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Migrants’ Misery and Livelihood Mapping: The Unfinished Agenda

Amiya Kumar Mohapatra*

Abstract
COVID 19 pandemic has triggered one of the most unbelievable surges in reverse internal migration in India. Workers in almost all the metros and large cities have suddenly decided to return to their respective villages due to loss of livelihoods as a result of country-wide lockdown. On the surface, it looks like a scenario prompted by job losses. However, the current job losses are totally unexpected, short-term and unintentional. There is no indication that the job losses are permanent. This article presents a critique the emerging political economy of phenomenal reverse internal migration in the wake of COVID 19 scare calls for an in-depth probe from a fresh perspective. One has to look at the current urge of the workers to return to their villages from economic, non-economic, behavioural and contingency standpoints.

Keywords: Reverse Internal Migration, Migrants, Livelihood, COVID 19, Odia, India

INTRODUCTION
People are continuously on the move either for life or livelihood (Mohapatra and Jha, 2019). Migration is age-old, but its manifestation has changed over the times. Usually, people migrate from one place to the other primarily due to economic reasons (Ravenstein, 1885, 1889). Lee (1966) has provided a simplified framework based on push and pull factors to explain the causes and nature of migration. However, the emerging political economy of phenomenal reverse internal migration in the wake of COVID-19 scare calls for an in-depth probe from a fresh perspective. One has to look at the current urge of the workers to return to their villages from economic, non-economic, behavioural and contingency standpoints.

Is migration a choice or compulsion or a combination of both? The complexity decides the course of actions and nature of mobility. Currently, reverse internal migration, i.e. going back to native places appears to be impulsive, generally triggered by COVID 19. The behavioural aspects of migration determine the magnitude and intensity of the causes (Mohapatra, 2014). Push-pull economic factors mostly influence micro house-hold level decisions, but the macro-level aggregate migration decision may be influenced by such unusual and unexpected happening as COVID 19.

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Push factors which give a big push to these migrants include discrimination at work-place, expensive cost of living, lack of social identity, cultural conflict and social rejection, increase in crime rate, loss of livelihood among others (Mohapatra and Jha, 2019). COVID 19 is the latest trigger. Feel good factor of going back to their native places, rural infrastructure development, MNREGA, getting married, care for the older people, final settlement etc. are a few pull factors (Mohapatra and Jha, 2019). In the wake of COVID 19, the pull factor is a sense of safety and security of native place imbued with community support camaraderie that comes from being a part of large extended families.

In the changing matrix of reverse internal migration, the influx is augmented by COVID 19 factor, and push-pull factors set the tone as a multitier for the unplanned and impulsive mobility. Combined effects of the push and pull factors during the time of COVID 19 reveals that the reverse internal migration is not a ‘choice rather a compulsion’ and hence linked to a kind of distress migration. This is, in fact, a special kind of ‘situational’ and ‘seemingly life-saving’ mobility. Thus, large numbers of daily wagers, hawkers, blue-collar workers, maids and housekeepers, security guards, auto drivers, etc. are trying to flee to their respective native places even if they have to walk for over 1000 miles as the public transport is suspended for the time being. Although this type of migration is not frequent, it is significant in terms of numbers due to the COVID 19 effect.

A CASE OF ODIA MIGRANT WORKERS
COVID 19 has devastated people’s lives as well as their livelihoods and also endangered the socio-economic foundations; affecting the health including mental stress. Lakhs of workers are found stranded and living in dilapidated conditions during the lockdown. The economic recession caused by the global pandemic COVID 19 is further resulting in distress migration that caused a threat to life and livelihood.

To study the COVID 19 effect on Odia migrant workers, the exodus can be divided into ‘During-lockdown’ and ‘Post-lockdown’. Many migrant workers from Odisha have been stranded in other states due to lockdown caused by COVID 19, mainly in Surat, Pune, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Noida, Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai.

Unlike other states, during-lockdown phase, mobility has been limited for the Odia migrants, the major causes being distance, lack of readiness and wait for the summer vacation. Further, a few people had already made up their minds, got stranded amidst the lockdown due to lack of connectivity and are the hardest sufferers. It was found that sizeable number of Odia migrants entered into Odisha through West Bengal border without being noticed, adding to the concerns of the government. Recent news of 38 Odia migrants reaching Odisha from Chennai through a boat further aggravates the situation. The spread of corona through these returnees has created the horror. While awaiting the decision on revoking the lockdown, lakhs of people are in the offing to comeback to Odisha.

Extended lockdown triggered the intensity of mobility which is very impulsive and driven by hardships. This movement is a mix of impulse, fear of death and loss of livelihood. At this juncture, migrants prefer life strategy to livelihood strategy. Many migrant workers left their places of work and started walking hundreds of miles towards their native places, are the hardest sufferers.
In the post-lockdown exodus includes two groups of migrants, the first group which includes the stranded labourers with higher compulsion factor for mobility and second group of those who have decided to come but not stranded, influenced by choice factors. These groups look for the right time to get back to their native places. Post-lockdown migration will be caused by SAD factors of Stress and Displacement (SAD) and may be triggered by culture and seasonal factors, which include summer vacation, Raja Parba, and marriage seasons. Seasonal migrants look forward to agriculture work in the advent of the monsoon period. Amidst uncertainty, disillusion and bewilderment, it is not possible to predict the movement due to the pandemic.

**LABOUR PARADOX - THE TWIN DISEQUILIBRIUM**

COVID 19 is not confined to a health crisis which is the only visible part of the iceberg but has already caused a major jolt to the labour market and paved the way for the economic slowdown. In turn, it has begun exasperating inequality and widespread poverty. The hardest sufferers are workers, mostly semi-skilled and unskilled labourers. Critically the class struggle has taken a different shape of mass struggle due to COVID 19. Further, the bigger challenge is encompassing the workers’ life due to technological advancement, resulting in automation and robotics, causing widespread job losses.

A peculiar form of disequilibrium is going to occur amidst COVID 19, which will affect workers' life and industry output. Labour-intensive industries will face a situation of 'shortage of labour' in the labour market and have to operate at less than their capacities due to the scarcity of labour. Similarly, in rural areas, labour supply will exceed labour demand, leading to a situation of 'excess supply of labour' which will worsen the misery. This will cause a twin disequilibrium paradox that will affect income, output and employment, and may not be corrected anytime soon.

**INITIATIVES AND INTERVENTIONS**

Currently, the government of Odisha is evaluating and monitoring migrants' situation with inter-state coordination ensuring their safety and providing food for the stranded. In order to assist and support, 24X7 helplines are being created under dedicated teams, supervised by nodal officers. Recently a web portal to keep records of migrants with mandatory registration has been launched. Odisha government is taking multiple initiatives to reduce the discontent among the stranded and arrest the spread of the disease simultaneously. Government has delegated powers to the Sarpanch to deal with local situations. The data collected and recorded by Sarpanch is used for crafting strategies to fight COVID 19 spread through migrants. Additionally, hospitals, doctors and support staffs are ready to deal with lockdown and post-lockdown issues, including mental health and support.

The state government is also working proactively on policies to mitigate concerns of travel, health, accommodation, rehabilitation and economic engagement of the migrants. To address and overcome migrants' issues, people's participation and migrants' cooperation is essential (Mohapatra, 2015). Active participation of people and robust processes of capturing data on migrants, their health check-up and follow-up, is utmost essential to stop the spread of disease in the community. A vital role is envisaged for the local and national media to communicate information about these migrants and their mobility pattern. A large number of NGOs and volunteers are working within and outside the state in helping the Odia migrants. At this stage, thinking only about the workers’ rights and their employability is not enough and will be a short-run arrangement. It actually requires a sustainable eco-system to deal with such a situation.
With a significant focus on livelihood enhancements through MNREGA, agriculture, dairy farming, fisheries and poultry, and horticulture, it can be hoped that a broad-based policy shall cater to the new-found issues of reverse migration to support the deprived sections of the society. Role of agriculture is of tremendous importance in creating employment opportunities for these returnees and the success of agriculture depends upon micro-credit availability at the grass root level (Jha and Mohapatra, 2020). Moreover, the government also needs to strengthen the farm sector so that the villages can sustain such a huge influx of migrant workers (Jha, Mohapatra and Lodha, 2019).

