

WARID: Ethiopia (TPLF, EPDM, EPRDF)

STARDATE: 2 June 1976

ENDDATE: 28 May 1991

Related cases: Ethiopia (ELF, ELF-PLF, EPLF) 1964-1991,
Ethiopia (OLF) 1987-1992,
Sudan (SPLA, NDA) 1983-2004

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Conflict overview

After the Derg established a socialist military regime in Ethiopia in 1974, many leftist groups and associations were soon disappointed by the centralist and authoritarian behavior of the new government. One of these groups was the TPLF (Tigray People's Liberation Front), originally a student movement at the university in Addis Ababa. It mainly had an ethno-nationalist background, demanding more self-determination for the Tigray region – it initially did not aim at seizing governmental power. Under repression from the Derg and with training from the neighboring Eritrean rebel group the EPLF (Eritrean People's Liberation Front), the group started to develop a guerrilla army in 1975. With the support of the population, it was quickly able to move almost everywhere in Tigray but did not hold any territory. In 1981, the EPDM (Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement) was founded and followed a similar strategy in the regions Wollo and Gonder, cooperating closely with the TPLF. It quickly became clear that the Derg would never grant any more autonomy to these regions. In 1989, the TPLF joined forces with the EPDM and two smaller armed organizations.¹ This alliance was named the EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front). Together, they made significant territorial gains and occupied all of Tigray except for one garrison. However, the government was still able to launch devastating air attacks on the region. This led the rebels to decide to seize governmental power. They moved southwards from Tigray through the Wollo and Gonder regions and, in 1991, after several successful offensives, they encircled the capital. President Mengistu fled the country on May 21 and, on May 28, the EPRDF occupied Addis Ababa with little resistance, setting up an

¹ EDORM (Ethiopian Democratic Officers Revolutionary Movement), a movement of captured officers from the Derg army, and ODPO, a rebel group of the Oromo people in Wollo.

interim government with representatives from other ethnic groups.²

The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) notes a victory for the EPRDF as the end of war. The fighting in the respective dyads of EPDM and TPLF ended due to ‘low activity’ according to the UCDP dataset. As the EPRDF mainly consisted of the EPDM and the TPLF; we consider this victory as theirs [**WARENDUC=4**]. This judgment is in line assessments made by case experts. Given the crushing blow to the Ethiopian army, the victory is unambiguous [**WARENDOS=4**].³ The war lasted for 180 months [**WARDUR=180**] and left, according to the UCDP, at least 53,483 persons dead [**FATALUC=53000**]. This number includes 484 victims of one-sided violence by the government against civilians.⁴ Other sources refer to a death toll of one to two million [**FATALOS=1000000**].⁵ The pre-war population in 1975 was 32.6 million [**PREWARPO=32600000**].⁶ The portion of death victims to the pre-war population is 0.16 according to the UCDP data [**INTENSUC=0.16**] and 3.07 according to the other sources [**INTENSOS=3.07**].

The military balance at the end of war

This civil war in Ethiopia ended with an unambiguous victory for the EPRDF. With two major offensives in early 1991, the EPRDF moved quickly southwards from Tigray and overran government lines (Young 2006: 168). When they marched into Addis Ababa, “almost all of the army had melted away” [**VICTORY=1**].⁷

Cunningham et al. (2009) indicate that the TPLF and the EPRDF controlled territory, while the EPDM did not. In fact, the TPLF and the EPDM both led a strict guerrilla war for most of the time, indicating that they did not aim to control any territory (Luckham 2002: 252). However, after founding the EPRDF in 1989, they made significant territorial gains, mainly in the north of the country. Tigray had been under control of the TPLF/EPRDF since 1989 (Young 2006: 164). Therefore, we adopt the judgment of Cunningham et al. (2009) that the EPRDF controlled territory and consider these last two years of controlling territory as a crucial asset for the military balance. During the last months of the war, the EPRDF kept the conquered regions under its control and even widened their territorial gains substantially by moving forward to

2 For a conflict overview, see Abbay 2004; Berhe 2004; De Waal 1991, Matthies 1992; Tareke 2009; Young 1996; Young 2006.

3 See de Waal 1991: 266-270.

4 As there were three active conflicts in Ethiopia at that time – namely about Eritrea, the central government and Oromiya –, the 484 victims are only one third of the total number of victims of one-sided violence.

