

# Democracy's Journey: Unraveling Ethiopian Parliamentary Elections Trends and Changes from 1995 to 2021

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## Abstract

The article "Democracy's Journey: Unraveling Ethiopian Parliamentary Elections Trends and Changes from 1995 to 2021" delves into the historical trajectory of Ethiopia's parliamentary system, examining political trends, challenges, and reforms encountered from the establishment of the Imperial Ethiopian Parliament in 1931 to the present day. The study aims to offer valuable insights into the evolving political landscape of Ethiopia, shedding light on the obstacles, achievements, and shifts that have characterized its democratic trajectory. The research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of Ethiopia's political development by analyzing the major trends, changes, and dynamics that have shaped the electoral process and its results over time. It explores the evolution of elections from their inception in the mid-1990s to the present day, providing historical analysis and contemporary insights into the complexities and dynamics of parliamentary development in Ethiopia. The article also discusses the challenges encountered in Ethiopia's parliamentary journey, including electoral integrity, political inclusivity, and human rights protection. It emphasizes the significance of Ethiopia as a case study in Africa's quest for democratic governance, drawing attention to its distinct historical trajectory and its potential to provide insightful information about the prospects and difficulties of democratic governance in the African context. Overall, the research comprehensively explores Ethiopia's parliamentary system, highlighting its historical perspectives and contemporary challenges while offering valuable perspectives on the complexities and dynamics of parliamentary development in the country.

## Keywords

Changes, Election Terms, Parliamentary System, Trends, Unraveling

## 1. Introduction

The research aims to investigate the significant political transformations witnessed in Ethiopia, particularly in parliamentary elections, over the past few decades. Through an in-depth examination of election outcomes and procedural modifications from 1995 to 2021, the study seeks to offer valuable insights into the evolving political landscape of the nation as it navigates its democratic journey. By analyzing the major trends, changes, and dynamics that have shaped the electoral process and its results over time, the research endeavors to elucidate the obstacles, achievements, and shifts that have characterized Ethiopia's democratic trajectory. Through a comprehensive exploration of the evolution of elections from their inception in the mid-1990s to the present day, the study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of Ethiopia's political development.

## 2. Parliamentary System in Ethiopia: Historical Perspectives

The parliamentary system in Ethiopia has a long and complex history, shaped by various political, social, and cultural factors. The establishment of a parliamentary system in Ethiopia can be traced back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when Emperor Haile Selassie introduced a constitutional monarchy with a bicameral parliament in 1931. This marked the beginning of modern parliamentary politics in Ethiopia (Taye, 2018). However, the parliamentary system in Ethiopia faced challenges and underwent significant changes over the years.

The military regime led by Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam abolished the parliament and implemented a Marxist-Leninist system in 1974. This marked a period of authoritarian rule and centralized governance in Ethiopia (Claeys, 2016). Following the overthrow of the military regime in 1991, Ethiopia transitioned to a federal system of government with a parliamentary structure.

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was established, with a bicameral parliament consisting of the House of Peoples' Representatives and the House of Federation. This marked a new era of parliamentary democracy in Ethiopia (Johnston, 2017). In recent years, the parliamentary system in Ethiopia has faced challenges such as political unrest, ethnic tensions, and calls for political reform. The government has undertaken reforms to strengthen the parliamentary system and promote inclusivity and democracy in the country (Smith, 2020).

Overall, the historical perspectives of the parliamentary system in Ethiopia reflect a complex interplay of political transitions, challenges, and reforms that have shaped the country's governance structure.

### 2.1. Evolution of Ethiopia's Parliamentary System: 1931-1991

From 1931 to 1991, Ethiopia underwent significant political transformations that profoundly impacted its parliamentary system. During this period, Ethiopia experienced the rule of Emperor Haile Selassie, who introduced the first modern constitution in 1931, establishing a bicameral parliament known as the Ethiopian Parliament (Abir, 1968). However, this Parliament had limited Power, as

ultimate authority rested with the emperor. Despite this, the Ethiopian Parliament played a role in legislative matters and served as a platform for political discourse, albeit within the confines of an essentially authoritarian system.