Government of India has announced a relief package of Rs. 1.7 lakh crores recently and extended a bouquet of provisions including, Rs. 1000 in two instalments for poor senior citizens and widows and raised the daily wage of MGNREGA workers from Rs. 182 to Rs. 202 to name a few. Apart from this, many steps have been taken by the state governments at their level for hapless people, which include food and financial support to the poor and migrants. During this prolonged crisis, the government should address the health and livelihood issues of the migrant workers and support them proactively. Democracy will lose its shine if the deprived and affected masses are not able to get their livelihood during this crisis.

This paper includes the impact of corona on migrant workers and on the economy till April 2020, however new issues and insights will crop up over the time till corona persists and will surely carve a scare mark in the millennium history.

REFERENCES
COVID 19 Scare and Plight of Indian Migrant Workers: Decoding the Impact of Nationwide Lockdown

Srirang K Jha* & Manoj Kumar**

ABSTRACT
This article looks at the plight of migrant workers who were put into a tight spot in the aftermath of the sudden announcement of nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of COVID 19. Lockdown-induced closure of micro, small and medium enterprises resulted in joblessness at a scale which was difficult to fathom. Besides, there were vast numbers of daily wagers, hawkers, vegetable and fruit vendors, street food vendors, plumbers, electricians, maidservants, etc. who had no work and hence no money to fend for themselves and their families. As such, for a large number of Indian workers in unorganised sectors, no work actually means 'no money'. Thus, sudden loss of livelihoods triggered a panic button, and the most impulsive reaction was a mad rush to return to their respective native places. However, homeward journeys were even more distressing. The article provides insights into the root cause of the distress of the migrant workers and a framework for tackling the issue in short and the long run.

Keywords: Migrant Workers, Lockdown, Joblessness, Income Insecurity, COVID 19, India

INTRODUCTION
The fright of COVID 19 triggered a nationwide lockdown since 24 March 2020. The lockdown indeed succeeded in arresting the growth rate of the spread COVID 19 to a great extent. However, the almost sudden announcement of the nationwide lockdown unleashed unprecedented predicament for the migrant workers. Lockdown-induced closure of micro, small and medium enterprises resulted in joblessness at a scale which was difficult to fathom. Besides, there were vast numbers of daily wagers, hawkers, vegetable and fruit vendors, street food vendors, plumbers, electricians, maidservants, etc. who had no work and hence no money to fend for themselves and their families. As such, for a large number of Indian workers in unorganised sectors, no work actually means no money. Thus, sudden loss of livelihoods triggered a panic button, and the most impulsive reaction was a mad rush to return to their respective native places.

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Even the governments at the centre or various states were not ready to tackle the unparalleled rush of the migrant workers who wanted to return to their respective villages anyhow. As the trains and interstate busses were closed, many of them chose to proceed towards their homes on foot or their bicycles, cycle-rickshaw or carts. Highways all over the country thus became a theatre of thousands of unpleasant stories of disgruntled workers being hungry, injured, hurt, beaten up by cops, diseased, and above all, emotionally sapped. Many of the workers were seen moving on the highways with their baggage on their head and kids on their arms. Besides, pregnant women and children were also walking with the same determined pace as their distraught parents so that they can reach the safety of their homes in their respective villages. Such a disdainful spectacle on the highways raised questions on the sensitivity of the central government as well as the state governments towards the plight of workers who were left in the lurch by the sudden announcement of nationwide lockdown which caught them unawares amid uncertainty, hopelessness, unemployment, and scare of morbidity and eventual death if they got infected by COVID 19.

**ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS**

The problem of migrant workers may not be unique to India, but the sheer scale –there are more than 40 million migrant labourers across the country –makes it difficult to provide relief to everyone (Pandey, 2020). Nonetheless, the opposition parties were quick to react to the distressful plight of the Indian migrant workers all over the country. The visuals of the migrant workers’ movement in the most disgraceful manner, running on electronic media augmented public anger against the state authorities. The incidents have shone a spotlight on the plight of millions of poor Indians who migrate from villages to cities in search of livelihood –and how the lockdown has left them stranded far away from home, with no jobs or money (Pandey, 2020). Further, it has been observed that the announcement of nationwide lockdown was made without an adequate plan to deal with the problems of the migrant workers as the sudden lockdown created immense panic and confusion as factories, small industries and construction sites closed (The Economic Times, 2020).

Quoting an opposition leader, The Economic Times (2020) mentioned: 'Unpreparedness has become the byword of this government. And this Unpreparedness may have unintentionally led to a humongous risk of Covid-19. At least one to one and a half crore people are left out on the streets. Have you, the PM, completely forgotten (before announcing the lockdown) that these sections of people do exist in our country? What is the point of sermonising to such people who are bereft of shelter, food and medicine? Shouldn't we have prepared for this contingency as it was nothing that could not have been foreseen?' Furthermore, there is much substance in the claim of the opposition that the government of India did little homework before announcing the nationwide lockdown with an absolute curb on almost all business activities and mobility within the country, seemingly unmindful of the hardships such closure was likely to bring to the poor people at the receiving end.

Indeed, the mass movement surprised the state authorities as clearly, no policymaker had planned for such a reaction, and no detailed contingency plans seemed to be in place (Chatterjee, 2020). In a huff, the officials issued frantic orders to seal inter-state borders and for people to maintain social distancing so that the virus could not spread. Such administrative orders further complicated the matter for the poor workers who now had to fight the law-enforcing cops alongside hunger and fatigue. Several incidents of the scuffle between the migrant workers and the cops were reported from different parts of the country during initial phases of the nationwide lockdown.
It is true that the Prime Minister of India apologised for the miseries faced by the flustered migrant workers due to nationwide lockdown. However, the apology did not bring in any relief to the workers who somehow wanted to reach their homes amidst no support from the state authorities. In some of the facilities created by the state governments to accommodate the migrant workers, the arrangements were far from adequate and satisfactory. Whether living in shelters, sleeping on footpaths or under flyovers, the migrants are restless and are waiting for restrictions to be eased so they can go home. The mismanagement of the migrant crisis and the treatment of its poorest citizens during the pandemic could be India’s shame (Pandey, 2020). Hence, Prime Minister’s ‘apology’ should be for lack of planning, zero preparation, no relief measures for the poor, no warning and continuing waste of public money on expensive projects like Central Vista, anything short of that is a deflection from guilty and shirking blame (The Economic Times, 2020).

A lockdown, however necessary, was always going to be unbearably difficult for those without a social and economic cushion (Chatterjee, 2020). Apart from the suddenness of announcement regarding nationwide lockdown and lack of preparedness to tackle unforeseen exodus of the migrant workers from metros and larger cities, the state authorities were not able to reach out to them due to lack of centralised data. Unfortunately, India has no central registry of migrant workers despite passing legislation 40 years ago to establish such a database (Srivastava and Nagaraj, 2020). According to an International Labour Organisation assessment, 40 crore informal sector workers in India could be pushed deeper into poverty due to this lockdown (Press Trust of India, 2020). However, due to lack of credible database on migrant workers, it is undoubtedly a daunting task to make appropriate policy interventions.

THE WAY FORWARD

Migrant workers never seem to be much of a consideration for politicians, and despite their numbers; they have no political clout (Chatterjee, 2020). Besides, migrant workers rarely have access to welfare measures for people below the poverty line (Chatterjee, 2020). Surprisingly, in a survey conducted by Jan Sahas, it was found that 62 per cent of workers did not have any information about emergency welfare measures provided by the government and 37 per cent did not know how to access the existing schemes (Chatterjee, 2020). Hence, the migrant workers were not assured when the government announced free ration or direct benefit transfer. As a result, they continued on their impulsive journeys back home.