5 Debiel 2008: 250; Kozul-Wright/Fortunato 2011: 22.

6 <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx#> (27 Feb 2015).

7 See de Waal 1991: 270.

Addis Ababa [**REBTERR=1**].

The fighting capacity of the TPLF and the EPDM was ‘low’ according to Cunningham et al. (2009), but the joint forces in the EPRDF led to a ‘moderate’ fighting capacity. Again, we consider the capacity of the EPRDF at the end of the war as decisive for the military balance [**REBFIGHT=0**]. At the very end of the war, the Ethiopian army was evidently no longer able to fight. By March 1991, they were, according to case experts, unable to launch any significant counter-offensives against the EPRDF. When the president fled the country, “tens of thousands of soldiers abandoned their posts and flocked into Addis Ababa, selling their weapons or using them to intimidate people into giving them food and drink” (de Waal 1991: 269). The army disintegrated completely [**CONFIGHT=1**].

At the end of the war, the parts of Ethiopia under EPRDF control were still substantially smaller than the rest of the country. However, as the Ethiopian army collapsed, the government lost control also over territories that the EPRDF had not conquered. Territory in the south was effectively controlled by traditional authorities or local rebel groups (Schlee 1994: 19). Thus, the EPRDF held more territory at the end of the war [**MORETERR=1**].

The flight of President Mengistu was certainly a trigger for the disintegration of the army and the success of the rebel coalition. However, as the president himself decided to flee the country and the EPRDF was – as far as we know – not directly involved, we do not equate this act with the killing or capture of the opponent leader [**LEADER=0**].

All in all, the military balance at the end of the war shows an advantage for the rebels [**WARBAL=0.67**].

The military balance in the post-war period

Only three weeks after seizing power, the transitional government, led by the EPRDF, founded a commission that was charged with the demobilization of the complete Derg army. A huge demobilization program was quickly developed (Coletta et al 1996: 44). Between July 1991 and January 1992, 455,000 Derg soldiers were demobilized: 365,000 followed the first call from the commission to deliver their weapons and register for governmental assistance. 90,000 followed a second call a few months later (Coletta et al 1996: 24). In 1993, the transitional government founded the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) as the new state force. Basically, this meant that the rebel militias, mainly the TPLF, who until then had served as preliminary security forces for the country, were restructured as a national army (Luckham 2002: 259). This transition took several years. From 1993 on, the IISS Military yearbook registers ‘armed forces’ in

Ethiopia, but only from 1997 on does it consider these armed forces as the official state forces (IISS 1991-1997). Nevertheless, we take 1993 to be the first year of an existing state force as this was the founding year of the ENDF. As no official state forces existed before that date, we consider this item as not relevant for the first two years of the post-war period [**STATEFOR 1991-1992=n.r.**]. When the ENDF was founded, 6,000 former Derg soldiers with special technical skills were integrated into the new army (Coletta et al 1996: 69). This meets our criteria for substantial participation, although the general idea of integrating a substantial number of Derg soldiers was always rejected by the EPRDF (Coletta et al 1996: 45; Luckham 2002: 259-260). As we do not have any reports that these soldiers were discharged in great numbers, we consider their presence in the army as a given after 1996 as well [**STATEFOR 1993-2012=0**].

