



**MANAGING POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT OF DIASPORAS IN AFRICA:
A CASE STUDY OF ETHIOPIA**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES OF ADDIS
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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University and that all sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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July 2021

This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as a university advisor.

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APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF EXAMINERS

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Contents

Chapter One	1
Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2. Statement of the Problem.....	2
1.3. Objectives of the Study	4
I. General Objective	4
II. Specific Objectives.....	4
1.4. Research Questions.....	5
1.6. The Scope of the Study	5
1.7. Limitation of the Study	6
1.8. Significance of the study.....	6
1.9. Organization of the Study	7
Chapter Two.....	8
Literature Review and Theoretical Framework	8
2.1 Defining Diaspora.....	8
2.2 African Diaspora	11
2.3 Diaspora and Homeland Politics.....	13
2.3 Theoretical Frameworks	15
2.3.1 Constructivism	15
2.3.2 Liberalism	16
2.3.3 Neo-Classicalism	17
2.3.4 Historical Structuralism	19
2.4 Ethiopian Diaspora.....	20
Chapter Three.....	24

Research Methods.....	24
3.1 Research Methods and Design.....	24
3.2. Study Population.....	26
3.3. Sampling Technique and Sampling Size	26
3.4. Sources of Data.....	26
3.4.1. Primary data.....	27
3.4.1.1. Interview Method.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.4.2. Secondary Data.....	27
Chapter Four	28
Presentation of Finding and Analysis	28
4.1 Ethiopian Diaspora and Homeland Politics	28
4.2 The end goals of Diaspora Political involvement	31
4.2.1 Unionist Bloc	32
4.2.2 Federalist Bloc	34
4.2.3 Diaspora and the 2018 political reform.....	36
4.3 Channels of Diaspora Political Engagement.....	38
4.3.1 Political Parties	39
4.3.2 Armed struggle and Grassroots movements	42
4.3.2.1 Armed struggle.....	42
4.3.2.2 Grassroots Movements.....	45
4.3.3. Satellite and Social Media.....	49
4.3.4 Political engagements in host states.....	53
4.4 managing the political involvement of Diaspora: challenges and prospects	55
4.4.1 Challenges: Perceptions, Institutions and Policies.....	56
4.4.2 Prospects: change in perception and new institutions.....	59

Chapter Five.....	61
Conclusion and Recommendation	61
5.1 Conclusion	61
5.2 Recommendation	63
References.....	65
Appendixes	76

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Abstract

This paper explores the participation of African diaspora in the politics of their home country by focusing on the experience of Ethiopia. The Ethiopian diaspora is said to be highly politicized, large in number and well-educated; they keep in touch and are interested in domestic affairs. Therefore, according to their management and participation methods, they have the ability to challenge the country or give up its huge potential. So far, the relationship between the Ethiopian government and the diaspora has been more confrontational than cooperative. The political and political climate in Ethiopia tends to view the diaspora as cash cows and favors participation in political decision-making in a moderate manner. In any case, the diaspora participates in national politics through various other channels. After the reforms in 2018, the government made rapid adjustments to give expatriates a say in their hometowns. However, if there is no favorable political and institutional framework, the relationship between the diaspora governments will not be easily resolved in the short term. The researcher will use qualitative analysis methods in interviews, document analysis, video analysis, and websites.

Acronyms

AAU- Addis Ababa University

CPJ- Committee to Protect Journalists

CUD- Coalition for Unity and Democracy

EDA- Ethiopian Diaspora Agency

EDTF- AC- Ethiopian Diaspora Trust Fund Advisory Council

EPRDF- Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front

EPRP- Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party

ESAT- Ethiopia Satellite Television and Radio

FDI- Foreign Direct Investment

G7- Ginbot 7 or Arbegnoch Ginbot 7 for Unity and Democratic Movement – AGUDM

GDP-Gross Domestic Product

ICCPR- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

IDEA- International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

IOM- International Organization for Migrants

MEISON- All Ethiopia Socialist Movement

MFA/MoFA- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia

MoP- Ministry of Peace

NGO- Non-Governmental Organization

OLF- Oromo Liberation Front

OMN- Oromia Media Network

ONLF- Ogaden National Liberation Front

TPLF- Tigray People's Liberation Front

UDHR- Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UEDF- United Ethiopian Democratic Forces

UK- United Kingdom

UN- United Nations

UNDP- United Nations Development Program

USA- United States of America

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Migration has been an eternal part of the history of human beings. Migrations happened in both prehistoric and historic periods which therefore led to the conclusion that it is “inherent in human nature – an instinctual and inborn disposition and inclination to wonder and to wander in search of new opportunities and new horizons.” Historians duly recognizing that humans being are born migrants, agree that the first major exodus happened when Hominids moved out of Africa some 2 million years ago. Since then, millions, if not billions, left their natal homelands due to various reasons (McNeill, 1984).

Although migration has a history of millennia, the term Diaspora formally entered as a social science concept only in the 2nd half of the twentieth century. Diaspora is a Greek term encompassing the idea of dispersion, distribution, and diffusion. But in a surprise, most literatures dealing with this concept link its origin with the Jewish context. Now with globalization and technological explosion, the movement of people is intensified making Diaspora a global buzzword in both academic and political discourses (Cohen & Fischer, 2019).

Africa, a continent where the very first migration took place, is still a leading contributor of travelers in global massive movements of people. US, and Europe being the main targets, Africans have migrating before, during and after colonization. Africans migrants similar to the classic Jewish and Greek Diaspora tend to keep attachment with their countries of origin. Their attachment is usually translated to an individual or a group action which significantly identify Diaspora from other sorts of migrants. This is more pronounced when African Union (2005) defined Diaspora as “consisting of people of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union.”

The highest rate of Migration in Africa is directly related to the fast-growing population and labor force, poor economic prospects, protracted civil wars, ethnic and religious conflicts, draught and famine along with natural disasters caused by deteriorating environmental conditions. These problems are common to all parts of the continent but having the maximum effect in the horn of Africa states (Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan). Being the poorest in the poor continent, the habitants of the Horn are engaged in both voluntarily and involuntarily movement in search of safer and better places for life and work (Akokpari, 2000).

Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the world. The low educational and technological standards that are compounded by recurrent wars; limited industrial development; massive unemployment and underemployment; limited land availability for viable agricultural undertakings in some areas; a growing population; and what is deemed excessive taxation, all of which are exaggerated by “ethnic conflict and political instability” (Fransen & Kuschminder, 2009). The aforementioned problems have resulted in many Ethiopians regarding migration as providing them with an opportunity to change their station in life. In recent Ethiopian history, approximately “75,000 Ethiopians migrate annually to Libya” (Casper, 2015) and across the Mediterranean Sea into Europe, many of whom, as is the case with others, “get stranded [and] others die trying” (ibid: 1)

There are more than 3 million Ethiopians living outside Ethiopia. From geographically dispersed places, they mobilize across borders and retain a strong connection to their homeland (Solomon, 2019). Ethiopian Diasporas have become influential actors in shaping policy. In the past decade, Diasporas have made good use of the ever-expanding communication technology to mobilize transnational networks in support of their aims (Brinkerhoff, 2009). By being situated outside their original nation, but inside the people (Shain & Barth, 2003), Diasporas are able to exercise influence from far, oftentimes enjoying the political freedoms of liberal democracies, allowing them to be more vocal and critical about homeland politics than their kinfolk back home.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

There are vast literatures on the relationship between Diaspora and their country of origin. It seems researchers have been more impressed with remittance in serving as the major source of

foreign incomes in developing nations. Diasporas role in investment flow, technology and know-how transfer have also been dealt in depth. There is also voluminous work on how the Diasporas influence the way of life in their homeland through music, movies, and other sorts of art. Several other literatures can also be found on the legal, political, social, and economic situation in the host country (Anthias, 1998; Shuval, 2000; Sökefeld, 2006).

But the subject that relates Diasporas with homeland politics has been given less attention (Smith, 2010). However, there has been an increasing role Diasporas are playing toward influencing homeland politics. Some scholars mentioned undesirable political nature of Diasporas such as undemocratic values, extreme polarization in ideology, and apolitical attitude, while others stress on positive roles including promoting democracy, broader political participation, multiculturalism and pluralism (Newland, 2004, Hoehne *et.al.*, 2011). Current literature on Diaspora engagement suggests that a large proportion of Diasporas would form an opposition to the origin government in order to foster democratic regime change. Nonetheless, it should also be noted that the oppositions are always resisted by the pro-government segments. (Koinova, 2009; Shain, 1999)

It is difficult to find literatures that treat Diaspora political involvement in a comprehensive approach without labeling Diasporas a part of problem or part of solution in the politics of their country of origin. Since the inspiration came from the socio-political conditions (structure) of Diaspora or the political space of the home state, the nexus between Diaspora and homeland politics is largely ignored. Others who have attempted to contribute in these regard are limited to certain aspect of Diaspora political engagement.

This problem is more pronounced in Ethiopia. The interplay between the Ethiopian government has not been discussed in a manner it addressed the large number of Diaspora and their heavy influence in Ethiopian politics. Even attempts made by some writers emphasized on the role of Diasporas in certain political events like the 2005 historic election (Lyons, 2006), or the 2018 political reforms (Addis *et al.* 2020). Others prioritize the policy and political conditions both in sending and receiving states facilitating Diaspora political engagement (Ong'ayo, 2014). Writers such as Hagman (2014), Mesfin (2019), Skjerdal (2011), entertain Diaspora as a part of their discussion on conflicts in Ethiopia.

Others like Alebachew (2017), stress on ways of engagement such as participating in voting as sponsors, financing political parties, shaping political ideologies, policy making, democratization and accounting the government. Solomon (2019) highlights the relation between the Diaspora and Ethiopian state is characterized by antagonism, and mistrust in the last three decades. The other points raised in the literatures include the nature of Diaspora community, whether they are disunited and fragile or the other way around.

This thesis, therefore, attempts to provide an all-encompassing discussion on Ethiopian Diasporas political engagement which includes formal and informal ways of engagement, the end goals they aspire to achieve, policy and institutional frameworks in place, challenges and prospects for the best possible utilizations of Diaspora potential.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

I. General Objective

This thesis has both general and specific objectives. The general objective of the study is to explore African Diaspora engagement in the politics of their home countries focusing on the Ethiopian experiences. Besides, the study has an objective to assess how the African states are managing Diasporas' political involvement through the wide-ranging policies, institutional arrangements and incentive packages with an aim to contain undesirable interventions and strengthen constructive actions.

II. Specific Objectives

- i. To help understand Ethiopian Diasporas' involvement in homeland politics and how they politically group themselves with concern to politics in Ethiopia.
- ii. To outline channels through which Diasporas influence political decision-making and evident outcomes in Ethiopia and examine institutional frameworks, policies and incentives that encourages or limits political engagement of Ethiopian Diaspora.
- iii. To identify challenges and prospects for the best managed political involvement of the Diasporas and recommend viable policy options towards the positive management of Diaspora's political development.

1.4. Research Questions

- I. Is there ‘Diaspora nationalism’ on the part of Ethiopian Diaspora? And if there, what does it look like?
- II. Why do Ethiopian Diaspora’s involve in homeland politics? What are the major political end goals Diasporas’ aspire to achieve in Ethiopian politics?
- III. How do Ethiopian Diasporas manage their way in to influencing political decision making in Addis Ababa?
- IV. What are the existing sets of policies, institutional framework and incentives that deal with Diaspora political engagement in Ethiopia?
- V. What are the challenges and prospects in managing Diaspora political involvement?

1.6. The Scope of the Study

Diaspora engagement in their country of origin is a multifaceted one both in theory and practice. This thesis, however, is limited to the study of Diaspora political involvement as it intends to help the understanding of Ethiopian Diasporas role in political decision making. It should be well noted that this does not necessarily mean other sorts of Diaspora involvement (Economic and Social) are blatantly omitted. Any action or reaction Diasporas take aiming at influencing the political decision making of Ethiopia is dealt in this discussion with due prioritization. Therefore, concept wise, this paper is a political one without abandoning or under appreciating other paradigms.

Ethiopian politics and Diaspora is not a recent phenomenon and this research is in no way an attempt made to compile the relationship between the two since the ancient past. Let alone, dealing with the Ethiopian case with scarce resource, it will be an uneasy task to do so in the case of classic Jewish Diasporas. Therefore the researcher has framed the scope only to the post 2005 Ethiopia. As Lyon (2007) and Solomon (2019) indicated the 2005 election is a good example of how the Diasporas involve in Ethiopian politics to further their political goals. 2005 was taken as a sprinter due to the fact that Ethiopia had one of democratically held election with opposition

party enjoyed sweeping victory in the capital city and in some regional states. However, resembling the same old story of African election, the government went on persecuting opposition figures to exile reaffirming authoritarianism on Ethiopian political culture. However, for the best interest of political forces in exile, the period coincided with the fast explosion of social networking sites. Therefore with the internet revolution Diaspora political involvement was pronounced in Ethiopia.

The political involvement of Diasporas is a global reality. Since the thesis cannot encompass what politically motivated Diaspora did in Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe or elsewhere in the globe, the study area is limited to Africa treating Ethiopia as a case in point.

1.7. Limitation of the Study

Conducting a research project is not an easy task for one to take. Especially in such a time when unprecedented challenge called Covid-19 affecting all aspects of the lives in the globe, it needs a multiplied effort. The main limitation the researcher identified to face is accessing data from respondents and organizations due to restrictions related to Covid-19. To solve this problem, researcher has planned to exhaustively use the available technological options. This, however, will, pool the second problem; financial constraints.

The other minor challenge the researcher faced is preconceived judgment of this research paper either in pro or antigovernment bloc. Extremist elements in the Diaspora communities tend to shape the outcome of this research towards their own 'universal truth.' This is also true for the government officers challenging the research commitment of avoiding researcher bias. However, the researcher remained committed to academics ethics in giving chances for the data to speak for itself.

1.8. Significance of the study

If widely managed Diasporas are the sources of political, economic, social and technical leverage for states especially developing nations like Ethiopia. The appropriate ways of dealing Diaspora could only come out from academic research supporting government officials with an informed decision. This thesis mainly aims to contribute to the scarce literature in the Diaspora-

homeland political relationship. The paper will shed lights on the what, why and how of the Diasporas political involvement in Ethiopia being the first to address the nexus in general framework. While providing relevant policy inputs for Diaspora strategy decision makers, it could also benefit the governments, nongovernmental organizations, higher institution students and individuals seeking to further research on this timely and global issue.