Apart from protecting the villages from the rapid spread of COVID 19 due to the large influx of migrant workers, another major challenge for the state authorities is to ensure their rehabilitation in terms livelihood and income security. The migrant workers left their villages earlier due to shrinking employment opportunities. Suddenly, the villages have vast numbers of people who would require jobs to sustain themselves. Already distressed farm sector cannot accommodate such an enormous rural population. Hence the government needs to spend not only on revitalising the farm sector through appropriate policy interventions (Jha, Mohapatra and Lodha, 2019) but also focus on rural infrastructure development in a big way.

Currently, India is reeling under an unusual situation. No one knows precisely when the COVID 19 scare will be over. It is unlikely that the majority of workers will return to cities and towns anytime soon to reclaim their jobs. Hence, the government needs to work hard to empower the villages in the manner that every family has adequate and sustained income over time. While the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee can be used as a quick fix, it cannot be a lasting
solution to a typically high incidence of rural unemployment and income insecurity. Holistic development of rural India may be an appropriate response to combat the emerging scenario in the wake of COVID 19. There are considerable opportunities in the overall rural development. Most of the villages in India lack basic amenities like electricity, healthcare centre, school buildings, roads, cold storage, granaries, etc. A unified focus on providing basic amenities can create new job opportunities.

Modernising the villages as well as developing aspirational villages can also reduce large population influx from villages to the megacities and towns. If the villages offer decent healthcare and educational facilities, people may prefer to stay back. Further, industries should be incentivised to start or relocate their factories and offices close to the villages so that they have a readily available workforce. Rural India needs an image makeover on the ground. COVID 19 has presented an opportunity to reinvent Indian villages on the lines of counties of the European nations. However, this is possible only if the local communities own up the responsibility of rebuilding their villages in all earnestness.

REFERENCES
Election Manifestos and the Voters’ Right to Know

Akshay Bajad*

Abstract
Election manifestos play a pivotal role in the decision making process of the voters. Political parties put fore their vision to lead the nation in a particular manner while publicizing their manifestos. The general public of the nation cast their votes by relying upon such manifestos. One of such parties forms the majority by grabbing the votes, come in power, administers the Government for five years, and by the end of their tenure again publishes a fresh manifesto containing new promises for the voters. However, the voters do not have a clear picture as to what all promises were acted upon or what were the reasons for not implementing those promises or why the said unfulfilled promises are not carried forward in the next election manifesto apart from what is being portrayed by the opposition parties. If a status report is there with respect to the promises of quantitative nature made in the previous election manifestos of the candidates and political parties, at the disposal of every citizen before the ensuing elections, then it can strengthen the democratic process and also restore the confidence of the people in the democratic process of choosing elected representatives.

Keywords: Election Manifestos, Voters Right To Know, Election Commission of India, Political Parties, Candidates

Recognising the importance of the election manifestos, the Hon’ble Supreme Court directed the Election Commission of India to frame guidelines directly governing the contents of the election manifestos in the case of S. Subramaniam Balaji vs. State of Tamil Nadu & Others¹. Although the Election Commission of India issued certain guidelines on election manifestos, framed in consultation with the political parties, it failed to consider that the voters ought to have a right to know as to what happened to those promises made in the election manifestos. A failure on the part of the political party or for that matter a candidate in disclosing the status of the promises made in their election manifestos before the next elections deprive a voter his right to know and thereby denudes him from making an informed choice.

Election manifestos are generally drafted by the political parties and candidates keeping an eye on forthcoming elections and are typically published and well publicised. The political parties and candidates bag the votes by making promises in the polls, however, the voters are kept in the dark, when it comes to allowing them to know the correct status of all such promises made. It shall be

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difficult to hold the political parties and candidates responsible for non-fulfilment of every promise made in the election manifestos, however, what would be the harm caused to such political parties and candidates if a disclosure about the status of the promises is required to be made by them while filing nominations.

Till recently, the candidates use to propagate the manifestos published or released by the political parties to which such candidates are affiliated to. However, since last few elections, several candidates belonging to different political parties, taking into consideration the local issues, have been coming up with their manifestos giving an account of what would they do for their constituency if they are elected. The safeguards, although few, laid down by the Election Commission of India govern only the election manifestos issued by the political parties and not the individuals.

There is a statutory vacuum regarding the regulation of election manifestos to the extent of tracking the performance of the political parties and the candidates and accountability to the public thereof. The Representation of People Act, 1951 as well as the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 have recognised the right of a voter to know; however, the same is insufficient. The information sought under Section 33A and Form No. 26 pertains more to the conduct of the candidates in their capacity. Still, it is more so important to call for information concerning their conduct as a representative of the nation. Voter’s right to know about the agenda of the political parties, their accountability and sincerity towards the promises made by it is much more fundamental for the survival of democracy.

The voter may think over before making his/her choice of electing law-breakers as law-makers. The vacuum regarding the information relating to the promises made in the election manifestos and their status has resulted into deprivation of the right to know of the voter as guaranteed under Article 19(1) (a) of the Constitution of India. Such disclosure would ensure that the voters make an informed choice while casting their votes which is very much essential for participatory democracy. If a Status Report is there at the disposal of every citizen, then it can strengthen the democratic process and also restore the confidence of the people in the democratic process of choosing elected representatives. Furthermore, such disclosure would also keep a check upon the political parties since all such parties and candidates shall publish their manifestos after thorough research, thereby restraining them from making false promises to fill their vote banks.

**Why is the provision of information as to the past performance of a candidate and political parties concerning the election manifestos essential?**

Article 19(1) (a) of the Indian Constitution includes right to know of the voters about their candidates and their performance in their tenure before any citizen exercise their franchise. The Hon’ble Supreme Court recognised the voter’s right to know for the first time in the case of State of Uttar Pradesh v. Raj Narain & Others and has widened the horizons of the right to know of a voter while reiterating that the said right is a fundamental right under Article 19 (1) (a) of the Constitution of India in the case of Lok Prahari vs. Union of India reported in (2018) 4 SCC 699. Further, in the case of Union of India v. The Association for Democratic Reforms, [(2002) 5 SCC 294] held in Para 22 that a voter has a right to elect or re-elect based on the antecedents and the past performance of the candidate. Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) also guarantees the right to freedom of speech and expression with regards to voting and this right shall include the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kind.
Any political party is not liable to disclose information under RTI. As such, the citizens of the country are left with no option to know as to what is the status of the fulfilment or otherwise of the election manifestos. For a participative form of democracy, the voters’ must be educated in the right manner. It is all the more important that people cast their votes after knowing their candidate and not for any other extraneous considerations.

Therefore, to make our democracy and our election process, transparent and to give the voters all the information they require about the political parties and the candidates so that the voters could exercise their right to vote wisely, parliament should amend the Rule 4A. Form 26 appended to the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961 thereby seeking information regarding the status report of the promises of quantitative nature made in the election manifestos of the candidates along with that of his/her political party from the candidates; as well as the Election Commission of India should also issue guidelines regarding submission of an affidavit containing a statement concerning the status of the promises of quantitative nature made in the election manifestos of the candidates along with that of his/her political party from the candidates by suitably modifying the Model Code of Conduct.

Endnotes
5 https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/for-cleaner-fairer-elections/article22809421.ece
Recounting the Social Footprints of FIDR India

Charudutta Panigrahi*

ABSTRACT
This article is based on an interview with Charudutta Panigrahi, Founder-Mentor, Forum for Integrated Development & Research (FIDR India), a leading think tank of the country. In this interview, Charudutta passionately tells the story of the evolution of FIDR as also the challenges faced and the road ahead. Indian thinker, TED speaker and futurist, Charudutta has set up institutions (GLF & FIDR) which work with communities across India. Widely and diversely published, he is a prolific writer on trends, issues concerning the present and the future of our society: *he may be googled*. His present manifesto aims at enhancing the quality of community participation in governance –both in India and abroad. This interview has been conducted by Dr. Srirang K Jha, an academic, who is deeply interested in social change agenda.

