

Paris, 22 Jun. 06

Dear Dr. Getachew,

Let me first thank you for your deontological sense and concern in informing me of the content of your review before posting it on the web. This is a very neat way of behaving that I highly appreciate.

I must admit that I am really astounded to see how far all this is going. The version that was posted (without my support) on the web sites you mention was a very preliminary version, a work in progress, a draft full of imprecision, and sometimes misinterpretation. This version was submitted in December 2005 (I started writing it few weeks before) to the Center for African Economies Conference (19<sup>th</sup>-21st March 2006).

It was accepted there for its “potential”<sup>1</sup> (I am a PhD student, with, by definition, still many things to learn), the relevancy of the tradeoff ethnic voting/national voting it focuses on, and even the methodological approach (although you are doubtful about it), but not so much for the results (very preliminary and therefore rough), nor for the accuracy of the analysis of the Ethiopian political landscape (I am not a researcher in political science, but in economics, and the value of this preliminary paper for economists consisted first and foremost in my suggestions for theoretically modelling the above mentioned trade-off and testing it empirically through surveys... a fairer approach to Ethiopian politics is of course the next step for me now).

The March 2006 version that one can find on the websites is actually the replication of the December 2005 version (not many changes were made between these 2 dates because of my dedication to other research papers<sup>2</sup> related to my PhD in the meantime). This March version was indeed sent to the CSAE Conference organisers few days before the conference took place, and it was put online, as it is commonly done in academic conferences, among 150 other papers covering various topics relevant for the analysis of African economies (see: <http://www.csae.ox.ac.uk/conferences/2006-EOI-RPI/prog-csae-master.asp>). I wouldn't have imagined that this draft precisely be then downloaded by so many people and made available on other websites, in a way suggesting that I was encouraging it. I really regret not to have put the “Very preliminary version. Please do not quote” formula on the version sent to CSAE (this was done on the May 2006 one), but it was so obvious for me and the organisers that it was actually a very preliminary work that I forgot to take this precautionary measure. I am now paying for it, but I only have to blame myself. I should have been more cautious, and this taught me a lesson for the future.

Let's talk now about the smart comments that you are making. Before reviewing the most prominent of them however, please keep in mind that we are talking about a draft that I consider as not relevant any more, and above all not representative of the more advanced version I am currently working on (even the May 2006 version that you have seen on my

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<sup>1</sup> This is the good thing of academic conferences to welcome also PhD students, not so much to praise them when they are able to present a totally finalized research paper (this is actually of little interest), but rather to help those starting with good ideas but still very limited in their way of exploiting them, to improve their work. This is the way research goes... a endless process hopefully converging, step by step, to a more accurate picture of reality.

<sup>2</sup> “Ethical altruistic voting in a multi-ethnic developing country. Evidence from Ethiopia” is not the core paper of my PhD thesis.

website does not provide a good picture of this current version... but this is typically the progress of research enabling to improve analysis each day a little bit more). You also wrote a PhD and I am sure that you understand my point. It would make little sense if we decided to discuss nowadays the first drafts of research you wrote at the beginning of your PhD. One would find mistakes, and a very awkward way of presenting things, as you actually did in scrutinizing my paper. From this first remark, you may understand why I agree only partly with you when you write: *“All in all, the latest (May 2006) version shows improvements in writing and presentation. Nevertheless, **most of my comments from the paper that I read (March 2006 version) are still relevant to her research**”*. But I explain more deeply some reasons of my disagreement in the following.

### **Theoretical framework:**

- *The students were surveyed to document their political opinions on eight Ethiopian political parties **which were grouped as follows:** 1) Ethiopia-oriented parties (EDP, CAFPDE and EDUP), 2) vote-oriented party (EPRDF) and 3) ethnic-oriented parties (AAPO, OLF, ONC and SEPDC) (Figure 1, p. 27).*

Remark: The grouping of the parties is not arbitrary at all; it comes from students' answers to a question asking them to “characterize” these parties (are they rather “Ethiopia-oriented”, “ethnic-oriented”, “poor-oriented”...etc?). “Ethiopia-oriented” and “ethnic-oriented” were the items mostly used by students enabling to divide parties into 2 (and not 3 as you mention) groups: rather Ethiopia-oriented parties (EDP, EDUP, CAFPDE), and rather ethnic-oriented parties (EPRDF –considered as the least ethnic-oriented in this group-, SEPDC, AAPO, ONC and OLF).