1.9. Organization of the Study

This thesis encompasses five chapters. The first chapter discusses introductory parts such as brief overview of the area of the study, problems and objectives of the study. The second chapter covers the theoretical (literature reviews) parts discussing about conceptual clarifications of Diaspora engagement and Diaspora-homeland politics nexus. In this Chapter History and trends of African Diaspora in general and Ethiopia will be discussed. In the third chapter methods, materials and procedure used in doing the thesis, and the definition of terms will also be dealt with. Chapter Four is the core of the study presenting and analyzing the data. In this chapter the researcher attempts to address issues raised as research questions depending on collected data. Finally, the last chapter presents, conclusions and recommendations.

2.0. Ethical considerations

This research paper takes into account some ethical issues that a researcher need to take into consideration. The researcher kindly asked the interviewee's consent to be included in his research, and also vowed to protect the anonymity of some informants on the subject matter whom they considered sensitive for their position. Since misleading practices are not conventional in undertaking a research, the researcher did not forge or invent findings to meet researchers or some audience wishes. The researcher also did not abuse results to the advantage of certain individuals, groups or institutions.

Chapter Two

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Defining Diaspora

Since there is no agreed-upon definition of Diaspora, it is still contested and discussed among academics. The concept "Diaspora" has developed and been redefined as global factors such as conflict; drought, colonialism, and globalization continue to change migration patterns. The phrase Diaspora is derived from the Greek terms 'sperio', which means to sow, and 'dia,' which means over (Cohen, 1997). It was first used in literature to refer to the scattered Jewish Diaspora, but it was later expanded to include the early Armenian and Greek Diasporas (Brubaker, 2005). For instance, Diaspora was defined as "the settling of scattered colonies of Jews outside Palestine after the Babylonian exile," as "the area outside Palestine settled by Jews," as the Jews living outside Palestine or modern Israel" by Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary as late as 1975.

It is still a common understanding that the concept 'Diaspora' remains under the heavy influences of the characteristics of the Jewish Diaspora. The traumatic and forced dispersion of the Jewish people became a comparative factor in defining and categorizing other Diaspora communities. However, as global circumstances changed over time, people dispersed more widely, prompting a rethinking of the word "Diaspora," especially in the 1980s and 1990s (Cohen, 1997). As a result, significant number of scholars began to define the term in a systematic way. Of all Safran's (1991) definition of Diaspora by six characteristics become a major milestone on this field of study. These include:

1. Diaspora members or their ancestors have been dispersed from a specific original 'center' to two or more foreign regions;
2. Diaspora members retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland including its physical location, history, and achievements;
3. They believe that they are not and perhaps cannot be fully accepted in their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it;

4. They regard their ancestral homeland as their true and ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return when conditions allow;
5. They believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and ensure its safety and prosperity;
6. They continue to relate personally or vicariously to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship.

Safran emphasized the spiritual bond between migrants and their homeland as the defining characteristic of Diaspora, using the dispersal from the homeland into a foreign area as a starting point, which is valid for any form of migration. His description of Diasporas as a community that retains collective memory of their original homeland, idealizes their ancestral home, is dedicated to the restoration of the original homeland, and continues efforts in various ways to relate to their homeland was a breakthrough that enabled newer Diaspora groups to be included.

Nonetheless, although Safran's characteristics of 'Diaspora' were instrumental in the increase of Diaspora studies, they remained within the context and contrast of the Jewish experience. Cohen (1997) argues that the original concept of Diaspora as it related to the Jewish experience was too limited to enable academics to interact with the diversity of other emerging Diaspora communities. Chambers (1994) also recognizes the complexities of Diaspora communities, which pose a challenge to traditional migration research. Diasporic histories "interrogate and contradict any clear or uncomplicated sense of roots, customs, and linear movement," he writes (Chambers, 1994, pp. 16-17). The Diaspora's complex movements have questioned traditional notions of Diaspora and developed a plethora of new spaces for Diaspora and transnational studies.

Similarly, Cohen (1997) established a Diaspora definition that goes beyond the concept's limited application by providing a structure for categorizing Diasporas.

- 1) Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;

- 2) Alternatively, migration from the homeland in search of work, in pursuit of a trade or to further colonial ambitions;
- 3) Collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, and achievements;
- 4) An idealization of the putative ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety, prosperity, even its creation;
- 5) The development of a return movement that gains collective approbation;
- 6) Strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate;
- 7) Troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance at least possibility that another calamity might befall the group;
- 8) A sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement; and
- 9) The possibility of a distinctive creative and enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism.

Cohen added that, contrary to popular belief, not all Diasporas are involuntary, which has an effect on their structure, perspective, and growth potential. He observes that being forced to flee by force of arms seems to be a qualitatively distinct phenomenon from the general stresses of overpopulation, land hunger, poverty, or an unfriendly political system. With this work being a departure, Diaspora started to encompass any racial or religious group that is physically separated from its homeland, regardless of the circumstances that led to the separation. This is true regardless of whether or not the society and its home country have physical, cultural, or emotional links (Cohen, 1997).

Tölölyan (1996), on the other hand, was unconvinced about the growing trend of renaming all migratory groups as Diaspora. He concludes that, while Diaspora should not be restricted to

conventional application for a small number of ethnic groups, it is also not useful to loosely rename all groups of people living outside the homeland as "Diaspora." Based on this study, Brubaker (2005) warns about the dispersion of the definition of Diaspora, as its usage in academic and mainstream debates has been overextended to accommodate these new communities. Although he agrees with previous scholarship that the Jewish experience should not be used as a benchmark, he claims that the word "Diaspora" loses its utility when extended to all migratory groups.

Brubaker (2005) reaffirms three key criterion that define Diasporas: dispersion, homeland orientation, and boundary protection "involving the preservation of a distinctive identity vis-à-vis a host society" in order to put back some conceptual and functional framework while participating in discussions of these contemporary Diaspora communities. While it may seem futile to constantly re-examine and question the evolution of the word "Diaspora," this phase is essential for advancing deeper understanding and interpretation as new Diaspora groups arise and engage with larger global issues.

2.2 African Diaspora

When it comes to establishing who defines the "African Diaspora" and what it means to be a member of this group, the term Diaspora has a long history of ambiguity and academic discussion. The experiences of the trans-Atlantic slave trade dominated early writing on the African Diaspora. The names "black Diaspora" and "African Diaspora" were often used to denote the "victim Diaspora" of the slave trade after the 1950s and 1960s (Cohen, 1997).

This Diaspora population starts to look for their origins and identity in their motherland in the decades that followed. At the time, several African colonies were attaining political independence, and a Pan-African identity was taking shape (Edwards, 2001). However, it is incorrect to assume that everyone shares this pan-African longing and feeling of "African" identity.

While the term "African Diaspora" provided a theoretical foundation for exploring the creation of a diasporic identity among people compelled to leave the slave trade, Patterson and Kelley (2000) suggest that researchers must look beyond this one story of displacement when thinking

about Africa and its Diaspora. Zeleza (2010) challenges the dominant Afro-Atlantic Diaspora paradigm in order to provide way for other frameworks for comprehending African Diaspora. Scholars should de-Atlanticize and de-Americanize African Diaspora history, he believes. As literature on the African Diaspora has grown, the intricacy of these groups has become more widely acknowledged.

According to Sheffer (2003), some of the African Diaspora dispersed by and after the Atlantic slave trade has a longing and orientation toward Africa, while others do not identify with Africa as their motherland. In his writings, Sheffer (2003) also includes a "modern" Diaspora category, which comprises more recent Africans who have left their nation but still have ties to it. As a result of these emerging African Diaspora communities, the term Diaspora has been increasingly explored and examined. Cohen's (1997) characterization of African Diaspora as "victim Diaspora" is no longer appropriate, given the growth of numerous African Diaspora communities.

The Nigerian Diaspora, Ghanaian Diaspora, and Ethiopian Diaspora, to mention a few, are made up of migrants who see a particular nation-state as their "homeland" and a center of common memory and diasporic identification. Due to multiple push and pull influences such as economic globalization, political unrest, and overseas educational possibilities, these new Diaspora groups have dispersed and are no longer restricted to a unified "African Diaspora" tale (Gordon, 1998). Brubaker's (2005) "maintenance of homeland orientation" and Safran's (1991) "commitment to the maintenance or rebuilding of the homeland's wealth" classify new African Diaspora groups as Diaspora, even if they do not cleanly fit into the first Jewish exile Diaspora experience.

Furthermore, these African Diaspora communities have grown up in a more globalized world, allowing for the development of transnational relationships between host and home nations, as well as the fulfillment of their longings and hopes for homeland development. These in-depth analyses of current Diaspora groups provide a foundation for comprehending and studying Diaspora proliferation and growth.

2.3 Diaspora and Homeland Politics

Diaspora and exile groups play influential role in home land politics. Diaspora involvement in homeland politics is not a new phenomenon. With the advancement communication and technology, however, it became more evident in our age. Studies conducted in this regard put forward that the relationship between Diaspora and politics in their country of origin is either destructive or constructive in nature.

The destructive nature, which enjoys dominancy in the literature, portrays Diaspora's as a "long distance nationalists" who sustain hostilities by providing economic and political support or involvement without endangering their own lives. It has been argued that in cases such as Ethiopia, Kashmir, Sri Lanka, Israel, Palestine and Kosovo, Diaspora groups have played major roles in augmenting conflicts (Collier and Hoeffler 2001; Lyons 2004; Vertovec 2005). In such circumstances Diaspora's are seen as part of the problem.

On the other side, Diaspora and exile groups have been acknowledged for their commitment to nonviolent conflict resolution, which has the potential to promote and support local democratization and post-conflict reconstruction efforts in their countries of origin (Koser 2003; Emanuelsson 2005). Diasporas can give direct political assistance through networks and the exchange of thoughts and expertise with actors in the homeland, or they can engage in the democratic resolution of a dispute in their home country by serving on advisory councils or transitional administrations. This is reflected in recent suggestions and policy papers advocating for Diasporas to have a larger role in development, as well as democratization, in their home countries (Hear, Pieke et al. 2004).

In terms of more indirect political assistance from overseas, the Diaspora might generate support among the people and policymakers in their home country or among international organizations. They can, for example, plan public events, demonstrations, large gatherings, and information campaigns (which also serve to mobilize the Diaspora). This is not a policy area as well-developed as the one addressing the negative aspects of Diaspora politics.

There is the role of the media and the internet. The term digital Diasporas indicates how Diasporas are prolific internet users. Websites serve as platforms for information campaigns

mobilizing the members of the Diaspora as well as the wider public. Indeed, much Diaspora political activity takes place in Cyberspace. Similarly, the electronic and printed media serve as important vehicles for news and political commentary for the Diaspora.

There are a number of factors that determine Diaspora's relation with their homeland states such as political, economic, cultural, ecological and social context like politics itself, ideology, poverty and war. Diasporas function within a political national and international setting that both restricts and facilitates their actions. It is vital to discover what interests are at play in identifying who is a good and who is a bad Diaspora in order to comprehend why certain Diasporas receive support while others do not. Some of them are discussed as follows (Shain & Barth, 2003).

Homeland State: - While the state of origin may not be able to regulate political dissension to the same extent as it does on its own soil, it does have a number of long-distance devices. As a result, the state of origin may participate in mobilization efforts overseas through outreach initiatives targeted at suppressing dissidence and motivating allegiance among emigrant and refugee populations. Furthermore, in circumstances when substantial groups of abroad dissidents are present, home governments may exert pressure on recipient countries to limit Diaspora political participation. This type of long-distance public policy has been observed in Turkey, Morocco, and a number of other 'sending countries' (Levitt and Dehesa 2003; stergaard-Nielsen 2003b).

Host state: - Similarly, Diaspora states are not just incubators but also guardians, laying down norms and restrictions for Diaspora political efforts to affect disputes in their home nations. Needless to add, Diaspora political groups and activities must abide by the law and will not be permitted if they are considered a local or foreign security danger. Domestic issues, such as the presence of a rival Diaspora or migrant group with greater economic and political influence, may potentially dissuade policymakers from working more closely with the Diaspora political organization. As a result, Diasporas may strive to build political clout by finding common ground with policymakers in their host countries. Human rights conventions are being used as a venue for debate, which is a growing trend.

Beyond the state: - The mobilization and effect of Diasporas were typically discussed in terms of their connection with their two states in the early literature. The concept of a triadic interaction between homeland, Diaspora, and settlement nation, on the other hand, is too limited to represent the complexities of Diaspora lobbying and long-distance involvement. Indeed, one of the distinguishing characteristics of Diaspora politics is the absence of national state borders. First, Diaspora political networks pool financial resources and rely on experience and personnel from sister groups throughout the world through their transnational networks. They bolster their efforts by coordinating them with political equivalents in other countries, either through the production of shared information material or the planning and coordination of simultaneous events (demonstrations/mass gatherings). It should also be noted that transnational networking takes place not just among organizations of the Diasporas (Baubock & Faist).

2.3 Theoretical Frameworks

Developing the influence of the Diaspora in a country may be a constructive way to build transnational relations. It serves as a bridge between the domestic society and the accepting society, conveys the values of diversity and democracy, and contributes to development through participation in investment (Shain, 2007). However, the impact of the Diaspora is not always constructive, as it is also the main cause of domestic violence and instability. Therefore, by using the theoretical basis of international relations as the prism of analysis, the participation of the Diaspora can be well understood.

The theory of migration or Diaspora is relatively new, but has become popular in the interdisciplinary field of social sciences, and attempts to create different types of theoretical frameworks that can be used for different purposes (Arango, 2000).

2.3.1 Constructivism

Constructivism looks the state as a social subject, not only a rational and purposeful subject. It tries to maximize utility and is governed by the "logic of consequence". The state is also a rule-driven participant. They try to express an identity and are guided by "integration logic"(Market Facts Inc., 1995). Therefore, constructivism will initially bring benefits. It is believed that it is not exogenous and permanent, but endogenous and variable. National interest is a variable that is

mainly affected by national identity. In addition, identity itself is bounded because it is also a variable of national and international power (Centennial Platform, 1998).

Diasporas are part of the people beyond the scope of the nation-state. Building people's identities is an ongoing and incomplete project. It is continuously formed by the ecological process, the relationship between the actors and their environment, the social process, the relationship between the actors themselves, and the internal processes and characteristics of the actors. The process of national identity gives a vigorous trend, that is, the tendency to defend and strengthen the common national identity with people who identify with it.