Keywords: Forum for Integrated Development & Research (FIDR India), Development Sector, India, http://www.charuduttapanigrahi.com/, https://fidrindia.org/

What triggered the formation of FIDR India?

NGOs constitute a middle space between the public sector on the one hand and the private sector on the other. In India, there are over 3.8 million NGOs, and by this reckoning, the number of NGOs is more than double the number of schools in the country, 250 times the number of government hospitals. There is almost 1 NGO for 400 people as against one policeman for 709 people. With this population of NGOs, we find a severe deficit in the measurement of the development work being undertaken by these NGOs. The social impact of their work is rarely documented or seen objectively. Innovations are not forthcoming. With technology, development work can be made more affordable, less complicated, and more accountable. But the infusion of technology in the sector is still less than desirable.

With FIDR, we wanted to form a group of professionals, who besides being altruistic should also be keen on the measurement of the good work, they do or spearhead. Hence our catchphrase is ‘reimagine development’. Development is dynamic, and the social change organisation (s) has to

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move with the changing landscape of socio-economic trends and indicators. FIDR was set up to innovate new ways of development and out-of-the-box implementation mechanics which would yield sustainable impact at the point of change.

Objectives of FIDR include the promotion of good governance processes through an appropriate platform for improved service delivery in education, health, civic services and economic development; resolution of social challenges through data and service design, promotion of innovation and entrepreneurship initiatives using appropriate platforms for sustainable economic development; improvement in education standards through advocacy using proper tools and infrastructure development support to achieve competitive human resource capacity; improvement in the health care system through advocacy using appropriate tools and infrastructure development support for better health care services and well-being; and capacity building among women and youth as a measure for sustainable development.

**What are the vision and mission of FIDR?**
The vision of FIDR is to change the way people take charge and look at their own lives and the lives of their society and their country. The mission of FIDR is to involve all, tailor-made change initiatives for differing situations and always help communities reinvent their approaches towards reforms in the areas necessary. The reforms are theme agnostic. It could be health, education, water, livelihoods, or disaster.

**What were the early constraints in converting the idea of social change organisation into reality?**
The predominance of individualism, short ear to the ground, a culture of non-measurement of social work and all of the traditional notions assuming the status of discarded totems resulting in inefficiencies posed the early constraints.

**In the current scenario, what are the problems faced by institutions like FIDR in India?**
I would not call them problems, but they are challenges. With the growing significance of CSR, there is a trust deficit between the corporates and the NGOs. Corporates still take the NGOs as ‘vendors’ which gives rise to a lot of other legal and financial complications. NGOs are non-profit making, but they still have to pay GST. This creates a contradictory situation. Many of the corporates have created their foundations. Instead of utilising the services of 3.8 million NGOs present in the country, is it required to have one more foundation and duplicate the efforts? Another challenge is the NGO participation in public programs. Public initiatives should proactively encourage greater involvement of NGOs in their programs. It would help get rid of the opacity that still exists.

**What are the thrust areas of FIDR?**
The thrust areas of FIDR are incredibly diverse. Reforms in agriculture, livelihoods, promotion of women artistry, utilisation of ‘technology for good’ or ICT for Development to implement reforms, tribal community development, health & education form our core portfolio.

**How do you look at the experiences of working with the communities in different states of the country?**
I consider myself and FIDR fortunate to have got the experiences in different states of India and amongst diverse communities. We have been experiencing the true diversity of India, the uniqueness of it. But my learning at the end of the day is that a human issue is more or less the same everywhere with slight variations due to the ecosystems in which we live.
How has FIDR changed itself over the years?
FIDR has been continuously changing its approaches, the tools for social change management and the HR deployment for specific thrust areas. I believe that an organisation is ‘living’ and any living organism has to be sensitive to the environment and adapt to the changing paradigms. Or else, the change agent itself becomes prey to the ‘fixated’ assumptions. These affect the quality of interventions badly, on-the-ground.

What are the significant accomplishments of FIDR?
There are quite a few accomplishments. Some of them are:
- Changing the lives of more than 5L people across India
- Developing robust data-centric, research and documentation skills in the sector
- Always emphasising on innovations and have designed each program differently and uniquely to deliver the necessary results.
- Providing technical support to the governments – in research, data analytics and public policy initiatives
- Shaping FIDR to be a think tank which implements. Bringing in the combination of thought leadership and last-mile ground implementation

Will you like to share some of the path-breaking interventions of FIDR India?
One of our unique programmes was a Citizen School at Konark in Odisha to train the local youth in robotics just after the disaster brought about by deadly cyclone last year better known as Fani. It was an excellent way to divert the minds of young people who needed some creative engagement so that they can come out of the trauma induced by unprecedented destruction in the aftermath of the cyclone. Another significant contribution was the publication of a whitepaper on Corporate Social Responsibility in Odisha, which was highly appreciated by the Government of Odisha. Besides, we are also involved in microcredit, employment-linked skill training, microenterprise development, and employment generation as part of the Livelihood and Poverty Alleviation Programme. FIDR is also engaged in strategic CSR in terms of developing CSR master plan with clearly defined indicators for output, outcome and impact; implementing CSR plan by placing our team of professionals at partner location; providing consultancy on specific needs/projects, and conducting impact assessment of ongoing CSR Programmes.

How do you see FIDR growing and contributing during the next ten years?
FIDR in the next ten years should be able to change lives exponentially. We are restless to achieve scale, speed, and impact in the primary touchpoints of the social sector like health, education and livelihood. We intend to slowly but surely incorporate measures to drive results that can be transformative.

FIDR would like to work with younger talents and encourage ‘disruptions’ to spread across several levels to address challenges of cost, hiring, the scale of operations. We believe that strategic cost management can help us access new sources of revenue, expand our service footprint dramatically, and reduce resource hurdles to growth. We aim to foster ‘development labs’ across India because for us, innovation is all about thinking outside the box to achieve what others in the sector, consider impossible. The most critical aspect in successful innovation would be to find a new axis amongst the civil society, the government, and the industry. We would plan to solve the social issues by looking at a different axis and trying to touch the lives of millions.
The Dynamics of Ethiopia’s Unsettling Political Crisis: The Genesis, Dimensions of Stakeholders’ Inclusiveness and Remedies

Tewodros Woldearegay* and Timothy Chanimbe**

ABSTRACT
Given Ethiopia's political reforms distorted by numerous impediments. The objective of this study was to answer to the emergent causations of the country's political uprising, severe challenges obstructing the transition towards a democracy and hence looking a way forward remedy. Qualitative data collection approaches (interview and document analysis) as primary and secondary data sources) respectively employed. The finding of this study revealed that the political actors of the old regime and the reformist group are not only unwilling to bargain and settle on enabling strategies for a smooth transition but also intensifying their polarization. A typical pitfall rooted in the transition process is the dominance of the ruling party as major a stakeholder, to the detriment of non-state actors, opposition political parties and international actors who have been made dormant and only render mild participation. The result, furthermore, showed that the body responsible for ensuring the transition lacks appropriate reforming strategies to effectuate the transition. The root causes of the ongoing political crisis are traceable to economic and political frailties as well as social discontent mounted among the youth across the country. At the same time, the positions and hidden agenda of the actors seemed divergent and irreconcilable. The results also indicate that EPRDF's internal cracks, mass protests and communal clashes, ethnic federalism gap and presence of unregulated Media are the significant challenges of the transition. In order to make the political transition smooth, political bargaining between leaders of the autocratic (old) regime and the representatives of the reformist groups agree on strategic issues were recommended.