- *The research assumptions were the following (p. 46-47): “-egoistic people tend to vote for their ethnic-based parties; -biased ethical altruistic people tend to vote for EPRDF; -unbiased ethical altruistic people tend to vote for Ethiopian-oriented parties”.*

Remark: This is not a current assumption any more (see the May 2006 version).

- *“Valfort’s equations of “interest groups” with “ethnicity” and Aristotle’s notion of aristocratic or oligarchic “birth rights ”with modern day “ethnic interests” can be misleading in the Ethiopian context. More misleading is to equate Aristotle’s “altruistic voting” with “ethnic voting”.*”

Remark: As regarding the first sentence, the equation between “interest groups” and “ethnicity” may actually be misleading; but it may also provide an original way of dealing with the “ethnic issue”, perhaps likely to enrich more standard approaches. As regarding the second sentence, there is an obvious misinterpretation: I do not equate Aristotle’s “altruistic voting” with “ethnic voting” but with “national voting”.

- *“It is possible, even likely, that someone from Addis Ababa gets elected in these areas, but the fact of the matter is that political parties would recruit and nominate local electoral candidates, since they know that people elect politicians who understand their language, culture and socio-economic situations. Therefore, it can be wrong to assume that, in Ethiopia, all those who vote for ethnic-based parties are egocentric.”*

Remark: I totally agree with you. And I do not claim the opposite. What is interesting in the survey is that I do not ask students to “vote” for a specific candidate, but for an ideology (conveyed by a specific party) that they were able to characterize (through the above mentioned “characterization” question). In such a setting, the fact that a respondent supports a party’s ideology that he clearly defined as “ethnic oriented”<sup>3</sup> can certainly not be qualified as “altruistic”.

- *“Valfort’s research could have benefitted from comparative analyses of a large body of historical and contemporary literature specific to developing countries.”*

Remark: That is obvious since March 2006 version is a first draft. The references you are so relevantly highlighting will be of great help for me. Thanks a lot.

- *“By relying on literature critical of EPRDF - critics like Merera and Pausewang were cited too frequently - Valfort’s approach fails to shed at least some positive light on EPRDF’s ‘rule’ strategy.”*

Remark: Although I consider Merera’s and Pausewang’s works as EXCELLENT, I totally acknowledge that these first readings contributed to bias my discourse against EPRDF. I learnt since then, with the help of political scientists I am working with (one of them is Ethiopian) to diversify my bibliographical sources. This enables me nowadays to provide a more balanced and thus more accurate assessment of the EPRDF’s policy. What is sure is that I am neither an anti-EPRDF nor a pro-CUD militant, and it appears clearly in the latest versions of my work.

However, I must emphasize that, contrary to what you mention, I was already highlighting positive aspects of EPRDF’s “rule strategy” in the March 2006 version (see p 14):

“However, despite the persistence of electoral cheating, observers like Pausewang and al. (2003) globally acknowledge an improvement in the democratisation process: “Despite the democratic deficiencies of the EPRDF government, the difference between the current and the previous regime is unmistakable. The military dictatorship of Mengistu applied open force and undisguised violence. (...) Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has introduced democratic institutions”. This feeling is shared by students since 59.5% noticed an improvement in the democratic procedures over the last 10 years (15.3% consider that the democratic quality has been stagnating, and 22.7% that it has been worsening) –see Question VII.5. and the related statistics in the Appendix. This notably expresses through the existence of the NEB (National Electoral Board) in charge officially of the impartial and autonomous organisation of elections. Though often in collusion with EPRDF’s manipulation of the vote, it also showed its ability to organise relatively fair elections as it was the case when elections were re-scheduled after the cancellation of May 2000 national elections in Hadiya and several other woreda in Southern regions due to serious electoral fraud. One may also mention the development of civil society organisations that “have made a modest impact on public attitudes” by “promot[ing] public awareness and stimulate public discussion about democratic rights and responsible governance” (Rahmato (2002)). The independent press also increased its sphere of influence as noticed by Bonsa (2002). Finally, this democratic progress enabled the diversification of political opposition with the emergence of new adversaries to EPRDF in recent years.”

- *“Having said all this, Merera Gudina must have access to sources for the data presented in Table 3. He has used this information to make a serious allegation of*

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<sup>3</sup> In the survey (see the 2005 working paper which is not so much a “preliminary research report” as you say but rather a mere statistical compilation of the survey’s results), the definition of the “ethnic-oriented” item that students were able to use to characterize Ethiopian political parties is the following: “ethnic-oriented: they favour people from their ethnic group”. The opposite item was “Ethiopia-oriented”, designed to qualify those who “defend the interests of ALL Ethiopian people without favouring any group more than the other”.