Identity is a constant feature of any domestic policy because there is competition to adapt to the dynamics of national identity. By adapting to the dynamics, the subject can not only define the identity, but also guide the country's political orientation to the compatibility of universal identity. In this case, the Diaspora pays more attention to national identity. Diaspora, given its international status is suitable for "other actors". Therefore, constructivism helps to better understand identity on the basis of displaced people have both motives and opportunities to influence the process of identity formation, especially in terms of their foreign policy. Constructivists participating in this political process must regard the Diaspora as proactive actors who can compete for identity construction. In this way, the study of the Diaspora has enriched the methods of constructivism (Shain, 2007).

2.3.2 Liberalism

Liberalism rejects the generally accepted assumption that states are the main actors in international affairs and are unitary in this sense. Instead, he argued that the main players in international politics are individuals and private groups working to promote diverse interests. But he is the representative of the exciting transitional alliance. As a result, the state will not automatically seek fixed interests (security, power, or prosperity as claimed by neo-realism and institutionalism). On the contrary, the interests pursued by the state are preferred by the current ruling coalition (Shain, 2007).

According to the liberal approach, the degree of influence of internal participants on homeland politics depends on the strength of the relationship between the state (political institution) and

society (public organization). In this case, the weak state is a state with high permeability for a society to influence their decision-making process (Wendt, 1992).

The link between liberal and constructivist methods argues that the internal structure of a country is related to normative agreements rooted in society, that is, agreements between domestic politics and identity, are particularly important. The Diaspora participates in this political process and should be regarded as one of many internal interest groups. This means the opposite of the international. The family community treats the Diaspora as internal participants, even if they are outside the nation-state.

The study of the Diaspora has enriched the liberal approach by expanding the meaning of the key term "Home". By applying liberal views to domestic political dynamics, liberalism helps to better understand the influence of Diasporas in the homeland. The influence of stakeholders as the home country and the host country often affects the home country due to the influence of the host country (Shain, 2007).

Diasporas can use any influence to advance their own interests. Like other interest groups, they use their own financial resources because people in the Diaspora are generally wealthier than their compatriots at home. In addition to indirect influence through donations to various civil society projects, the Diaspora also exerts a more direct influence through political support for political parties or their chosen candidates. Groups in the Diaspora can also use their diplomatic influence as an interest group in the host country. In view of the increasing financial and political influence of Diasporas, governments of various countries recruit them through the establishment of Diaspora affairs departments, and more importantly, allow foreigners to enjoy dual citizenship and voting rights.

2.3.3 Neo-Classicalism

This theory explains migration using classic push concepts (Massey *et al.*, 1998; Kearney, 1986). In terms of immigration, this theory is the most influential theory (Arango, 2000). In the neoclassical tradition, the abundance of labor (or labor shortage) is regarded as the only determinant of wage differences, and the emergence of migration is a response to the unequal distribution of population and income among countries. If the neoclassical theory is correct, then

when the reason for the migration (the wage difference) disappears overtime, the migration is over (Castles, 2010).

The core idea of neoclassical theory is that immigration is voluntary, active and self-controlled. In other words, migration occurs only when it is encouraged to benefit from the host country, mainly from an economic point of view (Castles and Miller 1998; Shields 1989). In the neoclassical model, the immigration impact of the country of origin is positive because the country of origin of the Diaspora can export their surplus labor and benefit from the exchange of capital, knowledge, and skills (Massey *et al.* In 1998, Skelden, 1997). This hypothesis is based on the "Europe-centric" modernization theory.

The neoclassical tradition views immigration as a mechanism to promote the development of countries of origin and destination, and can be attributed to the paradigm of "development optimism" (Castles, 2008). However, the neoclassical theory only links migration factors with economic factors, and therefore ignores other factors such as politics, demographic and social aspects and their relationships (Nikolinakos, 1975). Due to the different characteristics and living conditions of immigrants, immigration decisions also depend on many factors, such as the politics, society, history, and immigration policies of the country of origin and destination (Castles and Miller 1998; Massey, *et al.*, 1993).

Neoclassical theory "is powerless in clarifying or predicting when and where migration will occur, but even more unsatisfactory in explaining where, when and why it did not occur" (Abreu, 2010). Because this theory implies that cross-border movement is not restricted, it has been severely criticized. In practice, immigrants must comply with the rules and regulations of immigration policies and the laws of their country of origin and residence (Van Hear and Sorensen, 2003). The goal is that people stay and may move on to the settlement (Portes, 2004).

The idea is that politics becomes a situation where it needs to be compared and reconciled with the current reality of immigration, and the expected benefits are the result of migration. The global distribution of the labor force encourages people to migrate, and over time, both the receiving and sending societies of immigrants may be structurally dependent on Migration (IOM, 2010).

Countries seek to attract skilled and unskilled immigrant workers, while many less developed countries such as the Philippines and Mexico encourage labor exports (Castles, 2004). The borders are not completely free or completely closed, which strongly criticizes the so-called freedom of the neoclassical movement. The border restrictions should not only be considered from the perspective of the receiving country, but also from the perspective of the country of origin of the immigrants.

2.3.4 Historical Structuralism

In the 1970s and 1980s, neoclassical theory faced major challenges and was dominated by a dependent school, which was mainly driven by Marxism and structural policy orientation (Massey *et al.*, 1998). The world system theory explains the interaction between countries and distinguishes three types. Concentric spheres, that is, the central state, semi-periphery and peripheral areas (Wallestrein, 1974:350).

The idea is that the development of central countries is at the expense of peripheral countries, while immigrants are regarded as a means and product of the manipulative relationship among the central and peripheral countries. The main principle of the deterministic method is based on the loss of skilled and unskilled workers and the penetration of capitalist markets into surrounding areas (Gross and Lindquist, 1995; Zolberg, 1989; Nikolinakos, 1975).

The theory of the world system believes that globalization is the main reason for immigration. Although it agrees with the view that capitalist countries charge cheaply from the periphery, its explanation of the reasons of global migration is the other way round: displacements brought about by capitalist penetration in less advanced countries. In the past, colonies, including today's neocolonialism, multinational corporations, and foreign direct investment, have always been poor people's infiltration tools localities (Massey *et al.*, 1998). Therefore, if human influence and structural factors can be considered more satisfactorily, then the historical structuralism approach to explain modern migration patterns will be effective (Abreu, 2010).

This study uses constructivism and liberalism as theoretical frameworks to evaluate the role of Diasporas in a country's domestic politics.

2.4 Ethiopian Diaspora

Ethiopia is Africa's poorest and second-most populated country, with a population of over 100 million people. The bulk of the population, 80 percent, lives in rural regions where agriculture is the main source of income, accounting for 46 percent of the country's GDP. Citizens of this country are compelled to move due to these and other circumstances. In the last thirty years, Ethiopian migration has been divided into four categories.

The pre-1974 period was the first phase of migrant movement. There was practically little emigration from Ethiopia before to the 1970s. Since the 1930s, the monarchy had been in control, and those who moved were mostly elites who traveled abroad for professional reasons, such as study trips, and subsequently returned (Abye, 2007; Terraza, 2007). As a result, the few Ethiopians who traveled overseas at this time had a strong desire to return because they were nearly assured of a very high social status.

However, the country's political unrest began in the 1960s, when Ethiopia seized Eritrea in 1962. (Berhanu & White, 2000). In 1962, Emperor Haile Selassie unilaterally dissolved the federation and the Eritrean parliament and annexed the country. As a result of the growth of an Eritrean independence movement on both sides of the border, fighting erupted on both sides of the border (Berhanu and White, 2000). People on both sides of the border began to move as a result of the violence. Following the military's toppling of the monarchy in 1974, greater emigration from Ethiopia occurred in the 1970s. As the Ethiopian revolution concluded in a totalitarian regime in 1974, a second wave of exodus began.

The use of repressive measures to suppress all opposition to the regime in 1976-79, as well as the 1977 conflict between Ethiopia and Somalia in the Ogaden region, combined with the intensification of the Eritrean independence movement, resulted in forced migration from Ethiopia (Berhanu and White, 2000). The third phase of emigration from Ethiopia began in 1982 and lasted until 1991, and was predominantly triggered by family reunion initiatives as individuals joined those who had fled since 1974 (Abye, 2007).

However, due to the famine in 1984-85, people continued to move and the number of refugees rose (Berhanu and White, 2000). Following the election of the Ethiopian Revolutionary

Democratic Front (EPRDF) to power in 1991, the fourth and most current wave of emigration from Ethiopia began. This was mostly for economic reasons and to avoid government political persecution. In general, the Ethiopian Diaspora has arisen as a new Diaspora in the last three decades, with a broad mix of nationalities and groupings (Kuschminder and Siegel, 2010).

While no precise statistic is available, the Ethiopian Diaspora is estimated to number more than three million people living in different parts of the world. One million Ethiopian Diasporas live in the Middle East, more than 600,000 in Africa, more than half a million in North America, and the remainder in Europe, Australia, and Asia (Ethiopian Herald, 2017). From its original exodus in the late twentieth century, the Ethiopian Diaspora is geographically diversified and well-represented in the immigrant community across the world. In comparison to other Sub-Saharan African nations, Ethiopia has a low emigration rate of 0.4 percent of the population, compared to 0.8 percent in Nigeria, 1.4 percent in Kenya, and 4.5 percent in Ghana (UNDP, 2009).

As Diasporas play an important role in the economic development of their countries of origin by sending remittances, promote trade and foreign direct investment (FDI), create businesses and entrepreneurship and transfer knowledge and skills (Migration Policy Institute, 2013), the Ethiopian government took different measures to encourage the engagement of Diaspora. Ethiopia Expatriate Affairs General Directorate, a sub ministerial unit dealing with Diaspora affairs, was established in 2002 under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This was with the objective to serve as a liaison between the government and Ethiopians abroad and to mobilize the Ethiopian Diaspora community to attract knowledge and capacity building in Ethiopia.

Furthermore, in 2002, the Ethiopian government issued Proclamation 270/2002, which grants international nationals of Ethiopian descent some rights. This is in order to grant them particular rights and advantages, as well as to provide a legal framework for their contribution to the growth and prosperity of their home nation. The Diaspora Coordinating office was also established in 2005 with a vision to mobilize and utilize Diaspora resources and facilitate optimal brain gain and capacity building for poverty alleviation (Kuschminder & Siegel, 2010).

As a result, it became important to implement a national Diaspora strategy in order to make the Diaspora fully aware of their country's peace, development, and democratic initiatives, as well as

the successes achieved so far, and to encourage them to actively engage in their country's development. In a landmark move, the Ethiopian government adopted Ethiopian Diaspora Policy in 2013, to defend their rights overseas, as well as to address internal concerns and increase their engagement (MoFA, 2013).

However, Ethiopia did not have a specific organization that is responsible for dealing with migration up until 2018 (Kuschminder & Siegel, 2010). In another milestone decision, Ethiopia launched a Diaspora Agency to engage Ethiopians and foreigners of Ethiopian origin in meaningful participation in the development of their country. The foundation of the agency lies on three points.

The first argument affirms that the government is responsible to its inhabitants both inside and outside the country. The second key reason is because the globally recognized "Diaspora Option" is seen as a significant possibility for the country's growth and democracy. The Diaspora Option is a method of organizing the Diaspora's full participation in national development and good governance. Third, it is critical to adjust to the political environment in the international world. The effort of integrating Ethiopians into their home nation has become a worldwide reality with the emergence of the cross-border citizenship concept, the rise of social media and the flow of ideas, and the growth of the second and third generation's political ideals. The Ethiopian Diaspora Agency was established to help Ethiopians living abroad understand their country's national and international situation.

To briefly discuss the significance of the Diaspora in the Ethiopian economy, Diaspora remittances account for about 5% of Ethiopia's GDP and one-quarter of the country's foreign exchange profits, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the first 10 months of 2016, the value of arriving remittances exceeded the country's export revenues. However, as compared to neighboring nations like Kenya and Sudan, Ethiopia receives a little amount of formal remittances. The ongoing political hostility between the government and the Diaspora is one explanation for this (Isaacs, 2017).

However, owing to the comprehensive reform performed in the nation by the reigning ruling party, Ethiopian Diaspora has recently downplayed political differences and worked for the

welfare of their nation (Fitsum, 2018). Furthermore, Ethiopia's government recently formed the Ethiopian Diaspora Trust Fund (EDTF), with the primary goal of funding people-centered social and economic development projects.

Approximately 3000 Diasporas have invested in Ethiopia over the previous two decades via agriculture, building, health, education, and development initiatives, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA, 2011). They put together a total investment of birr 22 billion and employed 123,000 people (Anberbir, 2014). However, as compared to the overall Diaspora investment in the nation, this is a minor amount.

We will discuss the political relationship between Ethiopian Diasporas and the politics in Addis Ababa in the chapters to come.

Chapter Three

Research Methods

3.1 Research Methods and Design

One of the first steps in planning a research project is to think about the appropriate method to use. Accordingly, exploratory research design is employed whereas descriptive analysis is given due attention. Exploratory research is interpretive research as it is used to answer questions like what, why and how which enables to create a better understanding of the existing problem (Given, 2008).

Thus, in terms of method the thesis employs qualitative method with interpretive technique to reliable findings and conclusion. A qualitative study depends much on interpretation. Furthermore, qualitative roach deals with analyzing data, or categorizing this data and finally making interpretation in order to grasp a meaning out of the collected data (Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell 2008). This however should not rule out instances whereby data are expressed in quantitative form to solidify some facts that will be described in the finding. This study will mainly focus on Diaspora's political involvement in their home countries with due emphasis given to Ethiopian. Therefore, in this view qualitative method enables the researcher to investigate the relationships and differences using rigorous and systematic methods of analysis of trends and themes.

In the contemporary international system, migration and Diaspora are grasping every ones attention. Developing countries are at forefront in taking delivery of Diaspora community's engagement in their home countries development. In this regard in order to answer the main questions of the research, qualitative methodology is ideal choice. Qualitative research it is important to investigate questions involving the intentions and purposes of the people, why, How and what are important, when looking at social science phenomena, not just "How Much" (Cropley, 2015).

By the application of these descriptive and explanatory research techniques. This research paper tried to explore African Diaspora engagement in the politics of their home countries focusing on

the Ethiopian experiences. This research has a conceptual framework which was essential in analysing the research questions that were raised in chapter one.