Keywords: EPRDF, ethnic federalism, ethnic violence, political reform, political transition

INTRODUCTION
Ethiopia's present-day turmoil is said to be associated with the absence of political opposition and the marginalization of minority groups (Getahun, 2018; Merera, 2007 and Smith, 2007). Even though

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the country’s constitution ensures rights of political participation to all ethnic groups in the country, which even extend to self-determination, the reality completely contradicts what the constitution spells out. Practically, there are rather rampant and constant complaints and allegations of violations of rights of ethnic rights (Getahun, 2018; Salih et al., 2018 and Harbeson, 2005). Inimical to the majoritarian principle of democracy, the country’s political headship is dominated by Tigrayans, who is approximately six per cent of the population, while others are marginalized (Seid, 2013; Merera, 2011 and Lyons, 1996). Although the country follows an ethnic-based federal government system, individual states are powerless, and parties which represent each state and ethnic group in the ruling coalition, Ethiopian People Democratic Front (EPRDF) are described by many as puppets (Getahun, 2018 and Smith, 2007).

Additionally, the TPLF are at the forefronts of the nation’s politics and economy. The party allegedly controls significant portions of the economy through its own companies and affiliate business institutions (Seid, 2013; Abbink, 2011 and Lyons, 2007). Party members have been accused of exploiting the country’s resources for personal and party gains, whereas other groups are extremely marginalized (Seid, 2019; Seid, 2013). Contemporarily, land-grabbing has become the new venture, which has adversely affected many ethnic groups whose livelihood depend on their land. With the signs of disappointment, the regime is not only accused of seizing land from these marginalized groups and handing it to its affiliates and supporters, but also sells it to foreign companies (Seid, 2013). However, government authorities claim that these large-scale land transfers are part of the development plan for the country. Ultimately, these multi-tiered repressions led to violent uprisings and protests against the regime (Getahun, 2018).

In light of the uprisings and protests, the political hierarchy of the country agreed to embark on political reforms geared towards democracy (Salih et al., 2018). However, there is collective anxiety that this reform could become another pseudo start to democracy due to disagreements about participation, among stakeholders, state and organizational inefficiencies (Ezekiel, 2018). Informed by the political uprisings and complexities stifling the political reforms, we investigate empirically and theoretically with the aid of the transitology theory, the dynamics of the unsettled political reforms of Ethiopia and its commensurate inability to see a smooth transition to democracy. To be able to conduct this study empirically, the following research questions are to be answered: (1) what emergent causes are inflaming the political crisis in Ethiopia? (2) What are the crucial and excruciating challenges obstructing the transition towards a democracy?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
We believe the political antagonisms among some grieved citizens and actors crippling the cross-over to democracy may be associated with transitional inadequacies for regime changes and as such the theory of transitology provides useful lenses for making sense of our data. Focusing on regime changes, the theory stresses on issues arising during a movement from authoritarianism to democracy (Lewin, 1988). In O’Donnell and Schmitter (1986), the determinant factor during political transition is elite bargaining, especially the strategic interaction between leaders of the autocratic regime and representatives of the opposition forces. They take a huge role to effectuate the process. Subsequently, Karl and Schmitter (1991) also add the essence of civil society and political parties also play a role in the transition process, while international actors take a backseat to domestic factors concerning transition outcomes.
As per the theory, patterns of elite interaction impact the prospects for democratization and influence the institutional features and quality of the democracy that emerges. Thus, formal and informal bargains among the elite are essential to neutralize the influence of hardliners within the collapsing authoritarian regime and radicals among the opposition. This negotiated transition abets the process of democratization (Karl and Schmitter, 1991). However, uncertainty and agency are fundamental principles of the theory. Thus, during the early stages of regime transformation, an exaggerated form of political causality tends to predominate in a situation of rapid and unpredictable change, high risk, shifting interests and indeterminate strategic reactions. Actors believe that they are engaged in a "war of movement" where dramatic options are available, and the outcome depends critically on their choices (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986). Inspired by this, we explore the processes and causes along with the diverging and converging interest of stakeholders in the transition process.

However, transitions from an authoritarian regime to democratic ones and its possible outcomes are summarized as follows. Historical experience tells us, the first and most probable scenario would be, a reversion to the same or a different form of tyranny but may be able to consolidate some type of democracy (Schmitter and Karl, 1994). The second possible outcome would be the formation of a hybrid regime which does not satisfy the minimal procedural criteria for political democracy (Schmitter, 2014). A third logical outcome is an unconsolidated democracy in which the minimal procedural criteria for democracy are respected, but without mutually acceptable rules of the game to regulate the competition between political forces.

The fourth possible outcome is the one we most obviously desired, namely, a democracy consolidated through mutually acceptable rules and broadly valued institutions of civic freedom, political tolerance and fair competition among its major actors (Schmitter and Karl, 1994). Related to this proposition, we assess what type of democracy the actions and inactions of actors in the transition would lead to and whether it can lead to democracy.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Area
The research was conducted in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where all key actors of the political transition are presented. Hence, informants were selected from EPRDF side, opposition political parties, civil society organizations (CSOs), higher institutions and research institutions. The data obtained from purposively selected informants from the groups described above. The rationale for such an approach is derived from the idea of purposive sampling techniques. Purposive sampling gives freedom to the researcher to select the most productive informant to answer the research questions (Marshall, 1996)

Source of Data and Target Groups
Informants were identified based on a preliminary assessment of their understanding of the subject matter. Thus, data on the dynamics of Ethiopia’s unsettled political crisis: the genesis, dimensions of stakeholders’ inclusiveness and remedies were obtained from thirty-five purposively selected informants from EPRDF side, opposition political parties, civil society organizations, higher institutions and research institutions. Seven individuals represent all selected institutions. The reason for choosing a purposive sampling technique as it will help the researcher to access the right informant and to address the core research question of the study (Creswell, 2009). However, the
researchers used data saturation as a frame of reference to determine the number of informants who were involved in the study.

**Informants’ Positions and Gender Category**
Informants were diverse in terms of positions in their organization that assured the fair representation of the data. Hence, the selection was made deliberately as follows: from EPRDF side (7), opposition political parties (7), higher institutions (7), CSOs leaders (7) and research institutions (7). Furthermore, twenty informants were male, and the rest were female informants to maintain gender balance.

**Data Collection Tools**
For this study, both primary and secondary data sources employed. Thus, questionnaires addressed through an interview with each informant to examine the ongoing political crisis of the country. The questionnaire has eight questions with four parts that are: two questions related to causes of the political crisis, two questions about the core challenges of the transition, two questions related to the hidden agenda of the political actors and other two questions are about possible solutions to actualize the transition. Also, we employed these secondary sources for contextual and academic purposes without twisting or massaging the sources to suit our interest or changing the meaning of the source (Aberbach and Rockman, 2002).

**Data Analysis**
The study employed qualitative data analysis method to analyze the response of informants according to the standard procedure. This is because, the method does not restrict informants from divulging information, and it is also suitable to organize, analyze, interpret and present the data about the research questions.

