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Compromising with Ethiopianness After 1991: The Ethiopian Festival of the Millennium (September 2007–September 2008)

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that imperial marks and symbols were central to the nation-building strategy of the leaders of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) before the outbreak of the 1998–2000 war against Eritrea and even before 1991. It thus presents the Ethio-Eritrean war, often perceived as a radical turning point concerning EPRDF's nation-building policy, in a different light. The study also highlights how two often opposed conceptions of the Ethiopian nation—i.e., Pan-Ethiopian and “multinational”¹—have actually been presented as compatible by EPRDF leaders in the last decades. It argues that these two conceptions do not appear exclusive of each other, and their equilibrium is more clearly manifested since the National Festival of the Millennium, celebrated from September 2007 to September 2008 to mark Ethiopia's entry into the third Millennium. The official narrations of Ethiopian statehood and nationhood expressed at this occasion confirmed the consistency of the new leaders' interpretation of what Ethiopia “was” and “shall be,” but simultaneously show how current and concrete contingencies—here the post-1998–2000 war context and the turmoil of the 2005 general elections—force these same state/nation-builders to adjust their discourses.

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Introduction

The “idea” of the nation is correlative of an “idea of the state,”² transcending but also based on material dimensions of nation-building, these very concrete and visible places of memories, buildings, symbols, heroes, etc.³ This State-building enterprise necessitates national histories with which different peoples identify, and historical *moments forts* interpreted in resonance with concrete political objectives and circumstances to legitimate authority. Thus created, the sense of a national belonging partly explains how coercion or negotiated protection⁴ can be progressively replaced by symbolic weapons aimed at conquering the spirits and minds of submitted peoples,⁵ i.e., a kind of “violence without violence” or “symbolic violence” that remains essential to implement any lasting authority.⁶ From this view, the study of official national “large set” or “constellation of mythologies” reveals how governments select and sometimes impose a certain interpretation of the past.⁷ These constellations based on images, symbols, and heroes are to be considered in the long run, as well as depending on political contingencies. They are fundamentally malleable, “polymorphous,” and concentrate several “resonances” and “significations,” whether complementary or ambivalent or even contradictory.⁸

At the crossroads of long-term perspective and short-term conjunctures, some *moments forts* have deeply impacted the trajectory of nation-building in contemporary Ethiopia. In the late twentieth century, when the last Ethiopian King of Kings Haile Selassie I (r. 1930–1974) fell to the 1974 Revolution, it meant the end of the Solomonic imperial dynasty founded by Yekuno Amlak (r. 1270–1285) who proclaimed himself the direct heir of Menilek I, son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba.

During the last decades of Haile Selassie’s reign, Ethiopia intensified processes of state centralization and homogenization that had started in the nineteenth century under Menilek II (r. 1889–1913) to an unprecedented level: Amharic was imposed as the official language, the Orthodox Church remained the religion of the state, the central army was reinforced, taxes were relatively centralized, and the former Italian colony of Eritrea was integrated to the Ethiopian empire. This high level of state centralization resulted in social uprisings and a student movement temporarily allied to military mutineers against the regime. Finally, in 1974, the Ethiopian

Revolution drove out Haile Selassie who, thus, became the last King of Kings of Ethiopia.

However, the revolution did not signal an end to the State centralization process. It continued under the Provisional Military Administration Council through the 1970s and the 1980s,⁹ and soldiers, who had been brought up with an imperial vision of state- and nation-building, dominated the new government led by Mengistu Haile Mariam. Thus, despite initial radical and revolutionary reforms inspired by the Ethiopian Student Movement (such as the nationalization of rural and urban lands in 1975),¹⁰ new slogans like “territorial unity” and “Motherland or death!” became the mottos of the Därg military regime (1974–1991). Despite the official promotion of Ethiopian people’s diversity,¹¹ this meant that the imperial conception of Ethiopianness (that we use here as synonymous with Pan-Ethiopian nationalism), defined as an Ethiopian national identity transcending people’s particular or ethnic identities, forged in the imperial times and aimed at legitimizing a “great” or “utopian Ethiopia,” remained *de facto* under a “Marxist” oriented discourse. Any defender of another representation of Ethiopian nationhood was violently opposed or sometimes even exterminated.

In this context, centrifugal forces born under Haile Selassie’s reign and contesting such a view of the Ethiopian nation quickly reactivated and radicalized. One of these was the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), born in the middle of the 1970s with the help of another northern front, the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF).¹² Eventually, after more than 15 years of wars, and while the EPLF was ousting the Därg from Eritrea, the TPLF led the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) to victory, toppling Mengistu’s regime by entering Addis Ababa on 28 May (Ginbot 20) 1991.¹³

The TPLF/EPRDF rebels, still in power, have considered Mengistu’s regime the continuation of the imperial period, condemning their centralizing policies and their vision of the imperial Ethiopianness, which they considered the main source of Ethiopia’s civil wars in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1991, in order to remedy this imperial “national oppression,”¹⁴ the new leaders embarked on a deep reshaping of the regime: a federal system based on the “Rights of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples” (NNPs) (Article 39, Constitution 1995) was implemented, recognizing the right of self-determination up to secession to these groups previously recognized as

NNPs (out of historical, cultural, and language criteria). Pan-Ethiopian symbols of Ethiopianness became less prominent in public life, and former emperors were presented in the TPLF/EPRDF's official historiography as "criminals" or "colonizers."

Despite these efforts, symbols and myths of the Kings of Kings of the empire and from ancient Ethiopian history clearly reappeared when the war against the young Eritrea broke out in 1998. During that period, the TPLF/EPRDF's leaders called "Ethiopians" to fight against forces they denounced as the heirs of European colonizers, i.e. Issayas Afewerki's Eritrea. The symbolism of the battle of Adwa (1 March 1896),¹⁵ embodying Ethiopia's resistance against external enemies, was soon reactivated to mobilize Ethiopian troops and spirits, the "Rights of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples" remaining, nevertheless, a very strong base of Ethiopian renewed identity. Out of these developments, an interesting—if not original¹⁶—combination between the two pillars of the EPRDF's nation-building strategy emerged: the "Nations, Nationalities and Peoples" articulated with an Ethiopian nationalism inspired and marked by the imperial inheritance, i.e. Ethiopianness. This combination appeared very explicitly at the occasion of the Festival of the Ethiopian Millennium organized by the Ethiopian government and celebrated from 11 September 2007 until 11 September 2008. In fact, in accordance with the Ethiopian calendar, Ethiopians began the third millennium on 11 September 2007;¹⁷ the EPRDF grasped the occasion to organize throughout the year a national celebration in honor of the new era Ethiopians were entering.