II. Method of Data Collection

In conducting a research, the selection of appropriate data collection instruments is crucial. In this thesis both Primary and secondary sources were used to get pertinent data. Accordingly, the followed sources of data will be employed:

- A. **Document Analysis:** Document analysis can provide background information and broad coverage of data, and therefore helpful in contextualizing one's research within its subject of field. Moreover, Document analysis can also point to questions that need to be asked or to situations that need to be observed, making the use of document analysis a way to ensure your research is critical and comprehensive. Accordingly, the researcher used books, policies, guidelines, websites, publications, proclamations, articles and other document relevant to Diaspora political engagement to their home countries with special attention to Ethiopia (Bowen, 2009).
- B. **Interview:** there are different types of interview in qualitative research, but in this study, semi-structured interview was used so that the researcher will have flexibility to gain appropriate data. Adams (2015) noted that the semi- structured interview employs a blend of closed and open ended questions, often accompanied by follow-up why or how questions. Seven interviews will be made with higher officials of Ethiopia Diaspora Agency, Ethiopia Diaspora Association, three Diaspora political activists, two political science scholars. The purpose of the interview is to investigate views, experiences and factors that accelerate and holdback Diaspora engagement to their home countries.
- C. **Video Analysis:** Some YouTube videos that have connection with the study are analyzed and integrated in the process of final analysis. With regard to video analysis, various discussions made by the Ethiopian officials with Diaspora communities in several states as well as scholarly discussion in the area are extensively used.
- D. **Websites:** various reliable governments and other websites that have valuable data to the

study and the data will be analyzed and used properly in the study.

3.2. Study Population

The study population includes, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ethiopia Diaspora Agency), Ethiopian Diaspora Association, Ethiopian Diaspora Associations operating in US, Europe and Middle East, Diasporas' who moved to Ethiopia recently, political parties and scholars from higher education institutions.

3.3. Sampling Technique and Sampling Size

While undertaking this research, the researcher will apply non-probability sampling and purposive sampling. In applying non-probability sampling the sample sizes are smaller but the data collected are more detailed. This non-probability sampling is also important for the researcher to justify the type of sample, the number of people in the sample and the process by which those people were selected. In purposive sampling, the researchers identify certain respondent as being potentially able to provide significant data on the research subject (Oliver, 2008).

As a result, the researcher has selected key informants which are believed to provide preeminent information in consultation with the aforementioned organizations. While selecting these key informants purposively, the researcher has taken their awareness; familiarity and position to the subject matter into consideration. Hence, in this research there are about 30 general respondent and ten key informants selected purposively from 8 organizations/groups mentioned above.

3.4. Sources of Data

Under this research both primary data and secondary data are applied. Primary data are direct sources including the oral or written testimony of eyewitnesses, which are original in nature. Primary data include original documents, and items related to the direct outcome of an event or an experience. They may also include documents, photographs, recordings, diaries, journals, life histories, drawings, mementos, or other relics. Secondary data involve the oral or written testimony of people not immediately present at the time of a given event. Secondary data may

include textbooks, encyclopedias, oral histories of individuals or a group, journal articles, newspaper stories, and even obituary notices (Berg. 2001).

3.4.1. Primary data

In this research the primary data will be collected by the use of in-depth interviews, with Ethiopia Diaspora Agency, Political science scholars, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ethiopia Diaspora Association, Ministry of Peace, Diasporas political activists from US, UK and South Africa and Political Activists, Personal, and focus group discussions will be in used. Although the information collected from respondents and key informants constitute the major part of primary sources, policies, guidelines, publications, proclamations, and other original documents relevant to Diaspora political engagement to their home countries with special attention to Ethiopia are thoroughly used.

3.4.2. Secondary Data

The research also makes use of secondary data refer to data that were previously available. Under this research the researcher will apply an extensive reading of books, journals, articles, publications, academic literature and media reports (newspaper, news, website blogs, etc.)

Chapter Four

Presentation of Finding and Analysis

4.1 Ethiopian Diaspora and Homeland Politics

Ethiopian residents living abroad are known to be highly political, numerous and well-educated. They stay in touch and are interested in homeland's issues. As a result, the people of the Ethiopian Diaspora have the ability to offer national challenges or abandon their enormous potential, depending on how they are processed and participated. (Alebachew, 2020). To fully comprehend the Diaspora's political engagement in Ethiopia, it is necessary to split the issue into two categories. There are two types of political participation: direct and indirect.

When the government allows the Diaspora to engage in national political activities, this is known as direct political involvement. Direct political involvement includes the right to vote and run for office, participation in referendums and other public political activities, participation in major political parties, and membership in political parties (Wellman, 2021).

Involvement of the Diaspora in these political activities is a common practice in the world and is practiced in 152 countries. More than 24 African countries have given their citizens the right to do so, while the rest are either not enforcing the law or attempting to pass legislation. Ethiopia is one of the 55 countries that do not allow direct political participation of its Diaspora, and the political participation of the Diaspora in this regard is negligible (IDEA: 2007). This is related to the government's attitude toward the Diaspora.

Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy, unveiled in 2002, stated unequivocally that the government's foreign involvement is primarily focused on poverty alleviation and other economic aims. In accordance with this, Ethiopia's first Diaspora Policy, announced in 2013, stresses expatriates' economic and social potential for the country's growth. In other words, the government regards the Diaspora as a cash cow.¹

¹ FGD with Experts from EDA, MoFA and MoP (January, 2021)

However, considering the primary cause of Ethiopian migration in the 1970s and 1980s is related to conflicts and political constraints, it is not difficult to see this Ethiopian Diaspora perspective is misguided. First-generation Diasporas, particularly those who fled Ethiopian governments to the United States and Europe, are more concerned with political goals than with accumulating riches (Sarah, 2015).

As a result, attempts to involve Ethiopian Diaspora individuals, which are mostly focused on securing economic and social engagement, would be ineffective unless they are accorded the ability to participate in direct political participation. Although voting in home-country elections is not the only activity associated with individuals' political engagement abroad, it is one of the most officially performed activity demonstrating membership in a political community. Corollary, allowing Diaspora residents to vote in Ethiopian elections will encourage them to participate constructively in the country's social, economic, and political concerns (Alebachew, 2020).

Their involvement in elections would also help to legitimize government and democratic institutions in general, especially in Ethiopia. It is also critical to institutionalize Diaspora political involvement in Ethiopia, which is now disorganized and hazy. On the other hand, the principle of universal suffrage, which is duly recognized under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), cannot be fully realized unless citizens living abroad have the right to vote in their home country's elections (Ibid: 43).

Apart from election participation, there are cases when the government engages with Diaspora organizations on other political concerns. For example, Diasporas that want to cooperate closely with the government might engage in public diplomacy with their home country's embassy or consulate. As a result, they function as ambassadors, promoting their country's image; they also operate as watchdogs, pursuing actions that are detrimental to their country's interests. On the other hand, it is acceptable for them to create a variety of civic organizations in order to pass on

good political traditions to their nation and to engage in the development of democracy and human rights².

Furthermore, the question of dual citizenship remains unsolved, and the government does not include the Diaspora directly in state-building and other important political undertakings. However, this does not imply that the Diaspora is sleeping behind closed doors.

As a result, it's crucial to talk about indirect political engagement. This is a tactic used by the Diaspora to exert pressure on the government by using different loopholes in order to achieve its objectives. During the civil war under the *Derg* dictatorship, the Diaspora in exile collected resources and spearheaded the resistance by financing anti-government activities (Merresa et al, 2019). The *Derg* is a Coordinating Committee of the Armed Forces, Police, and Territorial Army that ruled Ethiopia from 1974 to 1987.

The EPRDF's 27-year reign demonstrates the Diaspora's incontestable involvement in Ethiopian politics. Following the 2005 election, Diasporas' impact in Ethiopian politics became clear as they increased pressure on the government to solve human rights abuses. To do this, they have exerted direct economic pressure on the government and severed ties with a number of strong nations and assistance organizations (Sonja: 2009). The government had to battle hard to minimize this influence mainly through a few Diaspora closest to the embassy. The Diaspora retaliated by intensifying its pressure on the government, instigating riots at home and seeking to topple it. Globalization and the subsequent information revolution becomes a powerful tool for the Diaspora.

The Ethiopian Diaspora is, in general, quite attentive to home political concerns. The Diaspora's engagement, on the other hand, is dictated by the country's political dynamics. The political situation affects all other engagements, such as remittance, knowledge, and talent transfer. There is currently no landscape in Ethiopia that can support Diaspora political involvement. Regardless of whether the climate permitted it or not, the Ethiopian Diaspora's engagement in domestic politics can be considered high (Kassaw, 2017).

² FGD with Ethiopian Diasporas in US, UK and South Africa (March 2021)

4.2 The end goals of Diaspora Political involvement

Depending on the time, place, and circumstances, the Diaspora's political aims change. Diasporas in the Haile Selassie era wanted the monarchy overthrown and a people's government established, while Diasporas under the *Derg* regime sought after replacing the military administration with a civilian one. Ethiopians in the Middle East want the Ethiopian government to sign labor agreements with Arab nations and respect their rights, whereas for members of the Ethiopian Diaspora in Europe improved democracy and human rights could be main priority. Therefore, we cannot list all the political groups in the Diaspora.

However, it is crucial to note that the Diaspora's political orientation reflects home political realities. Diasporas organize themselves depending on domestic political fault lines. With the bulk of the Diaspora, however, these disparities are tense.³ The following historical background of the Diaspora helps to capture the current division among the Diasporas.

Significant changes in internal political discourse occurred when Ethiopia's former monarchy and subsequent military coup were replaced by the republic. These systems, like those in every other country, have not only grown obsolete on their own, but have also been forced by enormous demand. In the 1970s, the student movement was the major source of opposition to the imperial rule. This isn't to say that all of the students in the movement shared the same vision for Ethiopia once the monarchy fell. For some, the desire for self-governance and identity was paramount, while others fought to bring global socialist movements to Ethiopia (Teshale, 1995; Lovise, 2002; Meressa *et al.*: 2019). Without any agreement on the path Ethiopia should take, those factions banded together to fight a shared foe.

During the demise of military *Derg* regimes, the same thing happens. While some resistance groups fought for greater autonomy for their people, others fought to replace the current administration with civilian authority. For the latter, the issue was not so much how Ethiopia was organized as it was a lack of democracy and effective administration. As a result, groups of many political stripes have banded together to depose military governments, the country's principal adversary, without agreeing on the country's future political course (Lyons, 2009).

³ Personal communication with Dr. Demeke Achiso, lecturer of Political Science at AAU (May, 2021)

The long-standing concerns of the country surfaced as lines of disagreement between the winning factions in the aftermath of the transition. Opposition organizations, including members of the opposition, withdrew from the transitional government freely and forcibly. At the time, identity-based organizations prevailed, while others were shut out of the political process. This difference became the basis for further political discourses. The political forces that were thrown out of the transition were scattered around the globe. This diffused force was critical in coordinating the Diaspora's political movements (UK Home Office, 2017).

As a result, Diaspora became divided into two sorts of political ideals: unionist Diaspora camp and federalist Diaspora camp. Differences in Ethiopia's history, present constitution, and administrative structure have formed the basis of the groupings. It is difficult to presume that the terms "unionist" and "federalist" are self-explanatory, particularly for those unfamiliar with Ethiopian politics. When one group claims to be a unionist, it appears that the federalists are opposed to unity. When the others are referred to be federalists, it gives the impression that the unionist are against federalism.⁴

It's also important to understand that radicals exist in both blocs. Finally, tremendous caution is necessary in supposing that all Diaspora members are politically active. There is "silent majority" of the Diaspora communicates who does not appear to be involved in a two blocs. Considering all these, political goals of each group are presented as follows.

4.2.1 Unionist Bloc

This bloc consists of a diverse range of political forces with no common denominator in terms of self-expression. There will be slight variations amongst the groups. But in matters of major importance, the groups are more than willing to fight together. One of these concerns is that Ethiopia must remain unified as a nation, and many people think that the country's present ethnic or linguistic federalism would not help it progress. Their positions in terms of history, constitution, and country structure are discussed one by one below.

Ethiopia, according to the Unity Forces, has a lengthy history, at least thousands of years. Her past is illustrious, vivid, and proud (Alem, 2003). There is also black part in the history that

⁴ FGD with EDA, MoFA, and MoP (January, 2021)

should not be compared to today's standards of democracy and human rights. Except the oppression of the people by the ruling class, there was no national oppression. Trying to rewrite history, rather than accepting the past and filling in the gaps, is a calculated attempt to undermine national identity, pride, and self-esteem derived from the Abyssinian empire's and Ethiopian state's remarkable history and continuity. (Africa Report: 2009)

They believe the present constitution is a ticking time bomb that will eventually destroy the country. First and foremost, the method through which the constitution was established is discriminatory since there was insufficient representation. As a result, they feel that constitutional amendments need not require many complicated steps. Article 39, which guarantees the right to secede, is particularly reviled. They regard ethnic groups' constitutional right to self-determination as a purposeful step backward in the nation-building process.

They claim that it is another document that does not suit Ethiopia, aside from the provisions on human and democratic rights (Aberra, 2016). When attempting to build a more liberal political culture, the preference for collective rights above individual rights is condemned as unproductive. Members of the educated urban middle class who identify as Ethiopian rather than a certain ethno-nationality feel humiliated by being forced to declare allegiance to a specific national group (Alem, 2003; Jemil 2021).

In terms of the country's structure, they fear that, like Yugoslavia, the existing ethnic federalism would inevitably dissolve the country. Regional structures should be based largely on geography rather than language or ethnicity. Regions should be the governance structures, not tiny countries. The states' powers should not defy the federal authority. The current federalism system emphasizes differences rather than unity, which will lead to disaster for the country by fostering needless rivalry and distrust among different ethnic groups (Abbink, 1997; Marina, 1999).

A variety of Diaspora groups, political parties, the media, activists, and other armed struggle organizations are attached to this bloc. The bloc has contributed to the 2018 political reforms in Ethiopia which will be addressed in the next discussions. As the Federalist forces achieved political upper hand in 1991, and many believe that the balance of power in this transition is in the hands of this bloc.

