency of the Judiciary system thereby to restore people belief in the rule of law. As part of the reform, recently the parliament has elected a woman with extended internal and external experience often called the champion of human and democratic right and justice- W/o Meaza Ashenafi- as the president of the Ethiopian Supreme court, hoping that she going to ensure judicial autonomy to the end serve justice.



Fig. 6 W/o Meaza Ashenafi, the president of the Ethiopian Supreme court
Source: <https://fanabc.com>, 2018

2.6. Control of Corruption

It implies that “the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as ‘capture’ of the state by elites and private interests” [27]. Various research outputs have revealed that corruption represents a major obstacle to development, growth, and the effective functioning of the rule of law [39].

In Ethiopia, the coming of the current government, EPRDF, in 1991 has paved the way for building ‘democratic government’ and reformed the overall affairs of the country. The establishment of the FEAC under Proclamation No. 235/200 marked the beginning of the institutionalized attack against corruption both in the public and private sectors [40]. Further, the country has developed the necessary legal and administrative mechanisms to combat corruption including ratification of international anti-corruption conventions adopted by the United Nations and the African Union to mention some. Moreover, the government's program to improve governance and to combat corruption is embedded in an ambitious program entitled CSRPF which covers a broad agenda dealing with judicial, legal, and financial management reform [8]. Further, Ethiopia currently spends one tenth of its GDP every year on IT to improve E-governance as a weapon against corruption [41].

Consequently, the government has made some encouraging achievements in fighting and preventing corruption. In 2004 and 2013 landmark crack down conducted on a number of senior government officials and top military personnel including the first prime minister, former army chief, director general and deputy of Ethiopian Revenues, and Customs Authority and senior management staff of the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia were prosecuted for abuse of office for personal gain. However, such moves were criticized for being politically motivated and some have questioned the independence of the FEAC [4]. Beside this, some international organization even has made a claim that the degree of corruption in Ethiopia has historically been low. For instance, Ethiopia ranked 103 out of 183 economies in the World Bank's annual Doing Business report series [37]. Further, the 2017 Corruption Perceptions Index reported by Transparency International, Ethiopia is the 107 least corrupt nation out of 175 countries [42].

Nonetheless, there is a growing perception that the incidence of both grand (committed by high profile federal and regional authority from mega projects and petty (committed by ordinary civil servants) corruption in Ethiopia is on the rise and it continues to be perceived as a pervasive problem since major pillar of the economy controlled by the government. In effect, the practice of corruption in Ethiopia is not an act of individuals, it is a phenomenon which constitutes the bigger part of the nation's institutional structure [16], [43]. Particularly, state monopoly in the telecommunications coupled with institutionalized corruption and rent seeking behavior limited the sector's ability to use e-governance as a weapon against corruption to the end ensure good governance across the country.

Thus, though the government itself has repeatedly accepted the prevalence of corruption in its system, it failed to eradicate corruption and rent seeking from state dominated economy. The on-going anti-corruption campaign cannot gain more momentum and vigor without addressing the fundamental and triggering factors including inadequate pay for civil service

workers, capacity constraints ; opaque rules and regulations, excessive discretionary power given to public officials, inadequate regulation of the private sector, state capture, political corruption, lack of transparency and accountability; weak disclosure requirements in the public and the private sector, lack of a free media, and limited space for civil society organizations, stakeholders and the public at large.

Keeping in view this, the reformist government that took power since April 2018 underlined the fact that rampant corruption and rent seeking activities at state level are the core reason behind the recent ethnic violence and political instability in the country. Abiy Ahmed, the current prime minister of Ethiopia, said that "We need to address existing inequalities that led to recent unrests." "We will continue to respect the rights of citizens, the right to question, criticize and hold its public servants to accountability." In effect, since then the government is taking ground breaking measure against corruption and rent seeking economic behavior that are rooted in the state for the last two decades. To minimize state oriented corruption and rent seeking behavior, Abiy Ahmed's government engaged in political, economic and institutional reforms. Economically, his government has planned to partially privatized decades of state dominated economy including telecommunication, airline, Electric Corporation and other major pillars of the economy to achieve both economic efficiency and minimize state level corruption in those sectors mentioned above. Since corruption in Ethiopia is largely manifested institutionally, his government has reformed the various institution including METEC, INSA, NBE, CBE, Electric corporation, telecommunication to allow professionalism and good governance in the sectors. Further, his government has showed unbelievable political commitment and devotion in hunting down most corrupted untouchable top political officials and army generals. In this regard, his government has carried out major corruption assessment committed in the country for the last two decades and holds accountable 63 individuals [44], [45]. This includes former CEO of METEC and CEO of INSA, public figures, military generals, and security officials and convicted them of corruption. However, the government's efforts have to be actively supported by various stakeholders including civic organizations, local and international nongovernmental organization, donor countries and their multi agencies, opposition political party and at large by the public to realize his vision of good governance, democracy and economic development in the country.