This paper analyses how the new leading elites have reinterpreted what they consider "Ethiopian nationhood," i.e., Ethiopianness, since they gained power in 1991. I shall focus on how a certain vision of Ethiopian history is being reinterpreted or reinvented in accordance with political circumstances and critical episodes of Ethiopia since 1991. I argue that such a resort by the EPRDF leaders to a "constellation of mythologies" related to Ethiopianness is not that surprising when we consider TPLF/EPRDF's view of the Ethiopian State and nation before the 1998–2000 war, and even earlier during the struggle against the Därg. Indeed, the change of regime in 1991 did not necessarily mean the rejection of a Pan-Ethiopian nationalism, its symbols, images and heroes, but rather a more complex articulation between different scales of nationalisms, a process of selective utilization of them to reinvent the Ethiopian nationhood out of a complex combination of

imperial inheritances and the “national oppression thesis” rooted in the Ethiopian Student Movement and the armed struggle. The Festival of the Ethiopian Millennium not only confirmed the compatibility and interdependence of these different conceptions of the Ethiopian nation, but above all, it illustrated how historiographies, symbols, and images can be reinvented within a permanent and broader “set of mythologies” to serve the government’s quest for legitimacy.

These historiographies must be understood in particular contexts deeply affected by critical episodes (insurrections, revolutions, political conflicts, armed conflicts, elections, etc.). In fact, as political conflicts represent critical events in the process of state- and nation-building, we shall focus on the impact of two major violent political episodes that have deeply determined the Ethiopian nation-builders’ discourses since 1991: the period following the fall of the Därg, and the aftermath of the 1998–2000 Ethio-Eritrean war, including the 2005 general elections. I shall argue that the 1998–2000 war against Eritrea has confirmed and intensified a tendency already perceptible in the 1990s and even before. And in the aftermath of the 1998–2000 war, the massive and unprecedented success of opposition parties defending a strong Pan-Ethiopian nationhood at the occasion of the 2005 general election has been a determining factor in the adjustment of the national discourse elaborated and promoted by the EPRDF. This Pan-Ethiopianist success has been often underestimated.

Celebrating the New Millennium (September 2007–September 2008)

To celebrate the start of the country’s third millennium, the Ethiopian Council of Ministers created in August 2005 (1997, Ethiopian Calendar) a National Council and a Secretariat in charge of organizing the Festival of the Millennium. According to Seyoum Bereded, the Chairman of the Council in charge of the Festival, the first objective of the celebration consisted of encouraging the whole Ethiopian society to share a common view of Ethiopia’s “development and democracy,” in the hope of a better future.¹⁸ The second objective of the celebration consisted of the development of tourism in Ethiopia. This objective aimed to promote the idea of a progres-

sive State, to increase the country's image on an international level, and to reduce references to the image of famine often associated with the country since the 1970s. Finally, the Festival aimed at federating Ethiopian peoples through the fight against poverty and the promotion of Ethiopian youth.¹⁹ From these objectives, defined and implemented by the national and regional administrations, state authorities clearly defined what Anne-Marie Thiesse called the "identity lists."²⁰

The logo below (Figure 1) was chosen by Ethiopian authorities to symbolize the Festival of the Millennium. It is very revealing of the appropriation and reinvention of preceding regimes' historiographies, which are clearly articulated with post-1991 new founding myths and which connect national history with present and future histories. The logo concentrates such perspectives: it is composed of a vertical oval figure separated along its middle, from top to bottom, encircled by the national flag.

The logo officially concentrates three strong symbols corresponding to different registers of the country's mythology: it first represents a bean of coffee, "a gift" that Ethiopia made to the world.²¹ It then represents a shield, symbolizing the resistance of Ethiopia against foreign colonizers, notably echoing the 1896 Adwa victory. Finally, the Millennium symbol refers to the female genitalia, thus asserting that Ethiopia should be considered the cradle of humanity.²² This latter symbol refers to the myth of origins, a pivotal tool in nation-building discourses. In fact, among other skeletons discovered in the region, *Lucy*, found in 1974 and now lying in the National Museum in Addis Ababa, still symbolizes this origin. While it is scientifically senseless to ask if these skeletons are in fact the remains of ancient "Ethiopians," it is much more pertinent to consider "why" they have become central "personalities" in EPRDF's national mythology. Clearly, they serve one of EPRDF's nationalist discourses based on that myth of the origin and proclaiming: "ETHIOPIA, Where it all began" (see Figure 2).

Interestingly, this myth of origins gives a renewed long-term perspective to the idea of the Ethiopian nation that had disappeared with the collapse of the Solomonic dynasty in 1974. The ancient myth found new life with the "rewriting of Ethiopian history" by the EPRDF after 1991,²³ which was often reproached in the early 1990s for limiting Ethiopian history to "100 years."²⁴

Thus, after having "lost" thousands of years of history in 1991, the 2,000-year-old Aksum stele definitively replaced the imperial Solomonic



Figure 1. Logo of the Festival of the Millennium. September 2007–September 2008 (Mäskäräm 2000–Mäskäräm 2001, EC).

myth,²⁵ and Ethiopian nationalism reinvented a long historical perspective based on a history dating back “Millions of Years.” Figure 3 offers a very interesting illustration of the reinvention of Ethiopianness by the Ethiopian government during the celebration of the Millennium. This image, displayed an important site in Addis Ababa (Arat Kilo) from 2007–

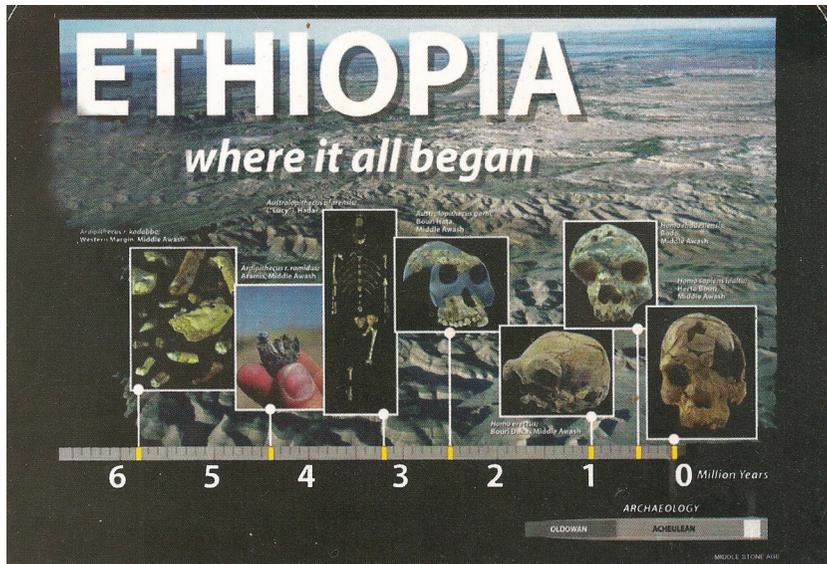


Figure 2. This postcard, which I bought in the National Museum of Addis Ababa in July 2008, shows how Ethiopia is being considered the cradle of humanity from discoveries made in Eastern Ethiopia between 1974 and 1997.