Being that the Derg army and the police forces were no longer organized and immediately called to demobilization camps, they did not constitute a separate force at any point of the investigation period. For 1991 and 1992, we consider the EPRDF as a separate force [**SEPFORCE 1991-1992=1**]. Due to the integration of 6,000 former Derg soldiers, neither side held a separate force after 1993 [**SEPFORCE 1993-2012=n.r.**].⁸ Given that there was only one separate force for two years, a comparison in the number of troops or equipment cannot be made [**TROOPS 1991-2012=n.r., ARMS 1991-2012=n.r.**].⁹

Following the complete dissolution of the Derg's army, only the EPRDF controlled important territory; it maintained this control, as a government, until the end of the investigation period [**TERRCON 1991-2012=1**]. With the seizure of power, the area under control also grew considerably, adding the whole south of Ethiopia [**TERRWIN 1991-2012=1**].¹⁰ The Derg did not have any territory during the post-war period [**VULNERAB 1991-2012=1**].

The border conflict from 1998 to 2000 between Eritrea and Ethiopia led to the deployment of UN peacekeeping troops in September of 2000.¹¹ However, these peacekeeping troops do not relate to the dyad under investigation and will therefore not be coded [**PEACKEEP 1991-2012=n.r.**].

No permanent member of the UN Security Council was likely to intervene in case of a renewed armed conflict [**P5ALLY 1991-2012=n.r.**].

For the first two post-war years, the coding shows a total advantage for the EPRDF [**POSTBAL 1991-1992=1**] that slightly decreases with the integration of the 6,000 Derg soldiers into the

8 See Luckham 2002: 258.

9 See IISS 1990-2012.

10 See Eikenberg 1995: 253.

11 See <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unmee/> (15 Jan 2015).

ENDF from 1993 onwards [**POSTBAL 1993-2012=0.75**]. For the overall military balance, the value is 0.67 for 1991 and 1992 and thereafter 0.47 [**BALANCE 1991-1992=0.83, BALANCE 1993-2012=0.71**].

Economy

The World Bank data indicates an enormous growth of the Ethiopian population from 50 million in 1991 to nearly 92 million in 2012. With some exceptional years, the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita shows an overall downward trend until 2002. From 2002 to 2012, the GDP of Ethiopia grew.¹²

Table 1: GDP per capita in current USD

| <i>Year</i> | <i>Population (total)</i> | <i>GDP per capita</i> |
|-------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1991 | 49,743,883 | 271 |
| 1992 | 51,525,658 | 204 |
| 1993 | 53,357,867 | 166 |
| 1994 | 55,199,953 | 126 |
| 1995 | 57,023,519 | 134 |
| 1996 | 58,815,116 | 145 |
| 1997 | 60,584,273 | 142 |
| 1998 | 62,353,942 | 125 |
| 1999 | 64,158,887 | 120 |
| 2000 | 66,024,199 | 125 |
| 2001 | 67,956,866 | 121 |
| 2002 | 69,948,344 | 112 |
| 2003 | 71,989,666 | 120 |
| 2004 | 74,066,147 | 137 |
| 2005 | 76,16,7240 | 163 |
| 2006 | 78,29,0649 | 195 |
| 2007 | 80,440,708 | 245 |
| 2008 | 82,621,190 | 328 |
| 2009 | 84,838,032 | 382 |
| 2010 | 87,095,281 | 344 |
| 2011 | 89,393,063 | 357 |
| 2012 | 91,728,849 | 472 |

The scale of compromise after the war

After winning the war, the EPRDF convened a national conference to which they also invited other organizations who had opposed the Derg. A transitional charter was adopted there, establishing a transitional government with representatives from several ethnic groups and TPLF leader Meles Zenawi as president. During the transitional period, the EPRDF transformed itself from a military organization into a political party consisting of the TPLF, the EPDM (which renamed itself Amhara National Democratic Movement), the OPDO (Oromo People's

12 <http://data.worldbank.org/country/ethiopia> (27 Feb 2015).