Ethiopia's parliamentary system shifted dramatically in 1974 with the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie and the establishment of a Marxist-Leninist regime under the Derg government. The Derg dissolved the Parliament and centralized Power, instituting a one-party state governed by military rule (Clapham, 1988). During this period, the parliamentary system ceased to function as an independent legislative body, and political dissent was severely suppressed. The Derg's authoritarian rule lasted until 1991, when it was ousted by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), marking the end of Ethiopia's socialist era and paving the way for significant political reforms, including the reintroduction of a multiparty system and the establishment of a new constitution in 1994 (Young, 1997).

## **2.2. Formation and Legacy of the Council of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (1991-1994)**

The Council of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia was established as a result of the Peace and Democratic Transition Conference of Ethiopia, which took place in Addis Ababa from July 1-5, 1991, and followed the overthrow of the Derg dictatorship, by the EPRDF through armed and political struggle. The conference accepted a charter that guided the Council (EPRDF, n.d.). The House of Representatives of the Transitional Government was founded by several political forces, including movements, political parties, and the armed forces (Berhane, 1996).

When the Charter was adopted, the Council had 86 members, and three (3) were women. The Council served for four years, and its primary duty was to lay a foundation for establishing a democratic Government. Accordingly, it approved the FDRE constitution on December 9, 1994, and then handed over its Power to the newly elected Government on August 21, 1995 (FDRE, 1994).

## **2.3. Political Philosophy and Challenges of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Parliament (1995-2018)**

Two Federal Houses exist in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. They are the House of Federation and the House of Peoples' Representatives. These houses were so built in August of 1995. The Federal Government's highest authority is the House of Peoples' Representatives. Members of the House of Peoples' Representatives will be chosen for a five-year term by the majority of votes cast in each electoral district. It has been done through direct, accessible, and fair elections conducted by secret ballot following the principles of universal suffrage. Members of the House, based on Population and memorable representation of minority Nationalities and Peoples, Shall not exceed 550; of these, minority Nationalities and Peoples shall have at least 20 seats. House of Peoples' Representatives members are governed by the Constitution, the people and their

conscience.

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Parliament, established in 1995 following the adoption of the current Ethiopian Constitution, operated under the principles of a federal democratic system. The central political philosophy guiding the FDRE Parliament during this period encompassed several vital aspects: The FDRE Parliament embraced the principle of federalism, which recognizes Ethiopia as a multi-ethnic and multicultural nation. It aimed to decentralize Power and provide regional autonomy to Ethiopia's diverse ethnic groups, allowing them to govern themselves within the framework of a unified federal state.

Central to the political philosophy of the FDRE Parliament was the concept of ethnic federalism. This system recognized the country's various ethnic groups as distinct entities with the right to self-determination, including establishing regional states based on ethnicity. Each regional state had its Government and legislature, with powers devolved from the central Government. The FDRE Parliament upheld the principles of democracy, including free and fair elections, separation of powers, and respect for human rights. It served as the legislative body responsible for making laws, overseeing the executive branch, and representing the interests of the Ethiopian people. During this period, the Ethiopian Government pursued a developmental state model, which involved significant state intervention in the economy to drive rapid industrialization and economic growth. The FDRE Parliament enacted laws and policies to support this developmental agenda, including measures to attract foreign investment, promote infrastructure development, and enhance agricultural productivity. The FDRE Parliament emphasized the importance of social justice and equity in its policies and legislation. Efforts were made to address historical injustices, inequalities, and disparities, particularly in areas such as land ownership, education, and access to essential services.

#### **2.4. Prosperity Party (2019-Present)**

After the coalition parties of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) merged, the Prosperity Party (PP) was founded in Ethiopia in 2019. Before going through significant reforms and eventually changing its name to the Prosperity Party, the EPRDF had ruled for almost thirty years. The party, which is led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, has worked to change Ethiopia's political and economic systems. Its primary goals include resolving long-standing complaints among Ethiopia's various ethnic groups, advancing economic progress, and creating national unity. The Prosperity Party's tenure has been marked by both promise and difficulty, with its success in achieving its objectives remaining a subject of debate and analysis both domestically and internationally.