3. Conclusion

In a country where democracy is a way of life and system of governance, government is elected based on its performance and outcomes in the wider socio-cultural, economic, political and environmental areas of human lives. In this regard, government will stay in power so far as they are performing well as measured by tangible outcomes. In contrast, when government degenerate the problem of good governance is prevalent and in effect governance performance; democratic system and sustainable development cannot be reached.

Ethiopia since EPRDF came to power in 1991 has made a paradigm shift favoring federalism against the centralized hierarchical power structure in the nation with the view to better recognize and accommodate the country's ethno-linguistic and cultural diversity and ensure good governance. Accordingly political administrative and fiscal power

devolved to ethnically administered lower level of government units. The new institutional arrangement, ethnic federalism helped nation nationalities and people of Ethiopia to administer themselves and develop; promote and protect their distinctive socio-cultural and linguistic identity. Parallel to with the establishment of the federal system, different legal and other programs of reforms which are essential for the realization of good governance and democracy have been initiated and undertaken by the Government of Ethiopia. On the positive side, the country has made remarkable progress in decentralization and the developmental role of the state has been significantly enhanced. In bold the government's landmark development policies and strategies including SDPRP; PASDEP; GTP I and GTP II have given emphasis to the continued support and enhancement of democratization and improved governance. The quality of public financial management has improved and the amount of fiscal resources transferred to sub-national governments has increased significantly. Consequently, the incumbent government has relatively brought peace and security, political stability across the nation which is believed to be the foundation for the economic success achieved in the last two decades in the country.

However, document analysis and observation shows that the efforts of ensuring good governance in the last two decades are all left on the paper without being practically implemented on the ground. International documents, after measuring the quality of governance in light of six major parameters: voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence; government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption, have found that the Ethiopian government is listed among the countries of poor governance quality in the world, as indicated in 1996 to 2008 governance quality measurement data, in most cases the governance quality of Ethiopia is below 25 % [27]. Similarly, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation's Ibrahim Index of African [46] has ranked the country poorly; 41st in 2016 and showing insignificant improvement in 2018 at 35 out of 54 African countries. Given this legacy of good governance crisis, however, the new reformist government since April 2018 initiated ground breaking political, economic, administrative and legal reform to ensure democracy, good governance and development in the country.

4. Recommendations

To improve good governance and realize democracy and economic development, major challenges that the country has facing need to be addressed; these includes promoting civil society participation; improving access to information to enhance accountability and transparency; strengthening the capacity and independence of the judiciary and other key institutions like house of federation and house of people representatives. With regard to gender empowerment and participation which is now celebrated at the federal level has to be cascaded down at regional government and the lower level of administration.

The political, economic, administrative and legal reforms which are currently undertaken by the reformist government have to be institutionalized so as to ensure all rounded justice across the country. Priority must be given to national dialogue with diverse stakeholders including opposition party to establish peace and security across the nation. Since 2015 Ethiopian rocked by unrest and political instability for which economic and political injustice mentioned as a fundamental factor, the reformist government must ensure unity

and equality among Ethiopians in socioeconomic and political scenarios. The decision made by the reformist government to allow minority shares and partial privatization in Ethio-Telecom, Ethiopian Airlines, electricity generation projects and the Ethiopian Shipping and Logistics Services Enterprise must be implemented in a short period of time to end state level corruption and rent seeking behavior as well as generate youth employment in the sectors which remain a security threat in the country. In this regard, corruption is an existential threat to Ethiopia which urges political commitment, active stakeholders and opposition party involvement as well as radical improvement in E-governance as a weapon against corruption. Finally, the reformist government must institutionally guarantee freedom of the press, access to information of public interest and prohibition of censorship as enshrined in the constitution.

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