2008, demonstrates the link established between past and present Ethiopia, and to a certain extent, future Ethiopia. The ancient past, for example, is illustrated on the left with representations of *Lucy* and the stele of Aksum. The historical connection of *Lucy*, the stele of Aksum, or the Churches of Lalibäla (left) with the road project (the road that appears on the picture was not built when the picture was taken in June 2008) is a way to give sense to Ethiopian history, its “continuity” and unity.

Finally, it also portrays the Ethiopian national flag, encircling the logo of the Millennium. This flag illustrates the resort to strong national symbols previously rejected by EPRDF. It is interesting to note how this initial rejection and later inclusion reveal the articulation between different levels of Ethiopian “nationalisms”—as well as its past and future—and how these articulations must be perceived in terms of complementarity rather than exclusiveness. For instance, when questioned on the national flag’s signification in a 1991 press conference, Meles Zenawi (then President of the Transitional Government) declared to journalists:



Figure 3. Addis Ababa, Arat Kilo, June 2008. Credit Jean-Nicolas Bach.

For us [the EPRDF], the question of the flag, the question of the piece of cloth, is a trivial matter. It is not a question to which we lend any interpretation. What we consider basic is the outlook behind the flag. We therefore have nothing against the flag. It can continue to flutter.²⁶

Although the new leaders considered the flag a simple “piece of cloth” in 1991, the relative enterprise of state and nation “deconstruction” and “reconstruction” necessitated this strong symbol to be reinterpreted. Thus, after a long debate within the Transitional Assembly, in November 1994 the decision to change the flag was approved. Like a compromise between imperial history and the necessity to distance oneself from it, the imperial green-yellow-red colors were retained, but a yellow star on a blue disc was added to represent the different nations, nationalities, and peoples (the imperial lion had already been erased by the Därg). The colors of Ethiopianness have thus remained, and NNPs’ star now appears as a complement to Ethiopia’s imperial history and identity.

The organization of the first National Flag Day in July 2008 within the Millennium celebration framework clearly marked a new step in the way

the national symbol has been used since. It has been charged with a renewed symbolism, and in that light, a “national day” has been dedicated to the flag on 5 July of every year!²⁷ During the week preceding the first “Flag Day” celebration in 2008, everyone could buy a miniature flag in the streets of Addis Ababa for five or six Ethiopian Birr (as of writing, about 30 cents of Euro). The Flag Day celebration cost about 5 million Birr, most of which was privately sponsored.²⁸ However, the mouthpiece of the Ethiopian government, the official newspaper *The Ethiopian Herald*, published on 8 July the following note:

For centuries, the Ethiopian flag has been a symbol of our national strength and unity. It has been a source of pride and inspiration for millions of citizens. Our flag has been a prominent icon in the national history. As there is no pride and dignity without a country, Ethiopians believe in their freedom.²⁹

The National Flag is the Expression of the New Ethiopia and its Renaissance!³⁰

The Ethiopian Renaissance, prophesized by Meles Zenawi from the beginning of the Millennium celebration, on 10 September 2007, was built on the imperial past but opens a new era. Imperial symbols are thus necessary (“Renaissance” is a rebirth from earlier times): old symbols and past emperors were rehabilitated, like Tewodros II, Yohannes IV, Menilek II, Haile Selassie, and even Mengistu Haile Mariam. Exposed on Mäskäl Square in 2007 and 2008, these figures appeared next to Meles Zenawi (late Prime Minister, 1995–2012), Negasso Gidada (President from 1995 to 2001; currently one of the prominent leaders of the opposition) and Girma W/Giorgis (President of the Federal Republic since 2001), showing once again the continuity from past emperors to current leaders (see Figure 4).

Since 1991, imperial history has thus remained the great reservoir of myths and symbols for the new leaders. The mobilized images are given a statute of “memory” necessary to build communities.³¹ Actually, the Festival of the Millennium has been the occasion for TPLF/EPRDF’s leaders to clarify their national discourse. A more detailed look at EPRDF’s conception of Ethiopian nationhood since 1991 and even before explains this continuity.



Figure 4. Addis Abeba, Mäskäl Square, June 2008. Credit: Jean-Nicolas Bach.

The “National Oppression” Thesis and Ethiopianness: the EPRDF’s National Compromise

After the fall of Mengistu’s regime on 28 May 1991, the plurality of Ethiopian “nationalities” became the core of a renewed conception of the Ethiopian Nation inspired by the “national oppression thesis” that had been propagated by the TPLF rebels during the struggle (1970s–1980s).³² The TPLF leaders (still dominant with the EPRDF) thus remained devoted to the idea that the imperial concept of Ethiopianness was one of the main causes of Ethiopia’s troubles.

Tribute was given to the Ethiopian NNPs who fought the Italians in the battle of Adwa, while Menilek, Haile Selassie, and Mengistu were condemned for the “genocides” they committed against Ethiopian NNPs:

Menilek’s genocidal campaign against the Oromos has not so far been exposed since his successors . . . both the Haile Selassie and Därg regimes . . . sympathized with Menilek’s causes . . . Menilek took all inhuman measures to eliminate the Oromos from the face of the world.³³

At the occasion of a press conference given in September 1992, Meles Zenawi, then President of the transitional government (1991–1995) and leader of the TPLF/EPRDF, confirmed the vision of the new Ethiopian nation to be built, “from below,” emerging from “first” and “real” identities of Ethiopian peoples, i.e., their ethnic belongings.³⁴ As he then observed: “What incites disintegration is the view that we are all one.”³⁵ By eradicating any national “oppression,” the rethinking of the Ethiopian state and nation in terms of NNPs was supposed to respect Ethiopian diversity and preserve the country from any future conflict.³⁶

Yet it would be inaccurate to conclude that the notion of “Ethiopianness” simply disappeared in 1991. The Pan-Ethiopian national discourse was not abandoned in the beginning of the 1990s. The EPRDF instead embarked on a complex rethinking of the Ethiopian nation and the idea of citizenship. In fact, already during the transitional period (1991–1995) one could observe a superimposition of these two conceptions of the Ethiopian nation. “Ethiopianness [has become] a right, not obligation,” declared Meles Zenawi himself.³⁷ From then on, the EPRDF’s leaders have proposed a new vision of Ethiopian identity, in which primordial identities coexist with the inherited imperial Ethiopianness. EPRDF’s officials have been very clear on that point, showing an officially very tolerant and original conception of the Ethiopian nation(s). For instance, when journalists asked him about the coming evolution of Ethiopian citizenship in 1992, Meles Zenawi declared that the

Previous approach (Därg) was . . . to deny his nation, nationality identity in order to be an Ethiopian. . . . The greatest danger to unity is not accepting the fact that we can jointly retain and ascertain our Ethiopian identity while at the same time speaking our own languages, wearing our Ethnic costumes and administering our own respective regions. . . . If the danger is done away with, federalism will only further strengthen Ethiopia’s unity and not lead to disintegration. . . . I just can’t comprehend why being organized on the basis of nationalities and the respect on nations and nationalities should conflict with the notion of being an Ethiopian. . . . It is possible to be both an Ethiopian and one’s own ethnic origin, why is it that we insist that he chooses one of the two? . . . Why is it that he can’t be both? When he retains both identities, he can at the same time be a Kembata and an

Ethiopian, an Oromo and an Ethiopian, as well as a Tigrean and an Ethiopian all at the same time. . . . Most of the time no person desires to lose his identity.³⁸

Four main factors can explain the rapid relativization of the ethnic discourse and the cautious rehabilitation of Ethiopianness in the middle of the 1990s.