Since its founding in 2019, Ethiopia's Prosperity Party (PP) has made unity, inclusivity, and economic development the central tenets of its platform. The party, led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, has emphasized the following essen-

tial areas: The PP has strengthened Ethiopia's many ethnic groups' sense of solidarity and national identity. It aims to build a shared national identity among Ethiopians by bridging ethnic divides. The PP values national unity and acknowledges and honors Ethiopia's diverse cultural past. Promoting inclusion and treating all ethnic groups equally aims to create a society those values and respects variety.

### 3. Methodology

This study employed an intelligent methodology by adopting a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative analysis of political dynamics and context with quantitative analysis of electoral data. Voter turnout, election outcomes, and demographic data were sourced from credible research organizations and official sources, including the Parliament's more than half-century documents and the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE). Contextual data on political developments, socioeconomic issues, and electoral procedures were gathered from scholarly works, official documents, media outlets, and stakeholder interviews.

A systematic sampling technique was used to select a representative sample of Ethiopian parliamentary elections between 1995 and 2021. Purposeful sampling was employed to identify critical informants for focus groups and interviews, such as politicians, election monitors, representatives of civil society, and academic specialists.

### 4. Analysis

The analysis of Democracy's Journey: Unraveling Ethiopian Parliamentary Elections Trends and Changes from 1995 to 2021' delve into the nuanced evolution of Ethiopia's electoral landscape over the past few decades. One key aspect to explore is the trajectory of democratic consolidation, scrutinizing how the electoral processes have evolved in their capacity to uphold democratic principles such as transparency, fairness, and inclusivity. This examination would involve assessing changes in electoral laws, institutional frameworks, and political practices, shedding light on the extent to which Ethiopia's democracy has matured or faced setbacks during this period.

Additionally, the analysis would thoroughly explore the role of various actors and factors shaping Ethiopian parliamentary elections. This includes examining the influence of political parties, ethnic dynamics, socioeconomic conditions, and international interventions on electoral trends and outcomes. By dissecting these multifaceted elements, the analysis seeks to uncover underlying patterns, challenges, and opportunities within Ethiopia's democratic journey, offering insights into the country's political development and prospects.

#### 4.1. Different Political Parties during the Council of Transitional Government of Ethiopia (1991-1994)

**Table 1** below presents a comprehensive overview of the composition of political

**Table 1.** Different political party during the council of transitional government of Ethiopia 1991-1994.

R. No	Composition of parties	Seats in the Council	Percentage
1.	Harer Peoples League	1	1.162
2.	Afar Liberation Party	3	3.489
3	Agew Peoples Democratic Movement	1	1
4	Burjji Peoples Democratic Movement	1	1.162
5	Benishengul Peoples Liberation Movement	2	2.325
6	Ethiopian Democratic Movement Team	1	1.162
7	Ethiopian Democratic Coalition	1	1.162
8	Ethiopian People's Democratic Organization	1	1.162
9	Ethiopian People's Union	1	1.162
10	Gambela Peoples Liberation Movement	2	2.325
11	Gurage Peoples Democratic Movement	2	2.325
12	Hadiya Nation Democratic Movement	2	2.325
13	Horiyal	1	1.162
14	ILFO (Islamic Liberation Front of Oromo)	3	3.489
15	Isana Gurigura Liberation Front	1	1.162
16	Kambata Peoples Congress	2	2.325
17	Oromo Abo Liberation Front	1	1.162
18	Oromo Peoples Liberation Front	12	13.95
19	Omotic Peoples Democratic Front	2	2.325
20	United Oromo Peoples Liberation Front	1	1.162
21	Sidama Liberation Front	2	2.325
22	Wolaita Peoples Democratic Front	2	2.325
23	Proletariat/Work force	3	3.489
24	West Somali Liberation Front	2	2.325
25	Keffa Administrative Region Democratic Union	2	2.325
26	Gedeo Peoples Democratic Organization	1	1.162
27	Yemi Nationality Movement	1	1.162
28	EPRDF		
28/1	Ethiopian Military Officers Democratic Movement	2	2.325
28/2	Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement	10	11.63
28/3	TPLF	10	11.63
28/4	Oromo Peoples Democratic Organization	10	11.63
29	Universities Representation	0	
	Addition	86	100%

