**The Neglected Ethiopian Minority Rights Issues Under Ethnic-Based Federalism and Conflict**

The challenges of democratic reform in Ethiopia are exemplified by the dilemma of minority rights, which highlights the country's ongoing identity crisis. Historically, Ethiopia has been a centralized and homogenized governance state, which marginalized its otherwise diverse population. In the 1960s, left-leaning movements mobilized around ethno-national identities led to the overthrow of the imperial dynasty in 1974. However, the subsequent military regime failed to address the national question and imposed another unitarist system, causing armed ethno-national liberation movements to proliferate.

As previously established, in the early 1990s, the EPRDF came to power and introduced a significant shift in managing the country's diversity through Ethiopia's 1995 federal constitution. This constitutional rendition provides "nations, nationalities, and peoples" with the right to self-determination, including the right to secede from the federation through a constitutionally prescribed process, as well as territorial self-rule and protection of cultural and linguistic rights for these groups. Despite the all-encompassing right to self-determination, the EPRDF's party-state system reflected a disregard for population size, thus giving an equal vote in the party’s decision-making organs to minority parties, including the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) although the Tigray population represented only 6–8 percent of Ethiopia's population. Thus, the EPRDF favored consensus-based governance and expected unanimity among members and elites from the four regional member parties. This system was seen as Tigrayan ethnic minority rule by many and was contested over the EPRDF's 27-year rule, especially by Oromo and Amhara elites.

After Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came to power in Ethiopia, the EPRDF and its structures were dismantled, and the Prosperity Party was formed primarily through the Oromo-Amhara alliance. Ultimately, this change marked a significant departure from the EPRDF's party-state system, which was fiercely contested for disregarding population size. However, there are now concerns about creeping majoritarianism at the national level, with the dominance of the Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups leading to tensions and brewing ethnic and communal conflict. Ethnic minority groups fear that the majority tendencies of the political system will marginalize and alienate them. At the regional level, dominant groups in Oromia and Amhara have become emboldened to directly confront communal conflicts, the targeting of minority groups, and widespread human rights violations.

***Overlooking Minority Rights: Deficiencies in Ethiopia's Democratic Reform Process***

Ethiopia is a country with a diverse range of ethnic groups, none of which constitute a numerical majority. To protect the rights of these multiethnic factions, the standing Ethiopian government introduced an ethnic-based federalism system that grants territorial autonomy to specific groups. However, this system appears to have created internal minority groups within the ethnic majority regions of Ethiopia.

Namely, there are just over eighty ethno-linguistic communities in Ethiopia governed by eleven regional states and approximately thirty sub-regional administrative units that were been established to grant territorial and political autonomy to specific identity-based groups. This means that all regional states are heterogeneous and include internal minority groups to varying degrees. While the federal constitution treats all groups identically under the law, the regional constitutions distinguish between indigenous and non-indigenous minorities on major issues regarding territory and legal rights.

Indigenous minorities are, for instance, territorially empowered and guaranteed the right to self-determination under the regional constitutions. However, non-indigenous minorities can only claim