First, the former Oromo ally during the struggle, the Oromo Liberation Front, boycotted the 1992 elections, left the transitional government, and took up arms against the TPLF/EPRDF, complaining about the leading group's tendency to monopolize the political process and reiterating its claims of independence for the Oromo "colonized" peoples. But the Oromo region represents the country's biggest and richest region in the middle of which the capital city, Addis Ababa, stands.³⁹ At that moment, the EPRDF coalition had no choice but to calm ethnic tensions and regional claims to avoid Ethiopia's implosion. This may explain why the ethnic discourse began to be relativized from the middle of the 1990s.

A second event may have played an important role in the preservation of Ethiopianness: the conflict in neighboring Somalia. After the fall of Somalia's President Siyad Barre in 1991, the different Somalian groups in power did not find any agreement for a peaceful and inclusive transition, so that the young Somalian state "collapsed." In that period, this conflict was presented by the Ethiopian governmental press as emerging from inter-clan tensions and resulting in a state of "chaos" and "anarchy." This vision of the Somalian conflict may have scared Ethiopian leaders, who faced the challenge of stabilizing the country after more than 15 years of a cruel civil war, and for whom identity tensions carried a strong potential for violence that was hard to deal with. Ethiopianness, then, may have appeared to be a useful way to promote "unity in diversity."

The 1994 massacres in Rwanda may also explain the inertia of Ethiopianness; the genocide clearly showed the danger of the institutionalization, politicization, and manipulation of ethnicity when defined "from above." In fact, this episode of Rwanda's contemporary history has remained very present in Ethiopia (the Ethiopian government sent a contingent to participate in the United Nation peacekeeping mission in Rwanda). Even recently, two months before the 2010 general elections in Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi justified the banning of two radio stations (*Voice of America*



Figure 5. Tigray People's Liberation Front, 1978.

and *Deutsche Welle*) by accusing them of inciting hatred. The Prime minister explicitly compared the stations to *Radio Mille Collines*, underscoring the important role played by the latter in inciting the genocide in Rwanda and echoing the 2005 Ethiopian election when he explicitly qualified some opposition groups as Interhamwe. This reference to the genocide of Rwanda was already very present in anti-opposition discourse from the EPRDF during the 2005 general elections, when it was directed at the regime's Ethiopian opponents.⁴⁰

Last but not least, this evolution of Ethiopia's nation-building process, and the TPLF/EPRDF's conception of the Ethiopian nation, actually echoed the complexity of TPLF nationalism itself. From the 1970s, the TPLF's nationalism has been built on this tension between historical Ethiopianness and the national oppression thesis. Outside a brief period of hesitation at the beginning of the movement's formation during which the young TPLF claimed independence for the Tigray region (cf. the 1976 *Manifesto*), their objective was fast clarified: the control of the Ethiopian state. The Tigrayan rebels rejected the Därg regime, but not Ethiopia's history and symbols, and even considered themselves the historical core of the Ethiopian state.⁴¹ The Aksum stele, symbol of Tigray as a political and religious centre of Ethiopia, was, for instance, appropriated by the TPLF who placed it at the middle of the movement's symbol (see Figure 5). By referring to Aksum and by getting

rid of the Solomonic filiation, the TPLF/EPRDF has been rebuilding the Ethiopian state and the notion of Ethiopianness. They made Ethiopia “lose” 1,000 years of history,⁴² but made it possible to place their own past at the core of Ethiopia’s long term history.

These observations on the TPLF’s discourses about the Ethiopian state give some explanation of the superimposition of Pan-Ethiopia discourses and symbols with NNPs at the occasion of the Festival of the Millennium. Yet, this complex articulation still appeared stammering until the war against Eritrea broke out in 1998. The war and its aftermath led to a more balanced and clear equilibrium between these two kinds of nationalism, in which NNPs and Ethiopianness—as the Festival of the Millennium showed—clearly appear complementary.

Postwar (1998-2000) Ethiopia and the 2005 Election: Equilibrating Imperial Ethiopianness and NNPs

Eritrea gained independence in 1993. Since then, the EPLF, led by Issayas Afewerki, has remained in power. Even if the relationship between the former Tigrayan and Eritrean fronts faced some crises during their common liberation struggle,⁴³ the 1998–2000 war was unexpected. Within a few weeks, a boundary clash in contested territories fast became a large-scale war in which both countries lost about 100,000 soldiers.⁴⁴ Tronvoll has brilliantly demonstrated the deep impacts of the 1998–2000 war on “the formation and conceptualization of identities in Ethiopia,” and the (re)construction of enemies’ and allies’ images in its aftermaths.⁴⁵ I would like to focus here on the perspective of the Ethiopian government as nation-builder and the way imperial symbols have been clearly reactivated since 1998, accentuating the trend mentioned above to fight against a “new” Eritrean enemy.

The war against Eritrea prompted the Meles regime to resort to broader federative symbols and references to national critical historical events referring to the “unity” and solidarity of Ethiopian peoples. In this context, the battle of Adwa represented a very powerful national reference in 1998–2000. In the 1990s, the commemorations of the battle were above all occasions to celebrate Ethiopian NNPs. Later, in 1996, while Ethiopianness was carefully reactivated, a great celebration was organized to mark the

centenary of Adwa victory against Italian aggressors, showing a growing interest for such an imperial event.⁴⁶ But it was the breakout of the 1998–2000 war that definitively rehabilitated the symbol. In fact, it symbolized the union of Ethiopian peoples, of “every Nations, Nationalities and Peoples” and their resistance against external enemies, now the Eritrean government.