*EPRDF preferential treatment of Tigreans. And one doesn't have to be a "staunch" supporter of CUD, EUDF or any other party to take up this issue. Somebody should follow up to set the record straight."*

Remark: I won't spend too much time at dealing with this issue since, as you wisely highlight at the beginning of your review "certainly her paper is not about how the Ethiopian government allocates a budget". I should however have been more cautious at presenting Merera's statistics and the interpretation he gives in his book: "Ethiopia. Competing ethnic nationalisms and the quest for democracy, 1960-2000" (see p 165-182). The per capita allocation that is favourable to regions of smaller size (and Merera gives a very interesting political justification of it) remains however puzzling... and the attempt to justify it through the "economies of scale" argument (see Meshat's article posted on waltainfo.com) not really convincing.

It is definitely useful to have a look at the way the formula used for determining the block grants accruing to each region is calculated. One can find it in the volume II (dedicated to Appendixes and Statistical tables) of a document published by World Bank in 2001 and entitled: "Ethiopia. Focusing public expenditures on poverty reduction" (see p 47 of the document:[http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/main?pagePK=64193027&piPK=64187937&theSitePK=523679&menuPK=64187510&searchMenuPK=64187511&theSitePK=523679&entityID=000094946\\_02013004015023&searchMenuPK=64187511&theSitePK=523679](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/main?pagePK=64193027&piPK=64187937&theSitePK=523679&menuPK=64187510&searchMenuPK=64187511&theSitePK=523679&entityID=000094946_02013004015023&searchMenuPK=64187511&theSitePK=523679)). It appears that the calculation procedure is actually, as stressed by Ato Sufian Ahmed, very transparent.

4 indexes are used for the calculation:

- a "population" index (with a 55% weight)
- a "development" index (with a 20% weight)
- a "poverty" index (with a 10% weight) that was introduced in 2001 in the formula, which appears to be totally fair. Poorer regions, and specially Tigray, the poorest of them, deserve to be compensated for it
- a "revenue raising effort and sectoral performance" index (with a 15% weight).

The fact that the population variable is used for the calculation of the index (and not as a "corrector" once the "development/poverty/revenue raising effort" index is set) however favours smaller regions. This is certainly an issue that needs to be more deeply investigated in the future.

### **Methodology:**

- *"First of all, historically Ethiopian students have a different political culture - whether one calls it militancy or active resistance to oppressive rule - so that their views do not necessarily represent those of the Ethiopian masses."*

Remark: There is absolutely no doubt about it. And the purpose of the research is not to extend observations made on the students' sample to the whole population. I am only intending to test whether "ethical motivations" may underlie people's political preferences, in addition to more self-interested motivations ... and a students' sample is already interesting in itself. In economics, this is a kind of investigation that was rarely led. There is however a seminal article dealing with this issue: "The importance of the "ethical voter": an estimate of altruism" published in 1994 by Hudson and Jones in the European Journal of Political Economy.

- *“Second, we do not know what proportion of the students were born and raised in Addis Ababa or came from different regions of the country”*

Remark: This is an information that is given in the 2005 working paper. The question and the related statistics are as follows:

**“QA3. Did you mainly grow up on the countryside/village or in a small, middle-size, or big city?”**

- On the countryside/village (less than 5000 inhabitants)
- In a small city (between 5000 and 50 000 inhabitants)
- In a middle city (between 50 000 and 500 000 inhabitants)
- In a big city (more than 500 000 inhabitants)

*[Please circle your answer]”*

	%
<b>Countryside</b>	28,4
<b>Small city</b>	25,4
<b>Middle city</b>	24,2
<b>Big city (Addis)</b>	21,1
<b>Missing</b>	0,9
<b>TOTAL</b>	100,0

This is a crucial information that I didn’t use in the March 2006 paper. I was wrong since, once having done it in the latest versions of the paper, it considerably improves the analysis, as you were judiciously expecting.

- *“Considering these and other factors, the research methodology was poorly managed and ineffective.”*

Remark: Here is the point I totally disagree with. Your main argument for considering the methodology as flawed is the fact that some ethnic groups are underrepresented (and thus others overrepresented). This of course biases everything when one only focuses on descriptive statistics. But this bias is easily evacuated as soon as one runs an econometric analysis (where you can control for the ethnic group of the respondent), which is by far the core element of my empirical analysis. The econometric work was of limited outlook in the March 2006 version, but it is becoming more sophisticated (it was already the case in the May 2006 version) and the econometricians to whom I presented my latest results were very encouraging in their comments.