**RESULTS**

**Causes of the Crisis**
Unanimously, all informants agreed that the ongoing political crisis in Ethiopia has political, economic and social bases. The results, in this regard, revealed that economic challenges (chiefly massive foreign currency shortages, faltering growth, inflation and pervasive corruption), political challenges (EPRDF's internal cracks) and social discontent mounted especially among youth in large provincial towns of the country, are the driving forces that push the reformist group from EPRDF'S womb upfront as the caretaker to lead the transition. In agreement with the finding, Getahun (2018), Seid (2018) and Salih et al. (2018) underlined that TPLF's political domination under EPRDF's umbrella makes TPLF, the only maker and breaker of the laws, contrary to the country's constitution. Furthermore, Merera (2011) and Smith (2007) further adds deep-rooted causes of the crisis by stating that Ethiopia's constitution reorganizes the importance of the political participation of all ethnic groups in the country and guarantees their rights which extend to self-determination. However, the practice contradicts the constitution and violates the rights of these ethnic groups. Unlike to majoritarian democracy principle, the politics is dominated by Tigrayans, who is approximately six per cent of the population, ousting the majority from decision making role. All in all, informants remarked that absolute political control makes TPLF's dominant in controlling the country's economy and that birthed nationwide protest which initially sparked in Oromia Regional State and later on spreading across the country including the capital city, Addis Ababa against the regime.
Positions and Hidden Agenda of Political Actors
Informants agreed that positions and interest of the actors were very diverse and irreconcilable. Besides, current Ethiopia's political fluidity paved to the proliferation of political parties. Further, they emphasized that almost all of these political parties are established without defined political philosophy; instead, they formed based on ethnic identity. This result is correlated with ICG report (2019), Yohannes (2019) and Dawit (2019) research findings which explained action and inactions of the actors in the transition: Thus, TPLF is resistant to the transition, instead, working to abort the reform by destabilizing the security of the country using its previous connections. Furthermore, the report underlined that TPLF’s has an insignificant role in Abiy’s administration and hence are working against the interest of other EPRDF’s members to regain its political monopoly. Hence, Tigray Regional State vice president, Debretsion Gebremichael, declared that "we either live together respecting each other or we will fall apart", implying that some Tigrayans advocate the state's secession. Since Abiy's ascension to power, the TPLF has been concentrating on building consensus in Tigray preparing its constituents for a scenario in which the region pushes for at least greater autonomy.

Amhara Democratic Party (ADP) and Oromo Democratic Party (ODP), on the other hand, are working together to actualize the transition. The coalition of ADP and ODP were successful in ousting TPLF’s political monopoly in the EPRDF regime as well as to address the grievances of the mass which surfaced across the country (ICG, 2019). Initially, their political marriage was successful in winning the heart and mind of protesters as well as to control the state machinery. Eventually, dissatisfaction grew during power-sharing between ADP and ODP. This is because, ODP took vital political offices in the military, security, ministerial positions, and other governmental posts, including Mayer of Addis Ababa. Besides, massive displacement and home demolitions of peoples in the name of correcting land grabbing in the outskirts of the capital city with the knowledge of Lemma Megersa deteriorated the political unification of ADP and ODP.

Meanwhile, the tension further escalated and became public when ODP raised ownership rights of Addis Ababa (Capital city of Ethiopia) and the strong reaction from ADP by defying ODP’s claim on Addis Ababa took their unity for another hidden confrontation. To claim the dust, therefore, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Lemma Megersa (the then Oromia region president) addressed this issue in their media briefing by saying that there is no as such bold disagreement between ADP and ODP. Still, both parties are working together to make the transition fruitful. Nevertheless, the deeds of both parties in their jurisdiction are often different, and still, ODP is working secretly to undertake political monopoly under cover of Ethiopiawinet (Ethiopian-ness).

Whereas, the position of Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM) is still blurred and often takes neutral positions. This is because Sidama-Wolayta conflict twisted SEPDM to have less engagement in the reform. Hence, the party has no specific position either to support or reject the transition, particularly at a regional level, instead, takes periphery role of the transition. On top of that, SEPDM has leadership gap at the grassroots level to address the grievances of their constituents and hence, dissatisfaction grown secretly on the deeds of the governing body which are fueling the conflict as well as posing SEPDM to have a vital role in the transition.

Meanwhile, the role of opposition political parties in the transition is mild; everything is controlled by the ruling party (Prosperity Party). However, among the notable opposition political parties Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) due to its hidden, but, calculated marriage with ODP becoming a
threat for the transition. According to Yohannes (2019), OLF leaders are acting as a government by refusing the PM's decision to disarm their troops. Hence, OLF troops in the Oromia Region are integrating into the society without disarming their troops, and hence, caused for massive displacement for non-Ormom people, cross-border raids, kidnappings and robberies in various parts of the Oromiya region. However, Abiy's administration kept silent against OLF action while taking action to maintain peace and order in the country.

MAJOR CHALLENGES OF THE TRANSITION
Informants boldly mentioned that EPRDF's internal cracks, mass protest and communal clashes, ethnic federalism gap and presence of unregulated media as critical challenges of the transition.

EPRDF'S internal cracks: All in all informants agreed that EPRDF is collapsed due to lack of charismatic leader after the death of Meles Zenawi and that birthed leadership gap. This finding has similarity with Lefort (2018) argument about EPRDF’s internal cracks. He argued that striking ideological difference between the ruling coalitions (EPRDF) as a government to stand together in realizing the transition is at a crossroad. In his analysis, both ADP and OPD are working together to actualize the transition, while, TPLF is a bit distanced and adding negative synergy to abort the reform. Whereas, SEPDM still playing an insignificant role in due to the process. Lefort also explained the causes of the crack of EPRDF by associating with the death of Meles Zenawi. This is because, during his administration, Meles had made the political and security apparatus, both responsible and dependent on him. Hence, he forceful controlled the direction of EPRDF without any problem. However, his unexpected death created internal mistrust within the EPRDF coalition and sisterly political parties. Eventually, the party nominated Hailemariam Desalegn as a new Prime Minister. However, Desalegn continued in maintaining Meles's revolutionary democracy rhetoric without addressing the grievances their internal problem as well as the mass and hence this eventually birthed total dissatisfactions across the country.

According to Dawit (2019) and Ademo (2018) in late 2014, EPRDF had begun to admit shortcomings of leadership and inefficient bureaucracy at both national and local levels. Henceforward, the party went through critical self-evaluation (in Amharic called Gimgema), leadership replacement (in Amharic called Metekakat) and deep reforms (in Amharic called tiluq tihadeso). However, it was too little and too late to address the longstanding deprivation of the mass. Meanwhile, internal quarrels continued and crippled the party's ability to implement reforms and addressing public inquires. This situation paved for the Amhara Democratic Party (ADP) and Oromo Democratic Party (ODP) leaders to take advantage of Meles's absence as an opportunity to assert their relevance within the ruling coalition by ousting TPLF from the epicentre of the country’s politics. Thus, the open confrontation had begun between the old governing and oligarchic elite, basically Tigrayan, and the reformists headed by Abiy Ahmed. Frictions within the ruling coalition prevailed openly during a media briefing and press releases. This birthed three bold power shifts within the EPRDF regime. First, the military and security apparatus was controlled by the reformist group. Secondly, regional states grab power and challenged TPLF dominance in their spheres of administration. Thirdly, the reformist group started to take action against corrupt ministers and officials of the regime.

Mass Protest and Communal Clashes: Informants who represented CSOs, opposition political groups and TPLF accused Abiy's loose administration contributed a lot for the existence of communal violence. While the rest believed that local administration of EPRDF who resisted change massively
played a significant role in the presence of communal violence, in support of this result, Dawit (2019) argued that he (the Prime Minister) has no clear strategies to address the grievances of the protesters. On the other hand, Gethaun (2018) stated that both the central government and regional states are responsible for the existence of communal clashes across the country. This fact indicated that the check and balance system among the central government and regional states becoming blurred due to the inability of the central government to enforce law along with its jurisdiction.

Horne (2019) in this regard, explaining that there is no credible evidence that Abiy's administration has a clear road map or strategy for the growing grievances of the mass. Disputes over access to land and question of identity and loss administration along boundaries have led open conflicts along ethnic lines. Furthermore, dissatisfactions and hunger are grown from ODP about who gets to govern and manage the capital city, Addis Ababa. The rising tensions across Ethiopia led to the displacement of more than 3.5 million people since Abiy took power. Taking this fact into account, Yohannes (2019) stated that Abiy's government lost public trust seems to be declined. Instead, ethnic hardliners from different groups are continuing to defy the prime minister's calls for pan-Ethiopian unity and keeping the possibility of conflict alive in several regions. Moreover, various groups continue to demand the right to form their states under the federal system. In a nutshell, Abiy's administration is becoming unable to assure the prevalence of peace and order across the country. Hence, the country's situation has gone down from bad to worse with a severe possibility of a civil war.