The most explicit illustration of this reactivation is doubtless the date (1 March 1999) chosen to launch one of the most important Ethiopian offensives against Eritrean troops in the disputed area of Badme (Operation Sunset), just where the war began in 1998. One could read on the first page of the governmental newspaper the following day: “It is propitious that the Badme victory was scored just as Ethiopians were preparing to observe the 103rd anniversary of the Battle of Adwa today.”⁴⁷ The next day, on 3 March 1999, the same newspaper published a special issue on the two events. At the top of the first page, one could read: “Adwa Victory Day Colorfully Celebrated,” and at the bottom of the same page: “Badme Victory—A Heroic Spirit Kindling.” The “Double Victory!” was celebrated throughout the whole week.⁴⁸

This not only proved the persistence of a sense of Ethiopianness in the EPRDF’s view, but also its usefulness. The conflict incited the Ethiopian government to resort to the “colonial” memory, presenting the Eritrean regime as the heir of the Italian invaders. Since the conflict the EPRDF has endorsed the role of defender of the Ethiopian State, just as did the preceding governments. Since the conflict, Badme has been charged with such a strong mythology that the Ethiopian government cannot accept its loss—even if it is situated in Eritrea, according to the decision given by the independent border Commission of the United Nation in 2002.⁴⁹ This partly explains why the Ethiopian government has been systematically impeding the implementation of this decision. Badme, as Adwa, has become a symbol of the Ethiopian nation and its martyrs, showing how old imperial places combine with new ones as markers of national and territorial memories.

The TPLF/EPRDF’s national project has thus concentrated several levels of nationalism, fighting at the same time for Ethiopianness and reinterpreting it out of the national oppression thesis. This evolution dates back to the 1980s. As Tronvoll notes, once the Tigray region liberated itself from the Därg armies, the decision taken by the Tigrayan Front to continue the struggle until Addis Ababa had two major implications:

First, the Front had to readjust its ideological platform so that the revolution of Tigrayanness and political autonomy could also include an Ethiopian solution to the problem of other suppressed “nationalities”. . . . And, secondly, it had to establish alliances with other ethnic fronts outside Tigray in order to carry on the military struggle on “foreign” ethnic soil.⁵⁰

But another historical event further explains this evolutionary trend: “competing nationalist discourses” from opponents have had great influence on EPRDF’s nation-building discourses. In particular, the 2005 general elections witnessed the rise of political opponents contesting EPRDF’s multinational federalism, some of them defending a more classical perception of Pan-Ethiopianism.

From the Transitional period and after (1991–1995), multinational federalism has been strongly criticized by other political groups for being the “negation” of the “Ethiopianist feeling born in Adwa,” a negation that would lead the country to disintegration.⁵¹ Some political movements defending Ethiopia’s unity had already expressed their concern about the “ethnic divisions” Ethiopia would face if federalism were fully implemented.⁵² This was, for instance, the case of the All Amhara People’s Organization (AAPO), renamed the Ethiopian Democratic Unity Party (EDUP) before the 2005 general election. The political programs of this party were based on the unity of a Greater Ethiopia and the defence of a strong Ethiopianness. The AAPO was one of the most representative of these groups. Created in 1992 and chaired by Asrat Woldeyes who defended a unitary Ethiopia and condemned EPRDF’s multinational project, AAPO strongly opposed the independence of Eritrea. One of its main slogans was “One Nation, One Country.”⁵³ Haylew Shawel, then responsible for external relations of the movement, declared:

Since childhood, we have been told that we are Ethiopians. Being Ethiopian is the only thing we know. But those forces allergic to this idea have left no stone unturned to incite inter-ethnic conflict in our country. All these attempts have failed. This was because the Ethiopian people have never fought wars along ethnic lines. They showed great maturity in the face of investigations which could have possibly led to

great suffering elsewhere. . . . At times, I fear that a situation like that of Lebanon or Yugoslavia could develop in Ethiopia . . .⁵⁴

Such opposition groups were quickly eliminated or politically marginalized in a multinational system eventually imposed and controlled by the EPRDF. Nevertheless, they did not disappear, and quite logically, they even increased after 2000 in the postwar context. In fact, opponents who defended a unitary Ethiopia found in the war an occasion to argue that they were “right” at the beginning of the 1990s when they warned of the coming of new conflicts, which they had stated would be caused by multinational federalism.

The May/August 2005 general election, which can be considered the most free and fair since the fall of the Därg, marks the first concrete political emergence of such opposition groups. For the first time in Ethiopian history, debates between different (and opposed) parties were publicized and aired on television and radio, thus giving opposition groups the occasion to publicly broadcast their views and programs.⁵⁵ Some of these,⁵⁶ like the most important coalition of opposition groups, the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD, or Qənəğət),⁵⁷ defended a strong Ethiopianness and criticized EPRDF’s “multinational federalism.”

However, as is commonly said, the greater the hope, the greater the deception. The opposition failed to meet its expectations, despite its relative successes at regional and federal levels officially announced by the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia.⁵⁸ Members of the opposition organized street mobilizations and refused to take seats in the Assemblies. Many thousands of these demonstrators and opposition members, journalists, and human rights activists were arrested until the end of the year and accused of national “treason.” Dozens more (sometimes estimated around two hundred) civilians were killed by security forces while demonstrating in Addis Ababa and in the main Ethiopian cities between June and November 2005.⁵⁹ Some opposition leaders were “pardoned” and released in September 2007 at the occasion of the opening of the Festival of the Millennium after having officially recognized their “responsibility” for the violent events a couple of years before, and due to the combined influence of a mediation organized by an Ethiopian council of elders and pressure from the U.S. administration and Congress.

It is interesting to note that the National Council for the Festival of the Millennium was officially created in August 2005, and that top opposition leaders were released just before the opening ceremony in 2007. The Festival of the Millennium, as a political event, is a pertinent entry to observe the different scales of nationalism around which political groups are still built in contemporary Ethiopian politics. In fact, the impressive progression of opposition groups in the Addis Ababa City Council, the Amhara region, and the House of People's Representatives is a concrete illustration of a growing Pan-Ethiopian nationalism that accuses EPRDF's multinational federalism of inexorably leading the country to ethnic fragmentation. The EPRDF's leaders were criticized for having "abandoned" Eritrea, still considered by most opposition leaders an "Ethiopian region," first in 1993, and then in 2000—by a strange irony of fate, just as some Tigrayan lords and/or rebels accused Menilek II of having abandoned the Northern region of the Mereb River to Italian colonialists following his victory at Adwa. It is then not surprising to find Haylew Shawel, a former AAPO member and then All-Ethiopia Unity Party (AEUP) leader, chairing the other important coalition next to the CUD in 2005.⁶⁰

Thus, if we wish to understand the dialogue between different levels of nationalism as it appeared during the National Festival of the Millennium, we need to take into account the Pan-Ethiopian project of some opposition groups during the 2005 general election.⁶¹ It represents a resurgence of a Pan-Ethiopian unitary nationalism that has been rejecting multinational federalism since the beginning of the 1990s. The war between Ethiopia and Eritrea created an opportunity for such a movement for a political revival. This strong Pan-Ethiopian nationalism from the CUD and other opposition parties has been considerably weakened since 2005. The outcome of the 2010 general election (in which the EPRDF won 99.6 percent of House of Peoples' Representatives seats) illustrates how the EPRDF has been able to react since 2005, using for instance the Festival of the Millennium. Nonetheless, the arguments elaborated by CUD and parties like Ethiopian Democratic Party (EDePa, led by Lidetu Ayalew, a former CUD member) in the 2010 campaign clearly echoed those of the Pan-Ethiopianists five years earlier. The declaration of Lidetu Ayalew during the first television debate aired on Ethiopian Television in February 2010 illustrates this continuity:

[a] multiparty system will never be implemented as we like as long as there are political parties which are based on ethnicity in accordance

with the constitution. There should be a political party that believes in the unity of all Ethiopian ethnic groups and individual rights.⁶²

And in the second debate, Lidetu Ayelew explicitly resorted to the argument that federalism risked fragmentation. He first showed a map representing Ethiopia and then a second one representing Ethiopia without the Oromo region, declaring:

Sorry to say but Ethiopia is at risk. The bad experiences we have come across can evidently justify our fear.⁶³ Let us think and imagine Ethiopia without Oromia—the biggest and richest regional state. If a demand for secession generates from such wealthy portion of Ethiopia, you can imagine what Ethiopia looks like.⁶⁴

Ato Legesse spoke for the CUD, and like EdePa, defended a united Ethiopia much as the Coalition had in 2005:⁶⁵

Ethnic federalism, we think, will erode togetherness and unity, which in turn leads to identity complex. We are not underestimating ethnic groups at all, no ever. We are only against ethnic federalism.⁶⁶

Thus, if we wish to understand the postwar evolution of nation-building as defined and expressed by EPRDF's leaders, we need to take into account the success of the Pan-Ethiopian Qənəğət in the 2005 general election, and more broadly, the resurgence of this persistent Pan-Ethiopian agenda defended by a part of the opposition. With the CUD's nationalism representing an obvious inheritance of imperial Ethiopianness, the EPRDF leaders had no options but to appropriate and stress imperial symbols. Through its discursive strategy, the EPRDF has federated Ethiopians and at the same time neutralized opposition leaders' arguments of national "fragmentation." The 2005 elections in this sense explain, in the post-1998–2000 war context, why the EPRDF's discourses had to adapt their nation-building strategy and stress their sense of Ethiopian nationalism.

Yet this strategy cannot be seen as a simple reaction against opposition parties' rhetoric. As we have demonstrated in this paper, the TPLF and then EPRDF's views of the Ethiopian nation and State articulated different kinds of nationalisms (Ethiopianness and NNPs) even before 1991, within a

continuous but evolving “constellation of mythologies” in which the same images, events, heroes, or symbols have been used in different ways depending on concrete political contexts.

Conclusion

Nation-building, as defined by the EPRDF, is much more a superimposed and complex articulation of Ethiopianness with a nationalism based on NNPs, than it is a (too often caricatured) national project initially based on primordial identities and the negation of Ethiopianness. From the 1980s, Tigrayan fighters opted for a clearer Pan-Ethiopian project, even after the implementation of the original multinational federalism in 1995. Under the combined pressure of the Eritrean-Ethiopian war and the internal political conflict following the 2005 election, the Festival of the Millennium represented a golden opportunity for the EPRDF to reinforce this articulation between Ethiopianness and NNPs. State/nation-builders have adapted their National oppression thesis to new circumstances, i.e. the “threat” of the empire’s disintegration underscored by many political opponents since 1991. As Tronvoll noted about post-2000 Ethiopia: “Ethiopian nationalism today, thus, comes in the plural.”⁶⁷ I would say it came in the plural even before 1991.

Finally, the EPRDF’s nationalism has “historical foundations”⁶⁸ and reveals the empire’s scars inherent to the TPLF/EPRDF itself. The Festival of the Millennium represented an interesting proposition elaborated by the EPRDF to resolve the very classical and “persistent dilemma of empires”⁶⁹: how to incorporate different populations in a coherent political entity and at the same time maintain distinctions and hierarchies on which this domination is based. The study of Ethiopian nation-building and its political cleavages inherited from the imperial period proves how thin the line remains between fallen empires and the “modern” states replacing them. These empires do fall but do not disappear. The Festival shows how the Ethiopian government has clarified its conception of an Ethiopian citizenship that is not only inherited from Tigrayan nationalism but also rooted in Ethiopia’s empire and long-term history.

NOTES

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1. Will Kymlicka, "Emerging Western Models of Multination Federalism: Are They Relevant for Africa?" in *Ethnic Federalism, Eastern African Studies*, ed. D. Turton (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2006), 32–64.
2. Georges Burdeau, *L'État* (Éditions du Seuil, [1970] 2009). Philip Abrams, "Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State (1977)," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1, no. 1 (1988): 58–89.
3. See the classic Pierre Nora, ed., *Les lieux de mémoire*, vol. 3, *La nation, la gloire, les mots* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), or Raoul Girardet, *Mythes et mythologies politiques* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1986). See also Pierre Centlivres, Daniel Fabre, and Françoise Zonabend, eds., *La fabrique des héros* (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1988).
4. Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 169–91.
5. Pierre Bourdieu, "Esprits d'État, Genèse et structure du champ bureaucratique," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, no. 96–97 (1993): 49–62.
6. Maurice Godelier, "L'État: les processus de sa formation, la diversité de ses formes et de ses bases," *Revue internationale des sciences sociales* 32, no. 4 (1980): 657–71. Pierre Bourdieu, "Esprits d'État, Genèse et structure du champ bureaucratique," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, no. 96–97 (1993): 49–62.
7. R. Girardet, *Mythes et mythologies politiques* (Paris: Seuil, 1986), 12–20.
8. Girardet, *Mythes*, 14–16.
9. The new regime (1974–1991) was later known under its acronym "Därg," which means "committee" in Amharic. See René Lefort, *Éthiopie: la révolution hérétique* (Paris: Maspéro, 1981); and John Markakis and Nega Ayele, *Class and Revolution in Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa: Shama Books, 2006).

10. The Ethiopian Student Movement (ESM) is rooted in the 1960s–1970s. It is based on a common critic of Haile Selassie’s regime. Although leftist, two main branches opposed each other concerning the nature of the struggle: the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Party (EPRP), and the All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement (Meison), respectively defending a class-struggle strategy and a national-struggle strategy. The latter allied with the Därg regime until it was eliminated by Mengistu, while the EPRP took arms. Both were eventually eliminated by the Mengistu-led Därg at the end of the 1970s.
11. The Därg also defended the idea of “unity in diversity” and promoted, during the very last years of the regime, a federal reconfiguration of Ethiopian state, creating the Institute for the Study of Ethiopian Nationalities in 1983 to list the different nationalities that should be represented in the National Assembly (*Shengo*) from 1987 on. But these groups had no real power, and the *Shengo* remained an appendix of the Därg. As Clapham writes, in post-1991, “the Stalinist theory of nationalities had life only after death.” See Christopher Clapham, “Controlling Space in Ethiopia,” in *Remapping Ethiopia, Socialism and After*, ed. W. James, D. L. Donham, E. Kurimoto, and A. Triulzi (Oxford: James Currey, 2002), 25.
12. John Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia, the Tigray People’s Liberation Front, 1975–1991* (Cambridge: African Studies, Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Aregawi Berhe, *A Political History of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (1975–1991)* (Los Angeles: Tsehai, 2009).
13. The EPRDF is a coalition formed under the auspice of the TPLF at the end of the 1980. It took its definitive form at the beginning of the 1990s and comprises four political parties: the TPLF, the Amhara National Democratic Movement, the Oromo People’s Democratic Organisation, and the Southern Ethiopian People’s Democratic Front.
14. The TPLF’s interpretation of the Ethiopian state- and nation-building, anchored in the Ethiopian Student Movement, has been based on the national oppression thesis. Derived from the Stalinist theory of nationalities, this view has been opposed to at least two other interpretations of Ethiopia’s imperial period, i.e., the “nation-building thesis” (or *Reconquista*) on the one hand and the “colonial thesis” on the other. See, for instance, Merera Gudina, *Ethiopia, Competing Ethnic*