4.2.2 Federalist Bloc

This bloc is made up of several organizations fighting for the right to self-governance in Ethiopia's multi-nation state. It is the forces that have banded together to bolster the right of nations and nationalities secured since 1991. They believe that they are the only ones who stand for real Ethiopian unity since Ethiopian unity is founded on the people's desire, which is achieved through federalism. So, one by one, their positions in terms of history, constitution, and state structure are as follows:

They believe Ethiopian history should be referred to as the history of the northern region rather than the history of the entire Ethiopian people. They claim that the vast South, which includes Oromia as well as the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples, is not included in this history. Therefore are not proud about its heritage. For this bloc Menelik II founded modern-day Ethiopia a century ago, following in the footsteps of European colonialists. Ethiopia's history is one of ethnic, linguistic, and religious persecution, both before and after it became an empire (Meressa *et al*, 2019; Wintana, 2017; Pausewang, 2009).

The country's rulers utilized different tactics to place a burden on the people's backs in order to prevent them from building their own wealth and culture. As a consequence, a national agreement on past injustices and scar should be achieved. Furthermore, the victims should be guaranteed that this will never happen again. Unbeknownst to these problems, the political forces that are gratifying the past are day dreamers who will be the major cause of the country's collapse. They argue that failing to acknowledge previous mistakes, even if they are not repeated, is a huge impediment to the country's progress (Alem, 2003).

In terms of the constitution, it is commonly said that it is the first in Ethiopian history to acknowledge collective rights. As a result, they mostly accept it. Although they believe the constitution should be amended, they don't support amendment on the articles dealing with group rights. They are particularly opposed to the notion of repealing Article 39. All groups in the country should be well-represented in the constitutional amendment. They claim that the fundamental issue with the constitution is its execution rather than its text (Balcha, 2007; Debelo, 2012).

They claim, for example, that the federal government interferes with the activities designated by the states, putting the states' right to self-governance at risk. This side would not hesitate to surrender authority from the federal state if the chance to alter the constitution arises, saying that the problem of weak governance is always with the lower institutions, not with the central government (Pauseng, 2009).

They argue that the right to collective rights is modest, not excessive, under the Constitution. The major source of political strife in Ethiopia right now is group demands, not personal rights (Alem 2003). They think that, if properly acknowledged, collective rights will coexist with individual rights. They say that the people had a good conversation throughout the constitution's formulation, and that anything that may be improved should be discussed carefully.

They consider that federalism based on ethnicity and language is the only option and that federalism based on geographic location makes it easier to exploit a country by dividing it into separate parts. Federalism is a system brought about by the people scarifying blood and bones. Therefore, it's not for negotiation. Federalism is not a system that would cause Ethiopia's disintegration; rather, it is a system that has prevented Ethiopia's disintegration (Kidane: 1999). Ethiopia would have divided into numerous little countries if federalism had not been introduced. Ethiopia has to focus on true federalism, not just modify the structure. Even if change is required, they prefer a confederal system to either geographical federalism or unitary government.

Diverse Diaspora groups, political parties, media, activists, and other armed resistance organizations are represented in this bloc. They played a key role in bringing Dr. Abiy to power. Following that, the leaders of this wing became directly involved in Ethiopian politics by joining both the government and opposition parties, with some returning their passports to host states. They are growingly expressing dissatisfaction with the change, claiming that it has been hijacked by the Unionists.⁵

⁵ Personal Communication with Prof Merera Gudina , Chairman of Oromo Federalist Congress (May, 2021)

4.2.3 Diaspora and the 2018 political reform

The year 2018 will be regarded as the pinnacle of Diaspora politics. Although playing a part in Ethiopia's previous political upheavals, the Diasporas were able to overturn the EPRDF, one of Africa's most powerful regimes, in 2018 by establishing a coalition with domestic power. The fight to topple the EPRDF by a coalition of diverse forces is eerily similar to the struggle to overthrow the *Derg* by forces of different political stand. In the United States and Europe, supporters of unity and federalism have universally agreed that the 'enemy of my enemy is my friend.'⁶ This demonstrates that tactical agreement is more prevalent than strategic agreement in Ethiopian politics.

When prominent federalist politicians like Professor Merera Gudina and Bekele Gerba were imprisoned, Diaspora members urged the government to free them regardless of bloc disagreements. In reality, Prof. Merera was imprisoned in the first place for meeting with the then-leader of the May 7 Patriotic Movement, which was a terrorist organization at the time. Federalist Diaspora groups backed the unionists to gain the release of notable unionists like Eskinder Nega and Andualem Arage (Personal Communication with Prof Merera).

Furthermore, when they organize joint rallies on deteriorating democracy and human rights, as well as a decreasing political and media space, differences in history, constitution, and administrative structure are overlooked. Both organizations cheered calls for economic and trade strikes, as well as damaging the government's image⁷. However, they have varied expectations from the struggle. Unsubstantiated claims of contributions and expectations to be regarded as are doomed to emerge. As a result, another round of disagreement, if not violence, emerges, derailing the transition process (Amare, 2020).

Dr. Abiy conducted a historic tour to several locations in the United States and Europe after assuming office to meet the Diaspora. Both camps' Diasporas came out in full force, attempting to claim that they were the driving force behind the change. Both parties attended the same meeting, but for different reasons. Both factions made sure to bring their political symbols,

⁶ FGD with Ethiopian Diasporas in US, UK and South Africa (March 2021)

⁷ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/04/09/ethiopia-joint-letter-about-us-house-resolution-128>

banners, and slogans to show their support. Behind the scenes, it was apparent that overcoming the fundamental divisions between the two blocs would be difficult.

The prime minister was wary about taking sides. In an attempt to placate unionists, he claimed that the previous administration focused on differences rather than togetherness. And to appease the federalists, he stated that his government will pursue true federalism, claiming that the previous dictatorship intervened in regional administration's internal matters. The journey went off without a hitch. One of the main reasons is that they were successful in convincing Diaspora leaders to come home and move on⁸.

These include the entry into domestic politics of armed group leaders such as Prof. Berhanu Nega and Andargachew Tsige, the appointment of Burtukan Mideksa as Chief Executive of the Electoral Board, and the entry into the country of Jawar Mohammed, Gelassa Dilbo, Lencho Bati, and other Oromo politicians. Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT) and Oromia Media Network (OMN) were able to open offices in Addis Ababa as a result of this incident. Dawd Ibsa, the head of Eritrea's Oromia Liberation Front, was allowed to return home with his troops.

But as history repeats itself, differences between the two blocs gradually began to unfold. Especially the federalists have accused of brazenly presenting narratives that do not take into consideration Ethiopia's historical grievances, in addition to failing to sustain the current federal structure. As a result, they began to urge people not to relinquish their right to self-government, alleging that the transition had been hijacked by the right wing (Unionists). Following Jawar Mohammed's official membership of the opposition, both blocs proceeded to take steps that would turn balance the power in their favor. This brought Diaspora politics back to square one. As a result, the political conflict between the two sides grew even more heated. There are, however, modifications.

Prior to 2018, the Oromo Federalist Diaspora, for example, did not gain much support from members of the Tigray Federalist Diaspora when they openly declared that Oromos were not politically benefitted as per their size and height. The EPRDF's human rights and democracy

⁸ <https://www.voanews.com/africa/first-us-visit-ethiopian-prime-minister-seeks-bridges-diaspora>, the premier was even asked the Diasporas arrange sport events together under Ethiopian banner instead of separate events based on ethnicity.

violations, as well as power abuses, were largely the result of the constitution not being effectively enforced on the ground, according to a major portion of the Tigray Diaspora. They oppose significant changes to the federation, other than governmental reform. After the TPLF was ousted from center, the Tigray Diaspora joined forces with the Oromo Federalist Forces to oppose the Unionist bloc's rising influence. When a battle erupted between Ethiopian Defense Forces and TPLF militants, this was exacerbated. Ethiopian Unionist groups, on the other hand, united with the Eritrean Diaspora in calling for the TPLF's total annihilation, much to everyone's astonishment.⁹

In general, Diaspora political involvement will remain a challenge to this government and the one to come if political dreams in Ethiopia do not come to a settlement in the form of a national dialogue, or until a real democratic system is established and political choices are decided at the ballot box. It is worth questioning why Ethiopian Diaspora residing in western states, where political variety is ensured via compromise, have failed to pioneer in spreading such experiences. The answer does not appear to be simple.¹⁰ It's important to remember that the motives for and attitudes toward political engagement in the Diaspora are a mirror of home politics.

4.3 Channels of Diaspora Political Engagement

Elections and non-electoral alternatives are available for Diaspora political involvement. Ethiopia, as has been discussed in the opening to this chapter, lacks a legal framework that allows Ethiopian nationals living abroad to vote in elections. As a result, the Diaspora is compelled to rely on non-electoral ways to express itself. Of course, in countries with an electoral system, Diasporas also use non-electoral means. The economic and political legacies accumulated by the Diaspora during their stay abroad require more activity than participation in elections. The following channels are the main gateway for Ethiopian Diaspora to have their say in politics in Addis Ababa.

⁹ FGD with Ethiopian Diasporas in US, UK and South Africa (March 2021)

¹⁰ Personal Communication with activist Eyaseped Tesfaye (May, 2021)

4.3.1 Political Parties

Following Ethiopian legislation, which prohibits the Diaspora from participating in party politics, the Diaspora chooses a political party that aligns with their political objectives and gives essential assistance behind the doors. The emergence of party politics in Ethiopia coincided with a massive Diaspora exodus. As a result, they did not hesitate to use it as a tool, and it is reasonable to say that it is the oldest Diaspora political outlet. During the *Derg* dictatorship, major political parties exerted a strong influence on student unions founded by students who came to the United States and Europe to study (Lyons: 2007).

The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) controlled the Northern American student union, while the All Ethiopian Socialist Movement (commonly known as MEISON) dominated the Ethiopian Student Union in Europe. These two major student movements characterized Diaspora politics. These two student unions were engaged in popularizing Marxist Leninist versions of revolutionary battles against Haile Selassie's feudal absolutism and *Derg* Military dictatorship.

Students were also engaged in delegitimizing the *Derg* regime's Marxist-Leninist militarism, and they fought for Ethiopia's transition to a popular democratic government, incurring numerous sacrifices in the process. The two major parties were at disagreement on how to counter the *Derg* regime's militarism. MEISON, for example, advocated for “critical support to the *Derg* regime” and the gradual transformation of the temporary military administration into an elected democratic government, despite the fact that it failed and became a target of the *Derg*'s counter-revolutionary red terror attacks. EPRP, on the other hand, dismissed the *Derg* regime's prospects for democratization as well as MEISON's appeal to back the *Derg* administration. EPRP, like MEISON, was a target of *Derg*'s red terror attacks (Meressa *et al.*: 2019).

Both political movements maintained their political struggle (from Europe and Northern America) against the new political system and ethnic federal nation building headed by the EPRDF in Ethiopia after the TPLF/EPRDF gained state power in Ethiopia in May 1991. However, Diaspora politics were not limited to EPRP and MEISON; there were a number of political organizations and movements supporting either Unionist bloc (such as *Qinijit*/Coalition

for Unity and Democracy, *Arbegnoch-Ginbot seven*, United Democratic Forces/*Hibret*, and so on) or Federalist (Pro-TPLF, OLF, ONLF, Red Sea Afar, Sidama Liberation movement and so on).

After Ethiopia's civil government was created, the Diaspora's main objective switched to securing political power of their choice through the ballot box. However, significant political parties led by expatriate figures boycotted the 1995 and 2000 elections, claiming violations of human rights, a stifled press, and other forms of poor governance. The 2005 election, on the other hand, is a good example of how the Diasporas may use political parties to further their political goals.

The decision of Ethiopian opposition parties to compete was influenced by a shift in strategy by prominent figures in the Diaspora who chose to embrace and encourage participation in the elections. Opposition parties did not boycott the elections, as they did in 1995 and 2000, but instead contested aggressively in the most populated areas. The Ethiopian people took advantage of this chance with zeal, turning out in large numbers to express their will (Solomon: 2019, US Institute of Peace: 2007).

The two main opposition alliances in the 2005 elections have significant roots in the North American and European Diasporas. The UEDF was founded in 2003 during a conference in the United States, and it comprised Diaspora-based organizations like the EPRP as well as domestic parties like Merera Gudina's Oromo National Congress and Beyene Petros' Southern Coalition. The CUD also has ties to influential Diaspora fundraisers and news organizations.

Berhanu Nega and Yacob Haile Mariam, both of whom had been university professors in the United States, were among the CUD leaders who had been famous Diasporans. Because they influence political party funds and how political disputes are framed and leadership is confirmed, the Ethiopian Diaspora has a disproportionate amount of power. According to official results, these two parties, together with other opposition parties, won 172 seats (31%) in 2005 election (Solomon: 2019).

This result was a huge setback for the ruling party and a huge opportunity for the opposition. However, many in the opposition, particularly those in the Diaspora, believed that they had

incontrovertible proof that the EPRDF had lost the election and that significant fraud had occurred. In this tense environment, the two opposition coalitions held a series of extensive and occasionally public meetings to determine their post-election strategy (Lyon, 2005).

Some people choose to take seats in parliament and the Addis Ababa regional administration in order to strengthen the opposition ahead of local elections (which were originally slated for 2006 but were finally conducted in 2008) and the next set of national elections in 2010. Others, on the other hand, claimed that accepting results they and their followers felt were rigged would be a mockery of democracy, and that the opposition should stick to its beliefs and boycott the parliament. Some of the Diaspora's most outspoken supporters backed this viewpoint, accusing anyone ready to participate in the parliament of abandoning the cause (Solomon, 2019).

Diaspora members had a great deal of influence in these often heated debates, but theirs were not the only points of view; the ultimate decision reflected both external and internal viewpoints. When the majority of UEDF members and all but a few CUD members took their seats in parliament, it became obvious that the political process was irreparably damaged (Abbink, 2006).

The administration reacted forcefully, hammering such divides. 131 opposition politicians, journalists, and civil society activists have been accused with offenses ranging from genocide to treason by Ethiopian authorities. Seventeen of those charged were located overseas, including Diaspora leaders in North America and Europe, demonstrating the Diaspora's power (US Institute of Peace, 2007).

The disappointing outcome of the 2005 election, along with the government's restrictive political climate, severely harmed Diaspora faith in political parties as a way of participating in homeland politics. Despite the fact that the great bulk of Diaspora support switched to armed resistance, some Diaspora supporters remained loyal to Ethiopian political parties in the 2010 and 2015 elections. Despite the fact that the support was low in comparison to 2005, it was a life or death situation for the parties.