- *“She also says that Ethiopian authorities would not have allowed her to conduct an extensive survey of urban and rural households (why?).”*

Remark: Political questions should have been included in a “social capital module” that was part of the 2005 edition of a questionnaire led on a yearly basis in Ethiopian Highlands among rural households. The “political questions” were finally withdrawn from the questionnaire because considered as too “sensitive” by key leaders of the project at the Addis Ababa University. They indeed considered that this was a necessary precautionary measure since the questionnaire was expected to be conducted in the hectic context of the May 2005 elections.

**Analysis of the survey:**

As a preliminary remark, I must stress the fact that the theoretical framework used for the analysis of the survey considerably improved, as you noticed from the May 2006 version. So, there is no ground any more for most of your concerns. I will however discuss some of them since you sometimes really misinterpret some of the statistical results.

- *“For example, the survey results show that Tigrean (who were over-represented in the survey) would support EPRDF. Thirty-one percent of the Amharas (another over-represented group) would also vote for EPRDF (Table VII. 10, p.59)”*

Remark: The statistics you are discussing are not at all what is considered as the results of the survey. The main results of the paper are the conclusions one can derive from the econometric work (that you do not consider at all in your comments) analysing the determinants of the probability of voting for an ethnic-oriented party, or for an Ethiopia-oriented party (the purpose is to check whether altruism significantly influence people’s political preference... it appears (see p 44 and 45) that it significantly decreases the probability of voting for an ethnic-oriented party and increases the probability of voting instead for an Ethiopia-oriented party). Moreover, the descriptive results you are referring to are not the “voting” results which are given in Table 16 (p 42), but approval voting results, which is very different. Indeed, in the case of “voting”, people must highlight THE party they support, while in the case of “approval voting” they can highlight as many parties as they want.

- *“Valfort’s lack of sensitivity to her research “subjects” is evident in some of her descriptions of result of the survey. For example, at one point (p. 12) she accused Tigrean university students of lacking “objectivity certainly because they are precisely the beneficiaries of [EPRDF’s] discriminatory policy”*

Remark: You are perfectly right. This way of presenting things was more than clumsy and I understand that some readers felt offended by this comment. I apologize for that.

- *“At another point, she does not appear to consider the results of her own analysis. For example, on pages 30 and 31, the analysis indicates that 84% of Tigreans would vote for EPRDF and 33% of Oromos for OLF; conversely, thus, 16% of Tigreans do not favour EPRDF and 66% of Oromos do not vote for OLF”*

Remark: Here again you read as “voting” results what is only “approval voting” results.

- *“Among those who are conscious of such an advantage [she is referring to, for example, the 31% Amharas voting for EPRDF]”*

Remark: no, I am referring to Tigreans who consider to be favoured by EPRDF

- *“Later on, the statistical figures show that both Oromo and Tigrean students preferred Ethiopia-oriented parties (p. 35), hence, contradicting Valfort’s argument that altruistic voting (voting for non-ethnic parties) is costly for Tigreans and Oromos.”*

Remark: the figures given p 35 are absolutely not related to the percentage of people voting for Ethiopia-oriented. It is related to the percentage of people who, from their answer to question IV.3. and question IV.4., show some altruistic concerns. The econometric work

conducted at p 43 then tests whether showing some altruistic concerns significantly influence people's voting behaviour.

As a conclusion, I must say that I am sincerely sorry if some people felt offended by the content of this first draft of research. Indeed, one must bear in mind that hurting people was absolutely not my purpose. This first draft was originally destined to a public of academic readers aware of its status as "work in progress conducted by a junior researcher", and not at all to a political debate referring to it as a finalized paper. I hope to be able to provide better academic results, as well as a more balanced analysis of the Ethiopian political landscape in the next few months. I am working on it very hard, with the assistance of political scientists from whom the PhD student in Economics I am is really learning a lot...

This would be a nice outcome if my research could ultimately arouse a less passionate and more constructive debate, and I will do my best for this to happen... this research is a more general matter of "common good" after all, and our ability, as "citizens of the world", to live in harmony with each other.

I thank you very much for having given me the opportunity to bring clarifications about my intentions and my work.

Best regards,

Marie-Anne Valfort