- Nationalisms and the Quest for Democracy, 1960–2000*, (Addis Ababa: Chamber Printing House, 2003).
15. The battle occurred 1 March 1896. It opposed the Italian army and its locally-recruited soldiers (*ascari*) going south from their colony in Eritrea (about 10,000 men) to the huge Ethiopian imperial army led by Menelik II and its generals (*rases*) coming from the entire Ethiopian empire (about 100,000 men). The Italian army was defeated, and the Treaty of Addis Ababa, signed on 26 October 1896, officially recognized the Italian possession north to the Mereb river, ceding the regions of Akälä Guzay, Hamasen, and Säraye to the Italians. See Paulos Milkias and Getachew Meteferia, eds., *The Battle of Adwa. Reflections on Ethiopia's Historic Victory Against European Colonialism* (New York: Algora, 2005).
 16. From the beginning of 1980, the Därg regime already initiated such a way to conceive nation-building, combining a strong Pan-Ethiopian nationalism with a formal recognition of Ethiopian peoples' diversity. The national *Shengo* had to represent this diversity officially determined by the Institute of Ethiopian Nationalities created in 1983. Comparing the Ethiopian case to the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Clapham noted: "The Stalinist theory of nationalities had life only after death . . ." See Christopher Clapham, "Controlling Space in Ethiopia," in *Remapping Ethiopia*, ed. James et al., 9–32.
 17. Depending on the time of year, seven or eight months separate our calendar from the Ethiopian calendar.
 18. Interview with Seyoum Bereded, "It was the first time in history that Ethiopia has carried out the biggest international campaigns to build its image." See *The Ethiopian Herald*, 19 June 2008.
 19. See the Festival's website, www.ethiopia2000.com (accessed June 2008).
 20. Anne-Marie Thiesse, *La création des identités nationales, Europe XVIII–XX^e siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 1999).
 21. See the interview of Seyoum Bereded published in *The Ethiopian Herald*, 19 June 2008.
 22. Interview of the author with the team manager of the Secretariat of the Festival of the Millennium, Mulugeta Asrate, Addis Ababa, July 2008.
 23. Christopher Clapham, "Rewriting Ethiopian History," in *Annales d'Éthiopie* 18 (2002): 37–54.
 24. Kjetil Tronvoll, *War and the Politics of Identity in Ethiopia, The Making of Enemies And Allies in the Horn of Africa*, (James Currey: London, 2009), 58.

25. The closing celebration of the Festival of the Millennium took place in Aksum on 11 September 2008. It was the occasion to celebrate the repatriation and re-erection of the stele, stolen by the Italians during the Second World War. For a more detailed historical perspective on the stele, see Eloi Ficquet, "La stèle éthiopienne de Rome, objet d'un conflit de mémoires," in *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 44, no. 1–2 (2004): 369–85.
26. "Ato Meles Zenawi Replies to Questions by Reporters," *The Ethiopian Herald*, 7 June 1991. The Därg had not changed the imperial national flag.
27. The second National Flag Day was celebrated on 5 October 2009, the third on 20 September 2010, the fourth on 26 September 2011, and the fifth on 5 October 2012, so that the celebration is not associated with a particular national or historical *moment fort*.
28. The main contributor was "Awate Real Estate," a subsidiary company of Mohammed Ali al-Amoudi's empire. Interview with Mulugeta Asrate, Team Leader of the Secretariat of the Festival of the Millennium, Addis Ababa, July 2008.
29. *The Ethiopian Herald*, 8 July 2008.
30. *The Ethiopian Herald*, 1 July 2008.
31. François-Xavier Fauvelle-Aymar, *La mémoire aux enchères. L'idéologie afrocentriste à l'assaut de l'histoire* (Lagrasse: Verdier Histoire, 2009).
32. See note 12.
33. "Menilek's Genocidal Campaign," *The Ethiopian Herald*, 5 January 1992.
34. "President Meles Zenawi replies to questions posed by journalists," *The Ethiopian Herald*, 23, 24, and 25 September 1992. These ideas were confirmed in an interview of Meles Zenawi by Donald Levine published the same month. See Donald N. Levine, "Meles Zenawi and the Politics of Ethnicity," *Ethiopian Review* (September 1992): 14–17.
35. "President Meles Zenawi replies to questions posed by journalists," *The Ethiopian Herald*, 23, 24, 25 September 1992.
36. See "No Alternative to Peace and Democracy," *The Ethiopian Herald*, 21 January 1992; and "President Meles Briefs Local, Foreign Journalists On Current Ethiopia Situation," *The Ethiopian Herald*, 2 February 1993.
37. "Ethiopianness, a right, not obligation: Meles," *The Ethiopian Herald*, 11 February 1994.