Because Ethiopian political parties do not collect membership dues, they rely on the Diaspora for financial assistance. Ethiopia Federalist Congress (headed by experienced politician Prof. Merera

Gudina) and Blue Party (new political party with some new political faces) are two of the parties contested in those elections. Both parties were almost totally reliant on contributions from the Diaspora. In general, political parties need the Diaspora population to achieve the following goals.¹¹

- **Networking initiatives** – this goal relates to a specific desire to expand one's network beyond national borders, whether in a country with a large Diaspora of citizens from the country of origin, or in a country that can be described as an important international decision-making and policy-making hub (like Brussels for the European Union).
- **Recruiting candidates** - this goal tackles the shortage of qualified personnel to represent the party in elections. This is particularly true in many emerging democracies, when a large number of highly educated and experienced individuals have left their own country to work and live elsewhere. This is useful for Ethiopians who haven't changed their citizenship yet. The primary objective of a party with such an aim would be to expand or fill its candidate lists with highly qualified and internationally educated candidates, which could help the party, not only win more votes, but also advance nationally and internationally if it succeeds in becoming a member of government.
- **Fundraising** – this objective has to do with a political party wanting to generate additional funding either for its operations, for its electoral activities, or both. As a result, the main objective of a party whose goal is to generate additional funds by having an office in another country is to mobilize financial support from its citizens living abroad, such as pledged donations, support for a specific candidate's campaign, or other forms of indirect support, such as offering real estate, vehicles, or manpower for party purposes.

4.3.2 Armed struggle and Grassroots movements

4.3.2.1 Armed struggle

Following the election crisis of 2005, the Diaspora gradually began to shift away from party politics and toward a diverse spectrum of groups, as previously stated. The Diaspora was

¹¹ Personal Discussions with Prof Merera and activist Eyasped (May, 2021)

dispersed among various political self-help organizations. A sizable number of Diasporas have backed the claim that the only way to overthrow Addis Ababa's government is through armed struggle. As a result, they band together in support of armed organizations, notwithstanding their own political affiliations (Kjetil & Sarah: 2003), as discussed above. The following are some of the major armed movements in which Diasporas have played a significant role.

OLF: - It is one of Ethiopia's oldest political groups, having its root in a student movement in 1973. OLF was a participant in the armed struggle that overthrew the military *Derg* dictatorship, with its proclaimed objective of self-determination for the Oromo people, Ethiopia's biggest ethnic group. Following the triumph, OLF was temporarily a member of the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)-led transitional government. The OLF, on the other hand, has long had a tense relationship with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the EPRDF coalition's most powerful political party. As a result of these tensions, the OLF left the transitional administration in 1992 (Sonja, 2009; US Institute of Peace, 2007; Landinfo, 2012).

Its leaders were dispersed all over the world. They re-defined their goals, which include the right to self-determination, the release of all political prisoners, the restoration of the Mecha Tulama Self-Help Association, and addressing the Oromo people's political grievances. As the front was divided into several groups, self-determination had different connotations. For some, it's about advancing the Oromo's political, economic, social, and cultural interests, which they think are being subjugated by the federal government, while for others; it's about full independence from the federal system (UK Home Office, 2017, Landinfo 2012).

The Diaspora's association with the OLF is as old as the party itself. However, once the party resigned from the transitional government, important members of the party was able to rally the Diasporas in a fight against the TPLF. Former OLF chairman Galassa Dilbo, for example, was based in London, former OLF deputy secretary general Lenco Latta was based in Oslo, and Dawud Ibsa, the leader of the major OLF faction, was headquartered in Asmara with close ties to Oromo Diasporas in America (UK Home Office, 2017).

The OLF, which had its head office in Asmara, was said to have a few thousand fighters. The OLF was active in Ethiopia's south and south-west regions. While Eritrea has supplied some

military training to OLF troops and may offer military consultants and land mine specialists, the Oromo Diaspora in North America, Europe, and Australia provides cash to assist pay for headquarters expenditures and weapon purchases. The Ethiopian government labeled the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) as a terrorist organization in June 2011 along with the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), and *Ginbot 7 (aka Arbegnoch Ginbot 7 for Unity and Democratic Movement – AGUDM)*.

Arbegnoch ginbot 7:- *Ginbot 7 (or Arbegnoch Ginbot 7 for Unity and Democratic Movement – AGUDM)* was founded on May 15, 2008. In Amharic, the name means "15 May," and it alludes to the date of Ethiopia's 2005 parliamentary election. Berhanu Nega and Andargachew Tsige spearheaded the formation of the party. Both have origins in the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), and they were members of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD)⁵ opposition coalition before and after the 2005 election. The party's main goal is to overthrow the regime using all methods at its disposal, including violence (Jima, 2021; Landinfo, 2012).

The leadership of the party has mobilized Ethiopians in exile in Europe, Africa, Australia, and North America since its inception. They seek to build a cohesive network of Ethiopian opposition groups in exile and mobilize support for the group's goals. Norway, Denmark, England, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, and Germany are among the European nations where the party maintains offices. The website ginbot7.com is run by the group. The Diaspora provided the majority of the funds (Danish COI, 2020).

G7 had a large, covert party network in Ethiopia. According to him, the party is organized into cells and is active across Ethiopia. Each cell was self-contained and comprises of four to five individuals. Others, on the other hand, say that there is no reliable information about G7 operations in Ethiopia. According to other sources, such as Western diplomatic sources, the movement is hardly existent in the nation. However, it was clear that Ethiopians have ideas and or attachments to the organization. This is especially true in urban academic settings where Internet and satellite television are available (Landinfo, 2012).

ONLF: - The Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) is a separatist organisation established in 1984 by former members of the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) youth league, a Somali rebel group active in the Ogaden area. The ONLF's declared goals have changed throughout time, but they all revolve around preserving the Ogadeni people's human and civil rights, safeguarding the region's natural resources from perceived governmental exploitation, and ultimately achieving the Ogadeni people's right to national self-determination (Ylönen, 2021). ONLF gained worldwide attention after an attack on a Chinese-run oil facility in April 2007, which killed 65 Ethiopians and nine Chinese citizens. Since 2014, the ONLF has operated out of Somalia, with its headquarters in Mogadishu.

The Somali Diaspora, like OLF, was the major source of funding for the front, while Eritrea provided logistical support. Hageman said that judgments made in Minneapolis, Minnesota, are just as potent as those made in Jijiga, Ethiopia (Tobias, 2014). The ONLF and the SRS administration are waging dueling public relations operations against the Ogaden Diaspora, which is deeply involved in the conflict. The Ogaadeeni Diaspora spans over sixty nations, with significant populations in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, Kenya, South Africa, and the Arab Gulf States. Supporters of the ONLF participate in international lobbying activities to raise awareness about what they call "genocide" in the Ogaden (Peter and Sally, 2019).

All three fronts did not represent an existential danger to the TPLF rule until they returned to Addis Ababa after abandoning armed resistance. Even though they were involved in several violent incidents in their areas of control, nothing came close to overcoming the Ethiopian Defense Forces' military might. In the final days of armed struggle, they were mostly supporting grassroots movements in Ethiopia. In 2018, they finally returned to legal way of political struggle in the invitation of the Ethiopian government.

4.3.2.2 Grassroots Movements

With the prospect of achieving political aims through political parties and armed conflict looming, Ethiopian Diasporas sought various ways to penetrate the political hinterland. Since it was clear that the dictatorship would not be swayed by outside forces, it was time to rally behind

Ethiopia's politically repressed groups. There was rising support for civil resistance as a tactic for overthrowing the dictatorship, citing nondemocratic settings and military might as reasons to rule out alternative choices. It was based on the notion that grassroots movements might remove autocrats faster than violent means. It did, in fact, prove to be an effective struggle strategy. The following movements had Diasporas engaged.

Qeerro: - The term “*Qeerro*” was introduced to the Oromo political scene in April 2011 when an Oromo youth organization named “*Qeerro Bilisummaa Oromoo (QBO)*” or simply “*Qeerro*” was established. The Arab Spring served as a source of inspiration for it. “*Qeerro*” means “unmarried young person” in Afan Oromo. It can also simply refer to a person in their early twenties. The *Qeerro* website has grown in importance as a means of conveying *Qeerro's* operations to the public and disseminating the organization's views. Unlike many websites that remain static for weeks or months, the *Qeerro* website was updated daily with news of *qeerro* operations on the ground and reports of the regime's cruelty from all corners of Oromia.

Despite the fact that the movement had been going on for years, it received little notice. Many people thought it was just another ploy by desperate Diaspora organizations opposed to the government. However, in 2014, Ethiopians heard about the organization and saw it as a direct danger to the administration in *Arat Killo*. This was due to their participation in the largest and deadliest demonstrations to overturn an integrated regional development plan for Addis Ababa and the neighboring Oromia region, which they say was a deliberate land grab tactic including the eviction of thousands of Oromo peasant farmers. Since then, thousands of *Qeerros* have been sacrificed, and they have played a key role in the change that brought Abiy Ahmed to office (Solomon, 2020).

The Diaspora has had a tremendous impact on the *Qeerro* movement, particularly the leadership. Given the *Qeerro* organization's secret status, the Oromo Diaspora originally struggled to find ways to financially assist the cause. Stationery, musical instruments for the Artists' Group, satellite for the *Qeerro* radio, cell phones, computers, cameras for recording the activities, medical expenses for *qeerroos* injured during protests, funeral expenses for those killed by the

regime, transportation expenses, and so on were all in desperate need of funds as *Qeerroo's* activities spread throughout Oromia.¹²

To address these issues, a group of *qeerroo* members from the United States and across the world banded together and created the "International *Qeerroo* Support Group," a legally registered nonprofit organization. In 2016, the Diaspora Oromos contributed \$188,814 to help QBO for the above-mentioned costs. While the real leaders of *Qeerroo* are unknown, the leaders of the International *Qeerroo* Support Group are well-known and have had direct touch with the *Qeerroo* leaders on the ground. This group made a significant contribution to the movement's success.¹³

Even though he never declared that he was the founder of *Qeerroo* or even the leader of *Qeerroo* directly, Jawar Mohammed was a significant leader indirectly. In his contentious piece "The Failed Journey of OLF," he said unequivocally that OLF had failed to meet the expectations of the Oromo people.¹⁴ Jawar was questioned whether he was "Ethiopia first" or "Oromo first" during an interview on Al Jazeera's "The stream" in 2013. Jawar stated that he was "Oromo first." When pressed for more details, Jawar said, "Ethiopia was placed on him."¹⁵

As a result, the "unity camp" threw all they had at him, while the Oromo camp hailed him as a hero. In very different circumstances, his popularity soared in both the Oromo and non-Oromo camps. Taking advantage of his celebrity, Jawar arranged "Oromo First Community Engagement" gatherings in major cities across the world where many Oromos live. Fast forward to the launch of the first Oromo satellite television, the Oromia Media Network (OMN), as a result of this community involvement initiative. The founding of OMN was timed to coincide with the start of a wave of Oromo demonstrations that swept Oromia in April and May of 2014 (Seifu, 2014).

¹² <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/472596157>

¹³ <https://www.ethiopia-insight.com/2020/08/21/qeerroo-a-regimented-organization-or-a-spontaneous-movement/>

¹⁴ <https://www.opride.com/2009/07/29/failure-to-deliver-the-journey-of-the-oromo-liberation-front-in-the-last-two-decades/>

¹⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=idvJozrs284&ab_channel=EthioPlanetTV

Qeerroo leaders were operating under the direct supervision of the OLF at the time, and after deliberation among the inner circle of *Qeerroo* leadership, they agreed to supply Jawar and OMN with all reports on the protests on the ground. He was constantly updating his Facebook page with news, photographs, videos, and audios of the movement that he got from individual *qeerroo* members on the ground. On his Facebook and Twitter sites, Jawar began to publish written instructions. On OMN, he gave directions. He quickly rose to prominence as the face of the Oromo uprising (Thea, 2018).

Fano: - In mid-2016, a wave of demonstrations spread over the Amhara area. Land conflicts and resentment of Tigrayan dominance within the EPRDF fueled this. Following the imprisonment of Demeke Zewdu, a senior member of an organization that opposed the 1995 allotment of the Welkait Tegede area to the Tigray regional state, ethnic tensions in Amhara were heightened.¹⁶ The arrests activist Nigist Yirga sparked a wave of demonstrations (Fisher & Meressa, 2019). Among the Amhara, a popular narrative portrays the EPRDF's ethnic federalism system as a TPLF-led initiative aiming at subjugating the area (Adamu, 2020). As a result, the grievances of the Amhara and Oromo, Ethiopia's two main ethnic groupings collided in the process, ushering Abiy Ahmed into power (Ostebo *et al.*, 2021). Despite the dearth of literature on the *Fano* movement and the absence of a person like Jawar "*Abbaqeerro*," there is little doubt that the movement was supported by the Diaspora. Financial, ideological, media, and other methods are used to provide support.

Ejjetto: - *Ejjetto* are Sidaama youth groups whose literal meaning is "a young person" in Sidaama language. It was made to become like *Qerro*, *Fano*, and other young organizations that demonstrated tremendous bravery in the face of the TPLF. Its members arrived on the scene shortly after the current prime minister was elected, and the new administration vowed to steer the country in a new path.¹⁷

In comparison to Oromo and Amhara youth groups, this is at least three years late. Ejjeetto is made up of Sidaama youngsters and Sidaama politicians who work in various government departments. In the region's Hawassa and Sidaama zones, the group's leaders serve as police

¹⁶ <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/threats-to-ethiopias-fragile-democratic-transition/>

¹⁷ <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/b146-time-ethiopia-bargain-sidama-over-statehood>

officers, judges, mayors, heads of government and nongovernmental organizations, and businessmen. The ground commanders had close ties to the Sidaama Diaspora in the United States, Europe, and South Africa. The Sidaama Diaspora Association actively supports the ejjetos with financial and political backing (Accord, 2019).

Other youth organizations, such as Zerma of the Gurage, Dhaaldiim of the Gambella, and Yelaaga of Wolaita, function with significant Diaspora engagement. Grassroot social movements finally succeeded in toppling the dictatorship, with thousands of people sacrificing their lives for the political revolution that occurred in 2018.

4.3.3. Satellite and Social Media

It should be emphasized that the routes via which Diaspora groups engage in homeland politics are linked and must be considered in the context of the full picture. In the media, the political parallelism we find in the Diaspora is reflected. Overall, the Ethiopian Diaspora is eager to “frame political discussions and function as a gatekeeper for opposition strategies,” according to the Ethiopian Diaspora (Lyons, 2005:279).