parties during the Council of Transitional Government of Ethiopia from 1991 to 1994. The data reveal a diverse array of parties, reflecting the complex ethnic and political landscape of Ethiopia during this period of transition. Some notable parties include the Oromo Peoples Liberation Front, which held seat 12, indicating its significant presence and influence. Additionally, the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement, TPLF, and Oromo Peoples Democratic Organization each held ten seats, reflecting their substantial representation and role in the transitional Government. The presence of various ethnic-based parties, such as the Afar Liberation Party, Sidama Liberation Front, and Gambela Peoples Liberation Movement, underscores the ethnic diversity and regional dynamics shaping Ethiopian politics during this period.

Moreover, the distribution of seats among the parties highlights the fragmentation of political Power and the challenge of achieving consensus within the transitional Government. While some parties held a considerable number of seats, many others held only one or two seats, indicating a lack of dominance by any political entity. This fragmentation likely contributed to the complexity of governance and decision-making during the transitional period. Furthermore, the inclusion of parties representing specific ethnic groups reflects efforts to accommodate diverse interests and address historical grievances within the framework of the transitional Government.

Overall, the table offers valuable insights into the multiplicity of political actors and dynamics during Ethiopia's transition from authoritarian rule to a more inclusive political system.

## 4.2. Timelines and Political Parties in Parliament (1995-2021)

### 4.2.1. First Term Election

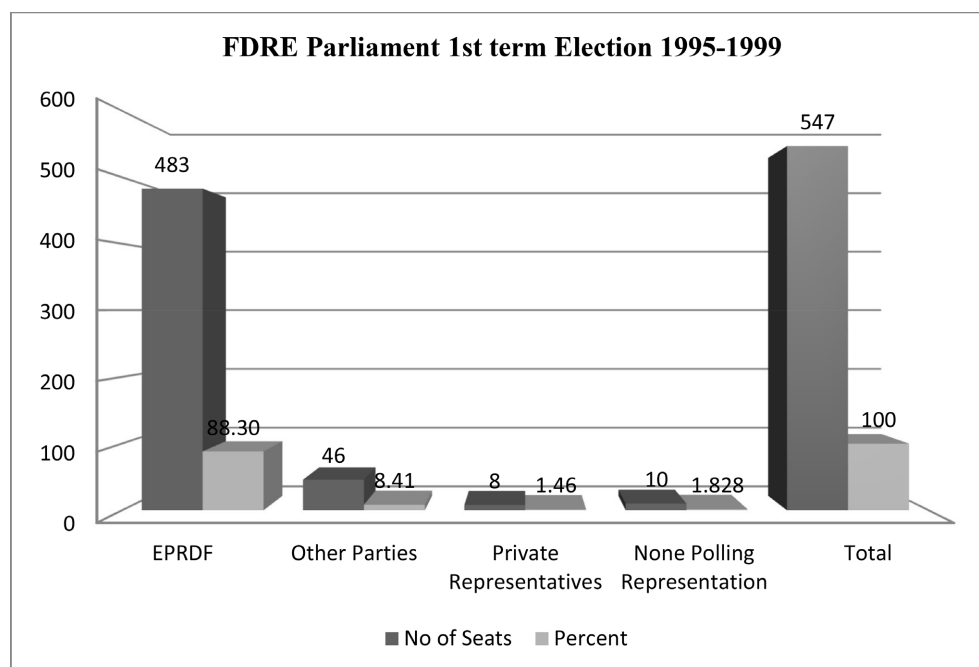
**Table 2.** FDRE parliament 1<sup>st</sup> term election 1995-1999.