38. “President Meles Zenawi replies to questions posed by journalists,” *The Ethiopian Herald*, 23, 24, and 25 September 1992.
39. According to the 2007 Census published by the Central Statistical Agency, the Oromo region covers about 280,000 km² and concentrates 36.5 percent of the Ethiopian population.
40. International Crisis Group, *Ethiopia: Ethnic Federalism and its Discontents*, Africa Report no. 153, 4 September 2009.
41. Medhane Tadesse, *The Eritrean-Ethiopian War: Retrospect And Prospects* (Addis Ababa: Mega Printing Enterprise, 1999). Yohannes IV (r. 1872–1889), King of Kings of Ethiopia preceding Menilek II, originated from Tigray. He was crowned in 1872 in Aksum, anchoring the moving of the Ethiopian political, religious, and symbolic state “centre” into Tigray at the end of the nineteenth century and reviving the Solomonic ascendancy of Ethiopian King of Kings’s authority. See Stéphane Ancel, “Épiscopat et encadrement des pratiques religieuses en Éthiopie chrétienne contemporaine: caractéristiques et évolutions” (PhD diss., Institut des Langues et Civilisations Orientales de Paris, 2006).
42. As Alain Gascon wrote: “L’actuelle république . . . a amputé 1,000 ans de son histoire préférant se référer au royaume d’Aksum [plutôt qu’au mythe salomonien] dont l’existence historique est indéniable,” in Alain Gascon, “L’Éthiopie tendra les mains vers Dieu: 2000 ans d’État éthiopien,” *L’Espace politique* 7, no. 1 (2009).
43. John Young, “The Tigray and Eritrean Liberation Fronts: A History of Tensions and Pragmatism,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 34, no. 1 (1996): 105–20.
44. Tekeste Negash and Kjetil Tronvoll, *Brothers at War: Making Sense of the Eritrean-Ethiopian War*, (Oxford, Athens: James Currey, Ohio University Press, 2000); and Alexandra M. Dias, “An Inter-state War in the Post-Cold War Era: Eritrea-Ethiopia (1998–2000)” (PhD diss., London School of Economics and Political Science, 2008).
45. Tronvoll, *War and the Politics of Identity*.
46. See “Adwa Centenary Worthier than Commemorations of Normandy Landings, V-Day,” and “We are all children of Adwa (A. Triulzi),” *The Ethiopian Herald*, 27 February 1996. See also Abdussamad H. Ahmad and Richard Pankhurst, eds., *Victory Centenary Conference, 26 February–2 March 1996* (Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1998).

47. "Operation Sunset Culminates in Success," *The Ethiopian Herald*, 2 March 1999.
48. "Double Victory Celebrated," *The Ethiopian Herald*, 9 March 1999.
49. Terrence Lyons, *Avoiding Conflict in the Horn of Africa, U.S. Policy Toward Ethiopia and Eritrea*, The Center for Preventive Action, Council on Foreign Relations, CSR no. 21, December 2006.
50. Tronvoll, *War and the Politics of Identity*, 55.
51. Worku Aberra, "Tribalism Rules in Ethiopia," *New African* (September 1993); Aberra Jembere, "The Making of Constitution in Ethiopia: The Centralization and Decentralization of the Administration," *New Trends in Ethiopian Studies, Papers of the 12th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Michigan State University 5–10 September 1994, Vol. 2, ed. H. G. Marcus (Lawrenceville: Social Sciences, 1995), 66–78; and Maimire Mennasemay, "Ethiopian History and Critical Theory: The Case of Adwa," in *The Battle of Adwa*, ed. Paulos Milkias and Metaferia Getachew, 253.
52. Donald N. Levine, "Meles Zenawi and the Politics of Ethnicity," *Ethiopian Review* (September 1992): 14–17.
53. "AAPO Leaders Speakout," *Ethiopian Review*, March 1993, 15–16.
54. "AAPO Leaders Speakout," 16.
55. See Abbink Jon, "Discomfiture of democracy? The 2005 Election Crisis in Ethiopia and its Aftermath," *African Affairs* 105, no. 419 (2006): 173–99; and International Crisis Group, Ethiopia: *Ethnic Federalism and its Discontents*, Africa Report no. 153, 4 September 2009. See also "Ethiopia Legislative Elections 2005," European Union Election Observation Mission, Final Report, <http://www.eueom.eu/files/dmfile/FinalReport.pdf> (accessed 15 November 2007).
56. Even if it is out of the scope of this article, it is still important to underscore here that this position is far from being common to every opposition party. Some do accept "multinational federalism" but criticize EPRDF's political governance. These, interestingly, combine discourses recognizing NNPs and stressing a kind of Pan-Ethiopian nationalism. This trend can be explained by the logic of large coalitions dominating the structure of the political scene, like the so-called Medrek since 2010.
57. Formed in October 2004, the main components of the CUD were: the All Ethiopian Unity Party, the United Ethiopia Democratic Party-Medhin, the Ethiopian Democratic League, and Rainbow Ethiopia (see Abbink 2006; ICG 2009). The United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF, or Hibrät) led

- by the Addis Ababa University Prof. Merera Gudina (Oromo National Congress) and Beyene Petros (Ethiopian Social Democratic Federal Party), represents the second most important coalition challenging EPRDF's power in 2005. Contrary to the CUD, the UEDF did not reject multinational federalism, but condemned what they consider authoritarian practices and EPRDF's monopolization of power. UEDF is composed of Ethiopian-based parties (mainly in the Southern regions) as well as exiled groups (in the United States). The coalition strongly criticizes EPRDF for the issue of the 1998–2000 war, considering that Ethiopia should have rejected the 2000 Algiers Agreement (ending the war) and (re)integrated the “lost” Ethiopian region.
58. The CUD had won 137 of the 138 seats of Addis Ababa City Council. It thus had the majority in the regional and federal level (since CUD won 109 seats in the House of People's Representatives), which marked a turning point in Ethiopian political history (the opponents had been almost absent in the lower House until then). 172 seats were won by the whole opposition, 372 remaining to the EPRDF and its affiliated parties. This was a big surprise for the EPRDF who did not expect such significant losses, particularly in the rural regions.
 59. See Abbink, “Discomfiture of democracy?” 173–99; and International Crisis Group, *Ethiopia*.
 60. See Asnake Kefale, “The (un)making of opposition coalitions and the challenge of democratization in Ethiopia, 1991–2011,” *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 5, no. 4 (2011): 681–701.
 61. Many opposition parties do not reject federalism or ethnic federalism. This was, for instance, the case of the coalition UEDF in 2005, or the coalition Medrek in 2010 whose main leaders were Merera Gudina and Beyene Petros. These groups criticize EPRDF's policies and “authoritarian” practices, but not multinationalism.
 62. Lidetu Ayalew, Six-Party Debate, Ethiopian Television, “Democracy, Election and Multipartyism in Ethiopia,” February 2010. These abstracts are unofficial translations from Amharic.
 63. This refers to Eritrea's independence in 1993.
 64. Six-Party Debate, Ethiopian Television, “Federalism and Decentralisation,” First Part, February 2010.
 65. After the 2005 elections, the CUD exploded, and many parties left the Coalition (Lidetu Ayalew's Ethiopian Democratic Unity Party was one of

- them), so that the CUD in the 2010 election was far from being as strong as in 2005.
66. Six-Party Debate, Ethiopian Television, "Federalism and Decentralisation," First Part, February 2010.
 67. Tronvoll, *War and the Politics of Identity*.
 68. Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, "Empire, droits et citoyenneté, de 212 à 1946," *Annales, Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, Éditions de l'Ehess, 63^e année (2008): 499, <http://www.cairn.info/revue-Annales-2008-3-page-495.htm> (accessed 22 May 2010).
 69. Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, "Nouvelles colonies et vieux empires," *Mil neuf cent. Revue d'histoire intellectuelle* 1, no. 27 (2009): 15, <http://www.cairn.info/revue-mil-neuf-cent-2009-1-page-13.htm> (accessed 22 May 2010).