**Ethnic Federalism Gap:** Informants who represented research institutions agreed that there is a practical gap about the application of the 1995 EPRDF constitution. As to them, due to lack of proper exercise of authority among each constitutes of EPRDF's coalition that eventually caused the rebirth of EPRDF as Prosperity Party to address the flaw of the former regime by ousting TPLF from the political centre. While, informants who represented opposition political parties, CSOs and higher institutions argued that it is not the failure of constitutional application, first, the ethnic-based federal system of EPRDF by itself is a cause for the current federalism gap. In this regard, Takele (2019) added that the 1995 EPRDF constitution delegated authority to ethnic communities in each of the regional states and two city administrations (Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa). However, up till now, the constitution is vague on the application and division of powers between centre and periphery as well as each ethnic community's right to self-determination, which theoretically ranges from autonomy to independence. As a result, no consensus exists so far among Ethiopians on the appropriate application of the EPRDF's imposed federalism.

**Presence of Unregulated Media:** All informants believed that the act of the media's in Ethiopia is quite the opposite from universally excepted responsibilities. This finding has a correlation with the conclusion of Salih et al. (2018) and Ezekiel (2018) highlighted that in a democratic society, media are considered as the fourth state with their critical role in monitoring the government's activities, exposes weakness and report on political and economic corruption. Besides, it served as a platform for discussion and debate on policy issues, a source of information about citizens' concerns and a voice for the voiceless. However, in Ethiopia, by deviating from this fact media are party-affiliated and working in bolstering party ideology, values, socio-economic-political and development programmes and channel for disseminating hate speech against the norm of the society. Abiy's administration is reluctant in managing media's role by law and instead served as a fault line for several Media to intensifying the crisis.
DISCUSSION

During the past two decades, Africa has seen significant changes and various countries have made substantial progress in achieving political stability (Merera, 2011). In this regard, countries like Mali, Ghana and Senegal achieved credible political culture (Abbink, 2010). However, Africa still suffers neither lack of a continent-wide democratic breakthrough nor an institutionalization of democracy and the rule of law, and hence, violent conflict and authoritarianism remained constant (Abbink, 2010 and Ottaway, 1998). In this regard, the Horn of Africa, where Ethiopia is located, is one of them. In terms of state formation, Ethiopia has a long tradition of indigenous state formation and a relatively more robust state structure in the region, but, unable to build democracy yet (Abbink, 2010). In 1991, the Derg regime was militarily defeated by TPLF. Since then, TPLF has been in power ever since as the dominant partner in the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front until the recent riot surfaced across the country (Lyons, 1996).

Having this political story in mind and examining Ethiopia's current political transition with transitology gives a better picture of the country's move towards democracy. As per the idea of transitology, elite bargaining mainly leaders of the former regime and representatives of the reformist group on strategic issues are determinant factors for the success or failures of political transition (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986). Nevertheless, contrary to the idea, both parties are not willing to negotiate on the critical matters of the transition, while, their polarization becoming intense. Nebiyu (2019), in this regard, described that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's verbal abuse against leaders of the old regime (TPLF leaders) was a sparking point for their polarization. His first piece of verbal assault by saying that "day-time hyenas" (termed as in Amharic language yek' eni hibachi) on television briefing that immediately followed the Meskel Square blast at his support rally blocked the political bargaining process. Then after, leaders of the old regime, particularly the Tigrians were moving to Mekele from Addis Ababa, hiding from political negotiations and smooth interaction with the reformist group as well as refusing to commend from central government. The political reality of the country, therefore, showed that the transition is in trouble in completing its phase to actualize a democratic system in Ethiopia. This is because; key political actors, including TPLF, were not still willing to open up a genuine political discussion on strategic issues to effectuate the transition; rather, they are working against one another.

On top of that, Ethiopia's ethnic federalism and its application created polarized views among political elite towards the ongoing transition. Likewise, the federal structure is established along ethnic lines and caused a source of conflict among several ethnic groups. Hence, the system created more animosity and competition for power and influence among political actors in the country.

The theory further upholds the essence of civil society organizations (CSOs), non-state and international actors in political transition (Karl and Schmitter, 1991). Thus, the theory emphasized the role of CSOs, opposition political parties and international actors to actualize successful political transition. However, in Ethiopia, the transition process so far is dominated by the ruling party with mild participation of opposition political parties and non-state actors. This birthed difference between actors of the transition. This, in turn, makes EPRDF powerless to consolidate itself as a credible government to make the transition more institutionalized, instead, continuing by making the transition on the shoulders of few individuals primarily on Abiy Ahmed. This structural vacuum created due to the absence of CSOs and other non-state actors in the process and adversely impacted the effort of the reformist group to make the transition institutional and participatory. Until recently, CSOs and other non-state actors are not actively engaged in strategic dialogue with
the ruling party to actualize the transition. Instead, they have only a watchdog role in the process. Whereas, international actors who have an interest in Ethiopia, such as the United States of America, Gulf Countries, including Saudi Arabia, continued to manipulate the transition process by lobbing the reformist group. This may lead the transition into a pseudo-democratic transition. This fact is also correlated with Salih et al. (2018) recommendation on the essentiality CSOs, opposition political groups, non-state actors as well as professional associations in the political transition to make the road smooth to realize successful democratic transition. However, Abiy's administration is giving less attention to these actors so far and hence, the transition lacks credibility, especially by most the non-Oromo ethnic groups.

Another challenge of the transition is associated with patterns of elite interaction in the process. According to Karl and Schmitter (1991) and Karl (1990), patterns of elite interaction have a considerable impact either to build or destruct political transition. Schmitter (2014) further indicated formal and informal bargaining approaches between the elite to avoid the influence of ethnic hardliners and radicals among the opposition political groups. Ethiopia's political transition, in this regard, suffers from the absence of credible bargaining approaches between the actors, first ethnic hardliners are working together to fuel the gap between leaders of the old regime and reformist group. This makes the transition more chaotic. As a result, the level of anarchy becoming high in the federal system, which practically makes the regional states busy in strengthening their capability through military recruitment and training. This created a lack of political trust within EPRDF as well as within the reformist group. This, in turn, exposed the people to conspiracy politics. A notable example for this, after the killings of ADP high ranking officials at Bahir Dar and chief of staff of the Ethiopian army General Seare Moknnen along with another general, Gezai Abera at Addis Ababa on 22 June 2019, the reaction of Abiy's administration in delivering information to the public was inefficient. Sadly, there was also jamming of internet across the country and defying independent Media to access the event.

Furthermore, government-owned Media, the federal police commander, including the PM's press secretariat office, was alleged to misleading the public by giving wrong information about the killings. Such measures of Abiy's administration lead the people to conspiracy politics as well as making sceptical to information which is coming from the government. All these political upheavals within EPRDF and by far among opposition political parties paved "war of movement" between actors of the transition notably between ODP and ADP; ADP and TPLF and ODP and TPLF.