Democratic Organisation) and the SEDEM, a party representing the southern peoples. A constituent assembly was formed, dominated by the EPRDF, which ratified a new, federal constitution in December 1994 (Bihonegn 2014: 5-6). The first elections took place in May 1995 and witnessed an overwhelming majority for the EPRDF (Coletta et al 1996: 45). Meles Zenawi became prime minister and remained in this position until his death in July 2012 (Záhořík 2014: 23). He was replaced by Deputy Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, also an EPRDF-party member [**GOVERN 1991-2012=1**].¹³

The Derg would eventually completely disappear from the political scene and have no more political say (Bihonegn 2014: 11). There were no mechanisms in place that allowed the Derg a veto in any matter [**VETO 1991-2012=1; VETOSAT 1991-2012=n.r.**]. The transitional government established a federal and democratic constitution and four national elections have been held since 1991. At the same time, a strong fusion between the state and the EPRDF emerged, allowing Zenawi to rule without interruption from 1991 until his death. According to the Freedom House Country Rating, the political environment from 1995 to 2010 was such that the elections during this period can be considered as ‘basically free and fair’. The case-specific literature, however, clearly contradicts this view. The first elections in 1995 were “generally judged neither free nor fair” (Gudina 2009: 119). In the national and regional elections of 2000, civil liberties were severely curtailed and only 13 of 547 seats in parliament were won by opposition parties (Gudina 2009: 119). Finally, severe violence against protesters after fraud elections in 2005 “questioned the legitimacy of his [Meles Zenawis] rule fundamentally” (Tetzlaff 2009: 104). In 2010, the EPRDF and its allies won 445 of 447 the seats in parliament,¹⁴ mainly due to the fact that most politicians from the opposition were in prison (EIU 2011: 4).¹⁵ In sum, the Ethiopian state is described as an “authoritarian state draped in democratic window-dressing in which manipulated multiparty elections are a means to sustain power” (Aalen/Tronvoll 2002 cited in Bach 2012: 647). The non-existence of basically free and fair elections along with the first four years without elections were to the advantage of the EPRDF [**ELECT 1991-2012=1**].

Although the warring parties had differing opinions on whether Eritrea should belong to the Ethiopian state or not – with the EPRDF supporting Eritrea’s quest for independence and the Derg fighting against it –, this dispute was not a central conflict item for the dyad under investigation [**EXBORDER 1991-2012=n.r.**].

13 https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/print_2028.html (15 Jan 2015).

14 http://africanelections.tripod.com/et.html#2010_House_of_Peoples_Representatives_Election (15 Jan 2015).

15 <http://allafrica.com/stories/201412030011.html> (15 Jan 2015).

After the EPRDF took power, the borders between the sub-state units were reshaped into nine regions according to their ethnic composition. However, this reform was a minor part of the greater question as to how powers and competencies should be attributed to the sub-state units; it will therefore be subsumed under the next item **[INBORDER 1991-2012=n.r.]**. The distribution of power between the central state and the sub-state units was the main conflict item between the warring parties. The TPLF demanded more self-determination in Tigray, including “autonomous administration, a fair distribution of political power, and an equal recognition of culture, language and tradition” (Berhe 2004: 574). The ‘ethnic federalism’ suggested by the EPRDF expressed the idea that Ethiopia, with its high diversity of ethnic identities or so-called ‘nationalities’, needed a system based on voluntary association and not on the power of one dominant ethnic group over the others (Clapham 2009: 182). The EPDM had similar demands for Wollo and Gonder (Eikenberg 1991: 208). After seizing power, the EPRDF established a federal system that granted the explicit right to secession to the nine regions (Fiseha 2012: 466). While the ethnic component of this system will be considered under the item SPECPRO, COMPETEN only refers to the level of political power-sharing between the regions. In 1992, a new map with the nine regions was presented, attributing the ‘nationalities’ of Ethiopia to political units with certain rights (Tetzlaff 2009: 107). Even though federalism in Ethiopia has obvious deficiencies in the actual implementation of federalist principles, the EPRDF was able to shape the allocation of competencies between the political levels in perfect accordance with its own interests (Bihonegn 2014; Clapham 2009). Moreover, the influence of the region Tigray at the national level – the original conflict item – was secured through the continuous influence of former TPLF cadres, even if the influence of other regions might be considered lacking **[COMPETEN 1991-2012=1]**.