From the beginning, media-related projects have been among the most appealing to Diaspora activists. Websites, blogs, news portals, local and short-wave radio stations, and television stations are all common instruments used by the Diaspora to criticize and combat government and ideological opponents back home (Lyons: 2006). The shrinking, and at times absolute closing, of the political space in Ethiopia to express viewpoints other than the state-sanctioned narrative is a ramification of the country's political repression. In this regard, the situation in Ethiopia has had a direct impact on the Diaspora media (Skjerdal: 2011).

North America and Europe are home to the most outspoken Ethiopian Diaspora media. The bulk of these Diaspora media sources focus on local Diaspora populations in the host country, with a significant emphasis on political happenings in Ethiopia. Whether they are small local community media in one corner of hosting countries or transnational media outlets broadcasting globally via satellite, they frequently “position themselves in opposition to the mainstream, challenging both structural media concentration and the dominant discourse (content)” of the government (Moyo: 2007). In an increasingly connecting world, the physical location of an actor

is becoming less decisive and participation more de-territorialized. The following are major media outlets by the Diaspora.

Ethiopian Satellite Television (ESAT):-

One of the most prominent manifestations of politically influential Diaspora involvement is ESAT (ibid.). ESAT was not the first satellite television project for Ethiopians living in the Diaspora. When it debuted in February 2007 in Washington, DC, the Ethiopian Television Network (ETN) was a source of inspiration. In terms of programming, the channel was meant to be more entertaining than political (Mesfin, 2019; Skjerdal, 2011).

Ginbot 7, as a political party and its leaders, played a key role in the establishment of Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio (ESAT). However, until May 7, 2019, neither ESAT nor *Ginbot 7* publicly acknowledged it. In a press release issued at the conclusion of its general meeting, *Ginbot 7* finally acknowledged its involvement in the founding and maintenance of ESAT. Similarly, three of the 14 journalists imprisoned in connection with the 2005 election returned to the station as major players after their release (CPJ, 2005). It has repeatedly complained about Ethiopian government attempts to block its signal since then.

The channel broadcasts a wide variety of news, current events, sports, documentaries, and entertainment programs. ESAT established a companion satellite radio program in October 2011 in response to the Ethiopian government's harsh criticism. Despite the fact that ESAT's primary studios are in the Netherlands, the company's main phone number and mailing address are in Washington, DC. It began broadcasting in Amharic in 2010 from studios in Amsterdam, London, and Washington, D.C (Mesfin, 2019).

The "Foundation of Ethiopian Satellite Television," located in the Netherlands, owns ESAT. Another non-profit organization in the United States, "Advocates for Media and Democracy in Ethiopia," is its American equivalent. The ESAT brand had been extended by the Dutch-registered corporation to the one in the United States. For two reasons, Amsterdam was chosen to host the initiative. *Ginbot 7* had a stronger presence in the Netherlands at the time, and a large number of exiled journalists were seen as a reliable human resource pool.

The goal of ESAT is more essential than journalistic ethics. It emphasizes on advocacy journalism; journalism is not a goal in itself. Discussing journalism discipline is as the main purpose is to contribute to the liberation of the people (Mesfin, 2019; Skjerdal, 2011).

Oromo Media Network

In 2014, Oromia Media Network (OMN) launched as a satellite TV station in Minneapolis, Minnesota, serving the Oromo Diaspora. Because such an arrangement is not permitted in Ethiopia, the station is still registered as a nonprofit in the United States. The Oromo People's Network (OMN) has made it clear that it is committed to advocating for the Oromo people. OMN also offers a forum for many people groups, as evidenced by the fact that it transmits in seven different languages, purportedly more than any other comparable media outlet (Skjerdal & Mulatu, 2021).

In terms of politics, OMN advocates 'multinational federalism.' This viewpoint differs with unionist and separatist viewpoints, which are the other two major political orientations in Ethiopian and Oromo politics. From 2016 onwards, OMN was a significant player in the staging of the *qeerroo* protests (Mululem, 2019). On-the-ground reporting from volunteers who acted as citizen journalists were used by the station.

The combination of media and politics, according to OMN's founder Jawar Mohammed, is a fundamental to the station's success. The station's leadership and the movement's leadership were intertwined. Protesters benefited from media attention, while the station benefited from the continual flow of first-hand information about political developments and occurrences. It was critical to incorporate social media into the communication plan. As a result, OMN is more of a social movement than a media outlet, according to Jawar. The funding of the station's operations is a little hazy. It is obvious that OMN's audience in the United States participates in fundraising efforts (Payal, 2020).

Both ESAT and OMN were charged with terrorism; however the accusations were dismissed following the 2018 political changes. The government also unlocked 264 websites and blogs that were previously unavailable in Ethiopia, as well as halting the jamming of ESAT and OMN signals (RSF, 2018b). The authorities acknowledged the practice of internet filtering and signal

jamming for the first time. Hundreds of new publications, periodicals, television and radio stations, and shows are springing up all across the country. In 2018, OMN relocated its operations to Ethiopia, and ESAT established a studio in Addis Ababa.

Social Media

More than twenty million Ethiopians use Facebook in Amharic, English, Oromiffa, and other languages, out of a total population of a hundred million. According to statistics, after the political upheaval, social media users for political involvement and news, particularly Facebook and YouTube users grew by 14.1 percent, accounting for 94.6 percent of all internet and smart phone users. According to Ethiopian data, the number of internet users is rising at a rate of about 37% per year, while the number of active social media users is growing at a rate of 20% per year. According to research, the majority of Ethiopians use a mobile device to access the internet (f, 2018). The majority of users are between the ages of 16 and 40, that is, the young and adult population, which accounts for the bulk of the country's overall population (Africa Internet Usage, 2019).

Diasporas took advantage of this to further their political ambitions. They established Facebook pages, Facebook groups, and YouTube channels with millions of followers. It was mostly used to mobilize young groups. Although cell phones and social media were extensively used to connect with big groups of people immediately, social media also helped to disseminate critical information to a huge number of people in the shortest amount of time possible (Habtamu, 2017).

Jawar Mohammed, the founder of the Oromia Media Network and Diaspora in Minnesota, USA, was a key figure in the Oromo demonstrations, demonstrating how social media could mobilize a huge number of people and effect change. He used social media sites like Twitter and Facebook to coordinate protests and circumvent government restrictions. “You cannot imagine this revolution, this change without social media,” Jawar Mohammed said in an interview with

Aljazeera (2018). Through these mediums, Jawar coordinated rallies and aired incontrovertible proof of the government's atrocities to millions of people.¹⁸

4.3.4 Political engagements in host states

Diasporas participate in a variety of activities in host nations with the goal of influencing politics in their home country. Lobbying, boycotts and sabotage, as well as rallies and demonstrations, are examples of these tactics. They also humiliate government leaders who chance to visit a state with a large expatriate population. Financial resources motivate Diasporas to engage a lobbying agency to urge parliament members of powerful governments to approve resolutions on their behalf. HR 128 was approved in April 2018 as an example of how it may help Ethiopia uphold basic human rights and promote inclusive governance.¹⁹

With over 100 co-sponsors, the resolution had significant bipartisan support. Furthermore, people with links to Ethiopia across the United States overwhelmingly supported H. Res. 128. It urges Ethiopia's government to expand civic space, hold people accountable for human rights violations, and foster inclusive governance. The resolution was backed by human rights organizations and the Diaspora Association. Diaspora organizations including the Amhara Association of America, the Coalition of Oromos for Human Rights and Democracy, the Ethiopian Advocacy Network, the Ethiopian Human Rights Project, and the Oromo Advocacy Alliance were all obviously involved.²⁰

Diasporas played a crucial role in increasing international pressure on Ethiopia's government by knocking on the doors of the UN, UN agencies, NGOs, and influential politicians. They sent e-mails and petitions, launched a Facebook and Twitter campaign, participated in advocacy, and most significantly, they urged other countries to stop supplying Ethiopia with aid.

Boycotts and sabotage are used as economic weapons to achieve political objectives. This is frequently associated with remittance. Diaspora-based political organizations encouraged

¹⁸ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkNuDr4TbXk&ab_channel=AlJazeeraEnglish

¹⁹ <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-resolution/128#:~:text=Calls%20on%20the%20government%20of,an%20independent%20human%20rights%20examination>

²⁰ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/04/09/ethiopia-joint-letter-about-us-house-resolution-128>

Ethiopians not to transfer money to the country in an attempt to financially undermine the administration. When they need to send money, they turn to people who exchange the Ethiopian currency, Birr, for any foreign currency at a greater rate than the country's banks.²¹ Some even called for Ethiopian Airlines to be boycotted by Diaspora Ethiopians.²²

Another issue is the intimidation of visiting Ethiopian officials who have gone to countries with large Diaspora populations. The date and time of an official's arrival, which authorities he or she will meet, and the community coordinators in each city are all collected by a task force set up for this reason. From the moment he enters the country till he leaves; the Diaspora will hound the official. They made the event go viral across the world by recording videos and photographs and sharing them on social media.²³

Abebe Gellaw is a good illustration of this. On May 18, 2012, at the Symposium on Global Agriculture and Food Security at the Ronald Reagan Building in Washington, DC, Abebe, an Ethiopian Journalist, protests against Meles Zenawi shouting “Meles Zenawi committed crimes against humanity!, Meles Zenawi is a dictator! Ethiopians want freedom before food.” As Abebe was taken away by the police, Meles Zenawi was visibly shocked. Following the event, Ethiopians from the Washington, DC region came to protest the Meles regime's mistreatment.²⁴

In general, these are not the only ways in which the Ethiopian Diaspora is active in domestic politics, but they are the primary beneficiaries. It's critical to realize that one route is inextricably linked to the other, and the success of one dictates the success of the other. The Federalist Diaspora, for example, supports the OLF in its armed struggle to overthrow the EPRDF government, uses OMN for media coverage, uses Facebook to incite violence in Ethiopia, persuades US and European parliaments to put pressure on the government, and backs federalist political parties at home, all at the same time. The efficacy of Diaspora political involvement is also determined by the effectiveness of each element.

²¹ <https://borkena.com/2018/01/01/remittance-boycott-regime-ethiopia/>

²² <https://ethiopianreview.com/content/41044>

²³ FGD with Experts from EDA, MoFA and MoP (January, 2021)

²⁴ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUVsq-FDFRE&ab_channel=ESAT

4.4 managing the political involvement of Diaspora: challenges and prospects

Previous discussions have shown that Ethiopian Diasporas are quite sensitive and hence involved in domestic politics. Ethiopia's politics are significantly influenced by Diasporas created by conflict and political repression, particularly in North America and Europe. It is important to emphasize, however, that their participation can be either destructive or beneficial.

The first, seemingly dominant stance in the literature emphasizes the Diaspora politics' negative side. Diasporas, in this sense, are long-distance nationalists or fundamentalists who perpetuate wars by economic and political support or action while avoiding risking their own lives. The second, on the other hand, sees Diasporas as a constructive force devoted to nonviolent conflict resolution who may help to speed up and strengthen local democratization and post-war rebuilding processes in their home countries. Diasporas from war zones are frequently presented as potential peacemakers and/or peace wreckers, respective to their positive or destructive attachment on conflicts in their countries of origin (Cindy *et al.*, 2010).

As a result, the positive or negative political influence of Diaspora in homeland politics is determined by a variety of factors in both the nation of origin and the host country. In terms of the host countries, the political and policy environments in the countries of residence provide Diaspora organizations with political opportunity structures that enable Diasporas to mobilize the resources and capacities required to contribute to the political development of their homeland countries (Hazel & Paul, 2007).

Diasporas in North America, for example, will have far more financial and political resources than those in the Middle East. Migration experiences building up political capabilities in the west outweigh states with politically repressive states. Without weakening the primary economic motive of migration, Ethiopian Diasporas in the Middle East are unable to exercise political rights on an individual and group basis. They have yet to be assimilated into a culture that is very suspicious of outsiders as a result of demographic shifts. In contrast, Ethiopian Diasporas benefits from higher living standard and pluralistic system in the developed nations.²⁵

²⁵ FGD with Ethiopian Diasporas in US, UK and South Africa (March 2021)

However, the most important element and the main point of discussion of this paper is the political and policy environment in the country of origin as it is crucial to whether Diaspora organizations can return (not necessarily physically) and contribute to political development. The establishment of institutions, political will, and the government's stance toward the Diasporas are all important considerations. With this in mind, let us examine the problems and opportunities of Ethiopia's political and policy structures for Diaspora political involvement.

4.4.1 Challenges: Perceptions, Institutions and Policies

The Ethiopian government first saw Diaspora as a friend rather than an adversary after 1991. In accordance with its grand strategy of poverty reduction, the government acknowledged the socio-economic potential of Diasporas for development. When the government issued its first foreign policy statement, "Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy," in 2002, it made this perspective extremely clear.

"Ethiopians in the Diaspora could also play an important role in carrying out research and investing at home. In addition they could win friends for Ethiopia and try to influence their country of residence to cooperate with our country. They could act as a bridge between Ethiopian companies and firms in their land of residence, thereby promoting investment and trade ties while seeking markets for Ethiopian products. Cognizant of the key roles played by Ethiopians residing abroad, especially in the economic sector, the government should take the initiative in creating the most conducive environment for them to play a constructive role."

The text makes no mention of the Diaspora's political roles, such as democratization and good governance. As a result, it is fair to assume that the government views the Diaspora as a "cash cow." This is how the government's latest spat with the Diaspora began. In the same year, the Ethiopian Expatriate Affairs General Directorate was created under the supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, fulfilling the government's commitment to create "the most favorable environment for the Diasporas to play constructive role."