On the venue, the transition is also challenged by the constitutional procedure. Unarguably, there were some irregular attempts to actualize the transition from the reformist group in the early stage of the transition. However, their efforts were not significant enough to realize the transition. In order to understand how the process is impossible for the reformist group, it is significantly better to assess the constitutional challenge of the transition. As per article 104 and 105 of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopian Constitution, constitutional change or amendments on the content of constitution required two-thirds majority vote in the House of Peoples' Representatives; a two-thirds majority vote in the House of the Federation and willingness of all State Councils is mandatory (Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1995). This implied that the refusal of one regional state council is enough to dismiss any proposal of constitutional change or amendment inquiries. Therefore, parties like TPLF and some ethic hardliners are still resistance to the transition and have a constitutional base to disprove any kind of amendment inquiry to defy the transition unattainable. Meaning, the constitution is secretly locked and makes constitutional change
unattainable unless and otherwise, someone followed a populist approach to dissolve the current constitution. Abiy Ahmed, in this regard, lacks the momentum to take advantage of dissolving this rigid constitution. This is because, at the early stage of his appointment, he has wide-ranging public support which makes him very powerful to follow a populist approach to dissolve the constitution to effectuate the transition. Therefore, Abiy can use such kind of tactical move to escape the rigid nature of the constitution as well as to establish a commission who work for constitutional change to make the transition successful. Unfortunately, now he is too late to do that and dissatisfaction raised against him who may lead him lack of public support to follow such an approach. As a result, he came back to party procedure to conduct constitutional change which seems unattainable due to the reasons mentioned above.

This indicated that, therefore, the reformist group might not be interested in actualizing the transition, instead of as per the theory of transitology they seem to need a different form of tyranny government or a hybrid regime which does not satisfy the minimal procedural criteria for political democracy. The key reformist group, in this regard, including the PM, often saying that once a democratic election is conducted, the democratically elected government will be responsible for any kind of constitutional change, which seems logical, but unattainable with the current constitutional procedure of the current constitution. For instance, the second-largest ethnic group (the Amhara) people were not represented in the ratification process of the current constitution due to TPLF’s open blockage the Amhara political party and hence ADP is claiming constitutional change, whereas, TPLF resisting such kind of constitutional inquiries by saying that, if there will be an amendment on the constitution, Tigray Regional State will ask secession as per article 39 of the constitution. Therefore, how can we imagine or expect the forthcoming government to be democrat without first having a constitution which accommodates the will, aspirations and interest of its constituents? This makes the future of the country gloomy as well as dangerous to determine the stand of the reformist group towards the TPLF introduced ethnic-based federalism. Hence, as per the prediction of the theory of transitology on the possible outcomes of transitions from an authoritarian regime to democratic ones and the deeds of the reformist group in the transition process so far seems that they are following the footsteps of TPLF system to build the ODP’s domination with some sort of pseudo-political transition. There are several indications also, for instance, the prime minister is playing with both cards and trying to address the bottlenecks of the transition without commenting on the shortcoming of the constitution. Still, the PM has no clear stand on the ethnic-based federal system of the country, whereas, he often claiming togetherness with his "love" and "medemer" rhetoric. This indicated that the PM lacks articulated policy and strategies as a leader of the transition. Love and medemer do not exist in a political domain; instead, are moral values which more-off inclined to the spiritual domain. In political realism, nation-states are motivated by national interest; hence, the PM should come up with clear national agenda by pulling himself out of ethnic politics to actualize the ongoing political transition for the wellbeing of Ethiopians irrespective of their ethnic identity.

On the other juncture, the appointment of ministers is crucial in the course of political transition. However, Abiy's ministerial appointment is also causing another challenge by itself. The prime minister has appointed new ministers by giving 50% of the ministerial positions for females. This is a breakthrough in the country's politics and highly welcomed by the public. Nevertheless, there is a clear gap between the prime minister and the majority of his ministers in defending the transition so far. Most of his ministers are not active in the process and are not capable enough to convince the
public in their speech as well as their deeds. The only minister, in this regard, who are trying to support the transition and Abiy Ahmed is Muferiat Kamil (Minister of Peace), while, the others are kept silent. This implied that the ministers are not aware of the pace and approach of the transition or they are not willing to support the prime minister in the process of actualizing the transition. Therefore, it is time for Abiy to re-think his ministerial appointment to lead the country towards a democratic state unless addressed this leadership gap which probably leads the country from bad to worst scenario.

The last, but not the least reason associated the weakness of the central government to manage the security of the country. In the course of this transition, the prime minister seems failed to maintain peace and order in his jurisdiction. Since Abiy became a prime minister, the extent of lowliness in the country became high. This is because; he welcomed ideologically irreconcilable exile political parties without crafting rules and regulation for their political engagement. Consequently, the rate of internal displacement massively increased, ethnic hardliners were massively intensifying the conflict with their hate speech and the Burayu massacre are among the prominent example that showed the weakness of the central government to manage the chaos. The main reason for the weak reaction of Abiy’s administration is associated with the shift of power balance between the central government and regional states. Analyzing the current situation, seemingly, the regional states are becoming more powerful than the central government. Hence, the prime minister often denounces such violent acts instead of taking serious measures against law violators. As a result, the majority of the people are uncertain on the commitment of the prime minister and even starting questioning his political attitudes. The publicly known ethnic hardliners and hate speech speakers are jealous of the prime minister, and no one accused him to deeds. Apart from this, when the Oromiya regional state is claiming the ownership of the Addis Ababa by ousting the rights of other citizens, the prime minister kept silent instead of addressing the problem. The reluctance of the prime minister on refusing the question of Oromo Democratic Party on the issue of Addis Ababa massively down-play his acceptance by most non-Oromo people of Ethiopia.

THE WAY-FORWARD
The current griming political, economic and social situations suggest that Ethiopia is at a crossroad between hope and hopelessness, change and disintegration. Hence, in order to attain durable peace across the country, all the political actors should come to genuine political discussion along with other non-state actors. To effectuate this, the following remarks are forwarded:

- The PM should back to its initial populist approach to regain public support instead of working on getting party backing to dissolve the constitution. Currently, it seems unlikely for him because; he is on the verge of losing public support, particularly among the most non-Oromo ethnic groups. However, it is a must for him to think critically to regain public support to dysfunction the constitution, the EPRDF political centralism, and organizational approach of the regime to install the ongoing transition properly.
- Identifying the grand challenges of the transition and restoring the security by calming ethnic tension and violence should be the PM priority. To encourage a positive national unity, Abiy should develop a governance style that matches his inclusive rhetoric. Working with ministries and the civil servants to develop the reforms that they will implement can help dispel the impression shared by some that he is governing from a closed circle of co-ethnic and co-religionist advisers.
- Lastly, the prime minister will need to institute comprehensive economic reforms: creating opportunities for more excellent domestic and foreign investment; streamlining regulation;
breaking up inefficient state monopolies; carrying out banking reform to free up lending to the private sector; increasing manufacturing and agricultural productivity and revitalizing the long-neglected small and medium-sized enterprise segment of the economy. All these measures will be critical to begin producing jobs for the burgeoning population. In support of this effort, Ethiopia's international partners should, through a coordination mechanism, support his reform efforts with quiet counsel and the substantial financial aid needed to breathe new life into an economy whose pre-existing weaknesses have been compounded by five years of unrest and capital flight. They should disburse these funds as soon as possible to help the new administration address festering grievances over mass youth unemployment, which some leaders exploit to drive violence.

CONCLUSION

Ethiopia, an East African giant, is at the midst of political transition with many impediments that could make the transition pseudo in all political measures. This study, in this regard, revealed that actors of the transition mainly the leaders of the old regime and the reformist group were not willing to bargain on crucial matters of the transition, unlikely, their difference becoming irreconcilable and often attracting ethnic hardliners to lead the crisis to irreversible manner. Furthermore, finding also showed that the reformist group lacks fair policy and strategy to effectuate the transition; instead, they often claiming togetherness with "love" and "medemer" rhetoric as a political centre. Even though "love" and "medemer" do not exist in a political domain, instead, are moral values which more-off inclined to the spiritual domain.

Therefore, in order to make actualize the transition, genuine political discussion from all political actors are mandatory to materialize the transition. Successful political reform will put the country on a path to political openness, inclusion and economic liberalization. This practice might help and transform the Horn of Africa by setting a positive example for other political transitions that are occurring in the region. Up until now, international communities have sent encouraging gestures to Abiy and his administrations. Hope, they should continue to do so and which is crucial for calming tensions, stabilizing the country and helping Ethiopia through this transition toward a brighter future.

REFERENCES