In terms of economic policy, the TPLF had an uncommon position considering its leftist ideological background. During the war, the TPLF heavily criticized the socialist, centrally planned economic policies of the Derg and argued that a liberalization of the country would lead to greater economic development (Bach 2012: 649). The position of the TPLF in this regard might partly be explained by the devastating economic situation in Tigray, where severe famines hit the population; these were aggravated by, if not even partly due to, the Derg’s grain trade policy (De Waal 1991: 145). Considering the severe consequences for Tigray, the economic policy was certainly a central conflict item during the war. After the waning of the USSR as an important economic and political partner, the Derg likewise added a number of liberal policies to the centrally planned economy of Ethiopia (Clapham 2009: 182-183). After seizing power, the

EPRDF slowly continued economic liberalization with substantial assistance from the World Bank and in occasional cooperation with the IMF (EIU 1996-2011; Luckham 2002: 152-154). Nevertheless, the EPRDF remained in control of several important sectors, such as telecommunication, finance and media, and liberalized other sectors for the purpose of handing them over to party affiliates (Hagmann/Abbink 2011: 587). This shows that the EPRDF was able to conduct liberalization according to its own preferences and therefore prevailed on this issue **[ECONOMY 1991-2012=1]**.

The ethnic federalist system introduced by the EPRDF had components that promoted specific groups based on their ethnicity. While the previous regime was dominated by members of one single ethnic group, the Amhara, the EPRDF undertook efforts to reflect the ethnic diversity of the country in key positions, such as the army (Coletta et al 1996: 44). Data about the ethnic composition of the army in 1996 and 2011 suggests that these efforts were successful, reducing the number of Tigrayan fighters – who were initially overrepresented – and increasing the number of soldiers from Southern ethnic groups, such as the Oromiya and the Amhara people. None of the ethnics group had an overwhelming majority within the army.¹⁶ With the formation of the transitional government that included representatives from the Tigray, Amhara and Oromiya, Zenawi set up cabinets that reflected the multi-ethnic composition of the country from the beginning (EIU 2006-2011; Luckham 2002: 259). In 2004, the Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Front and the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (ODPM) joined the EPRDF (EIU 2004: 5). Not all policies and promises were implemented immediately but the EPRDF clearly prevailed in this matter **[SPECPRO 1991-2012=1]**.

No additional central conflict items could not be identified from the war **[ISSUE 1991-1992=n.r.; ISSUE2 1991-2012=n.r.]**. As the Derg completely disappeared from the political scene, no further demands or conflict items emerged **[NEWCON 1991-2012=n.r.; NEWCON2 1991-2012=n.r.]**.

There were no compromises that could be assessed concerning the benefit of one of the warring parties **[BENEFIT 1991-2012=n.r.; BENEFIT2 1991-2012=n.r.]**.

The overall scale of compromise reflects the fact that the EPRDF seized power and was in no way hindered in realizing its projects due to the disappearance of the Derg **[COMPROM 1991-2012=1]**.

16 See <http://hornaffairs.com/en/2011/12/23/ethiopia-army-replaced-13-generals-and-303-colonels/> (15 Jan 2015). However, as our reviewer pointed out, most senior positions in the army are held by ex-TPLF officials.

The stability of peace

Ethiopia did not remain peaceful for long. War soon escalated again on three fronts. According to the UCDP, the conflict between the government and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) that had smoldered since the OLF left the transitional government in 1992 escalated in January 1998. In May of the same year; the government engaged in an intrastate war with their former brothers in arms, the EPLF in Eritrea (Abbink 1998: 552). Also in 1998, another conflict between the government and the ONLF (Ogaden National Liberation Front) started and reached the threshold of a war some years later.¹⁷ None of these conflicts met our criteria for a renewed war according to the strict definition [**SAMEWAR=0; DATESAME=n.r.; PEACMON1=259**]; they were, however, relapses according to the broad definition. As the first two of these three wars (OLF, Eritrea) related to other dyads covered by our project, only the third one is relevant for this case description [**ANYWAR=1; DATEANY=31 Dec 1998**]. Up until the war between the government and the ONLF, there were 91 months of peace [**PEACMON2=91**].

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