The Ethiopian Expatriate Affairs General Directorate (EEA) had the objective to: (1) serve as a liaison between the different Ministries and Ethiopians abroad, (2) encourage the active involvement of Ethiopian expatriates in socio-economic activities of Ethiopia, (3) safeguard the rights and privileges of Ethiopians abroad and (4) mobilize the Ethiopian community abroad for sustained and organized image building. Furthermore, it was involved in the publishing of an Information Booklet for Ethiopians and Foreign Nationals of Ethiopian Origin Living Abroad, as well as the publication of the Ethiopian Investment Guide and holding the annual "Ethiopia Diaspora Day" (Kuschminder & Siegel, 2011)

Along with its partners in the ministry of labor, national bank, and Ethiopian investment agency, the office was instrumental in facilitating the Ethiopian 'Yellow Card,' remittance sending protocols, investment incentives, a Diaspora bond, and foreign currency bank accounts directed at the Diaspora. Economically speaking, the arrangement was a milestone in the history of Ethiopia- Diaspora relationship. The new regulations in Ethiopia have made it simpler for Diaspora members to invest and interact, resulting in more enterprises and investment in Ethiopia.²⁶

Similarly to foreign policy, the initial institutional structure designed to improve Diaspora engagement fails to acknowledge the Diaspora's role in democracy, human rights, and other civic participation. As the institutional avenues to Ethiopian politics remained blocked, Diasporas turned to their own routes of influence. As the 2005 elections approached, Diasporas organized themselves behind their preferred political parties. Those who did not change their nationality were directly involved, while the rest mobilized a wide range of resources. For anybody following Ethiopian politics, the election outcome, or more specifically the Diaspora political muscle, was overwhelming. As previously said, disagreements about how to continue with the election results shattered the Diaspora community, allowing the government to commit crimes.

The EPRDF government harshly condemns the Diaspora's response to the post-election turmoil, branding its critics "extremists." Those in the Diaspora campaigning to discredit the elections were described as "remnants of the *Derg*" and "former Red Terror perpetrators" who were

²⁶ FGD with Experts from EDA, MoFA and MoP (January, 2021)

"fanning violence through demonstrations from Atlanta to Amsterdam [and] from Canada to Brussels" in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' June 2005 "Diaspora Forum" column (Lyons, 2009). Instead of being a part of a larger set of transnational political networks, the government depicts the Diaspora as an illegitimate participant with no rightful role in Ethiopian politics. In other words, the government perceives Diasporas as possible security concerns, resulting in widespread mistrust of Diasporas (Solomon, 2019).

Ethiopia published the first separate policy document for the Diaspora in 2013. The document's introduction, as well as its acknowledgment of Diasporas in promoting Diaspora Participation in Good Governance and Democracy, marked a departure. According to the policy, the National Electoral Board must "facilitate the participation of Ethiopians living abroad in elections in accordance with the Election Law, and joint responses to problems related to election logistics would be identified and implemented in collaboration with the Diaspora." This would include Diasporas having permanent residence permits in other countries but residing in Ethiopia, who would be able to vote at any polling location within a reasonable distance. Finally, the policy suggests that channels for Diaspora engagement in national policy research and development be established (MoFA, 2013).

However, there should be no ambiguity regarding the policy's goals, which are economic benefits. The policy admits that it was implemented to "help poverty eradication operations, which are the alpha and omega of our undertakings." Even while the program was a significant step forward by the government, it came too late to address the Diaspora's sparked political aspirations. Armed conflicts, grassroots social movements, and satellite and social media were used to mobilize the Diaspora. Finally, the Diasporas succeeded in pressuring the government to reform, including the removal of key political figures.

Overall, the major obstacles to Diaspora political participation stem from the government's erroneous beliefs, which may be summed as "remittances and investments are welcome, but Diasporas' political opinions and resources are not." This was reinforced by ill-advised policies and the lack of distinct institutional structures. The 2005 national election acted as a boiling point for the government-Diaspora feud (Solomon, 2019). The disputes became intractable, and the government eventually lost the battle in 2018.

4.4.2 Prospects: change in perception and new institutions

The relationship between Ethiopian Diasporas and Ethiopian embassies has altered dramatically after Ethiopia's transition in mid-2018. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's journey to Europe and America in September and October 2018 to ask Ethiopia's Diaspora to participate in their homeland sparked a lot of interest and enthusiasm among Ethiopians in the Diaspora and worldwide communities in general. This visit was expected to be the start of bridging the gap between Ethiopia's Diaspora and the Ethiopian government.²⁷

Abiy made it clear in his remarks, both in Ethiopia and abroad, that the reform that brought him to power belonged to all Ethiopians, including the Diaspora. Even though the Diasporas are geographically separated from mainland Ethiopia, he stated that they are as concerned about Ethiopia's well-being as everyone else in the nation.

“We have extremely big highways, gorgeous malls, expensive vehicles, 24 hour energy supply, high-speed communications, and so on here in Washington. Why are you spending your days and nights on Facebook, YouTube, and Viber in Ethiopia? It's because your Ethiopian's burns brightly in your heart. As a result, let us construct a country that is sufficient for all of us.” Abiy Ahmed, Washington, D.C., 2018.²⁸

The Diasporas reacted positively to these approaches. The Ethiopian Diaspora Trust Fund (EDTF) Advisory Council announced the fund's opening on October 22, 2018, and the Council was well aware of Diaspora Ethiopians' enthusiasm to react to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's appeal for USD\$1 per day to assist finance Ethiopia's urgently needed social initiatives' ((EDTF-AC, 2018)

Community social activities were held in the embassies' property, trade fairs were held on a regular basis, and other social events were held in places where the Diasporas had previously staged many demonstrations prior to the reform. Ethiopian diplomats, who had been restricted

²⁷ <https://www.voanews.com/africa/first-us-visit-ethiopian-prime-minister-seeks-bridges-diaspora>

²⁸ <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2018/08/abiy-ahmed-meets-the-ethiopian-diaspora/566591/>

within the embassies compound, have acquired confidence as a result of Ethiopia's reform. Following the reform, there has been a significant surge in Diaspora volunteers to provide different services²⁹.

The Diaspora continues to press the government to establish a distinct Diaspora Agency in order for their concerns to be properly handled. The Ethiopian Diaspora Agency was officially formed in March 2019 with the goal of assuring the protection of Ethiopians in the Diaspora's rights and dignity, as well as providing the necessary instruments for the Diaspora to actively participate in the country's development efforts.

It also seeks to create a climate that allows the Diaspora to optimize knowledge and skills transfer while also boosting commerce and investment. In order to determine the actual number of Ethiopian Diaspora across the world and the countries where they dwell, special emphasis will be paid to effective data management. The Agency is accountable to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is in charge of its own budget and finances.³⁰

Since then, the organization has been striving to change people's attitudes about the Diaspora. It began with the slogan "my country for me, and me for my country," which contradicted popular belief that the government exclusively sought resources from Diasporas. It recognizes the importance of adapting to the political situation of the international community, which “means that with the creation of the cross-border citizenship concept, the expansion of social media and the flow of ideas, and the progression of the second and third generations' political ideas, the work of integrating Ethiopians into their homeland has become a global reality.”

The agency's performance in advocating for Diaspora issues is still in question, but given Ethiopia's recent history of Diaspora engagement and the fact that many organizations were founded only recently, it's safe to assume that the Diaspora-government relationship will not be easily resolved anytime soon.³¹

²⁹ FGD with Experts from EDA, MoFA and MoP (January, 2021)

³⁰ <https://www.ethiopiandiasporaagency.org/>

³¹ <https://www.ethiopiandiasporaagency.gov.et/>

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

The majority of research on Diaspora transactional political engagement has found that Diasporas are either potential peacemakers or potential peace breakers. Although there are a variety of elements that influence whether they play a harmful or beneficial role, the most important is the political and policy climate in their home nation.

Depending on the political role assigned to them by the regimes or the attitude taken by the home government, Diasporas can be long-distance nationalists or fundamentalists who perpetuate conflicts through economic and political support or intervention without risking their own lives, or they can be positive agents who are committed to non-violent conflict resolution and may stimulate and reinforce local democratization and post-conflict reconstruction processes.

Ethiopian residents living abroad depending on how they are handled and engaged, Ethiopian Diasporas people have the ability to either provide a challenge to the country or to forego their enormous potential. So far, the Ethiopian government's relationship with the Diaspora has been more adversarial than cooperative. Despite the fact that a variety of circumstances influenced this type of involvement, the underlying issue may be traced back to the government's attitude toward the Diaspora. It favored a restrained approach to their participation in political decision-making.

When the government made initial attempts to engage the Diasporas in 2002, the policy it has embarked and the institutional framework it established aimed primarily on the economic resources of the Diaspora. Whether it was intentional or misperception, the framing was that once the Diasporas are out of the country they have no say on political decisions made in Addis Ababa. While the government was successful in terms of economy as the remittance, business and investments expanded, things went bad politically. The deteriorating political relationship reached the climax in 2005 election with Diasporas came out as an influential political actors against all the government understatement.

The EPRDF regime harshly condemns the Diaspora's response to the post-election turmoil, branding its critics "extremists." Those in the Diaspora campaigning to discredit the elections were described as "remnants of the *Derg*" and "former Red Terror perpetrators" who were "fanning violence through demonstrations from Atlanta to Amsterdam [and] from Canada to Brussels" in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' June 2005 "Diaspora Forum" column.

The administration depicts the Diaspora as an ill-conceived member with no legitimate part in Ethiopian politics, instead of as portion of a broader set of transnational political systems. In other words, the government verifiably Diasporas as potential security dangers, rising aimless doubt towards Diasporas in common.

This didn't work in favor of the government. The administration depicts the Diaspora as an ill-conceived member with no legitimate part in Ethiopian politics, instead of as portion of a broader set of transnational political systems. In other words, the government verifiably Diasporas as potential security dangers, rising aimless doubt towards Diasporas in common. This didn't work in favor of the government

The Diasporas continued to create channels through which to influence Ethiopian politics. The channels are linked and complicated, not mutually exclusive. At the same time, the Diaspora could support both a legally running political party in Ethiopia and an armed fight in neighboring states. Whereas satellite Medias played significant part in day by day critics of the government, social media were imperative in planning surreptitious resistance at the grassroots level.

The Diasporas impose financial sabotage and boycott to debilitate the government in the meantime contracting lobby firms so that international accomplices would do the same with their development assistance. When government officials and embassy diplomats are discovered in the Diaspora zone, the shaming technique is also used to humiliate them.

In 2013, the government issued a distinct Diaspora policy document, acknowledging the necessity to give Ethiopian expatriates voting rights. That appears to be too late, since the Diaspora government has reached a breaking point. The regime was obliged to open its doors for political reforms as a result of the combination of the above stated political instruments with domestic civil resistance. Following the 2018 reform, the government made a fast adjustment to

allow the Diaspora to have a say in their homeland. The establishment of a distinct government organization, the Ethiopian Diaspora agency, supports this.

The agency's performance in advocating for Diaspora issues is still in question, but given Ethiopia's recent history of Diaspora engagement and the fact that many organizations were founded only recently, it's safe to assume that the Diaspora-government relationship will not be easily resolved anytime soon.

5.2 Recommendation

Making Ethiopian Diaspora part of the solution rather than peace breakers is a difficult challenge. If the government assumes that the issues brought forward by Diasporas are simple and attempts to handle them with a "one-size-fits-all" approach, it will repeat the mistakes of previous administrations. All the approaches should appreciate the diversity of Diaspora groups and as well, the interests. During the study for this article, the researcher discovered that

implementing the following steps will assist stakeholders in building a positive connection with the Diaspora.

All-encompassing National Dialogue: - It is evident that Ethiopian politics are mirrored in the Diaspora. The conflicts will continue on numerous platforms as long as there is no compromise among the various groups in Ethiopia. The government should convene a civic dialogue with all political groups, including those in exile, regarding Ethiopia's future path. When Ethiopia's politics are healed, the healing spreads to the Diaspora.

Efficient data management: Without a precise estimate of the Ethiopian Diaspora's global population and the countries where they dwell, the government may be unable to properly engage the Diaspora. The National Identification Card is essential for Diasporas to get various welfare packages. This is especially important in determining who has political rights when the government opens the political arena significantly. Eritrea, Somalia, Kenya, Djibouti, Sudan, and South Sudan share ethnic groups with Ethiopia. Foreigners and foreign agents may be able to cut in to political rights if there is no unambiguous identification.

Extend voting Rights: How can the Diasporas be blamed for turning to alternative ways of influencing politics after the government blocks the door to peaceful expression of political rights through ballot? As a consequence, enabling Diaspora residents to vote in Ethiopian elections will result in their constructive participation in the country's social, economic and political issues. It is also critical to institutionalize Diaspora political involvement in Ethiopia, which is now disorganized and hazy.

Continuous communication not just one interaction: Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's interaction with Diaspora was critical in re-engaging the Diaspora; however the agency and Diaspora should keep in touch with the Diaspora. Once set policy cannot address questions the Diasporas raise time to time. As a result, keeping the Diaspora up to date with current events and acquiring new ideas helps to the solid foundation of connectedness.

Avoid strategies to divide the Diasporas: Based on political affiliation, ethnic group, religion, or other factors, no Diaspora community should be favored over another. The embassy should be welcoming to everybody and open its doors to all. There should not be a single group with whom

the Agency or consulates work on all issues while dismissing others. Embassies should not sit on the judges' bench, good or bad, constructive or not; instead, they should engage the Diasporas and listen to what they have to say.

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Appendixes

Interview Guideline

A. Questions for Ethiopian Diaspora in US, UK and Europe (3 from each through Facebook messenger group chat)

- I. Regarding the political participation of the Ethiopian Diaspora in their homeland politics, is their involvement a destructive or constructive one
- II. Regarding the influence relationship, is domestic political activity is largely influenced by homeland political activity or it is the other way around?
- III. Regarding political and policy environment for the Diaspora engagement, what factors determine the positive outcome and what factors determine the negative one from the Diaspora political role?
- IV. Regarding future Diaspora political participation, should the government support or restricted their engagement

B. Interview Questions for Experts of Ethiopian Diaspora Agency, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Peace

- VI. Is there any 'Diaspora nationalism' among Ethiopians abroad? And if there, what does it looks like?
- VII. What motivates Ethiopian Diasporas to participate in domestic politics? What are the primary political objectives that Ethiopian Diasporas hope to achieve?
- VIII. How can Ethiopian Diasporas get access to Addis Ababa's political decision-making process?
- IX. What policies, institutional frameworks, and incentives exist in Ethiopia to cope with Diaspora political engagement?
- X. What are the obstacles and opportunities for managing political participation in the Diaspora?

**C. Interview Questions for Prof.Merera Gudina, Dr. Demeke Achiso and Activist
Eyaseped Tesfaye**

- I. How influential are the Diasporas in Ethiopian Politics?
- II. Is Diaspora political engagement constructive or destructive for Ethiopian politics so far?
- III. What are the channels through which Diaspora have their say in Ethiopian Politics?
- IV. What kind of Relationship is there between Ethiopian Diaspora and political forces in Ethiopia (Political Parties and Activists)
- V. What should be done for productive engagement of diasporas in the future