Composition of Parties	Seats in the House	Percent
EPRDF	483	88.30
Other Parties	46	8.41
Private Representatives	8	1.46
None Polling Representation	10	1.828
Total	547	100

As shown in **Table 2**, the first term election of the FDRE Parliament in 1995-1999 marked a significant milestone in Ethiopia's political transition following the overthrow of the Derg regime. The table illustrates the dominance of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which secured 88.30% of the seats in the House. This overwhelming majority underscores the EPRDF's solid electoral performance and central role in shaping the post-transitional political landscape. The high level of representation enjoyed by the EPRDF reflects its success in mobilizing support and consolidating Power in

the aftermath of the regime change.

As shown in **Figure 1**, additionally, the relatively low percentage of seats held by other parties, at just 8.41%, suggests a lack of significant competition or opposition to the EPRDF during this period. This electoral outcome likely contributed to the consolidation of the EPRDF's authority and its ability to implement its political agenda effectively during its initial term in office.



**Figure 1.** FDRE parliament 1<sup>st</sup> term election 1995-1999.

Furthermore, the presence of private representatives and those with non-polling representation underscores the inclusivity of the FDRE Parliament's first term election. While the EPRDF secured a dominant majority, the allocation of seats to private representatives and those without polling representation reflects efforts to accommodate diverse interests and voices within the parliamentary system. This inclusivity may have been intended to promote national reconciliation and unity following years of political turmoil and authoritarian rule under the Derg regime.

Moreover, the total percentage of seats allocated to these groups, at 3.28%, indicates a concerted effort to ensure representation for marginalized or underrepresented segments of Ethiopian society. Overall, the first term election of the FDRE Parliament in 1995-1999 reflects both the EPRDF's electoral dominance and the Government's commitment to fostering a more inclusive and participatory political environment in post-transitional Ethiopia.

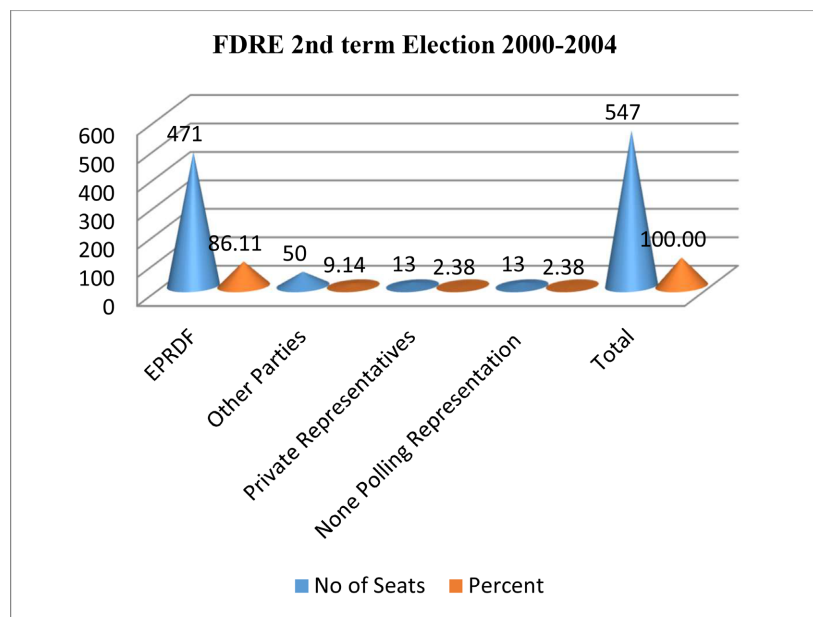
#### 4.2.2. Second Term Election

The second term election of the FDRE Parliament, spanning from 2000 to 2004, reveals several notable trends in Ethiopia's political landscape. The table indi-

icates the continued dominance of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which secured a significant majority of seats in the House, accounting for 86.11% of the total. This demonstrates the EPRDF's enduring electoral strength and ability to maintain its position as the dominant political force in Ethiopia during this period. The EPRDF's continued electoral success suggests a degree of stability and consistency in the country's political environment despite potential challenges and opposition from other parties. **Table 3** clearly indicated as the following.

**Table 3.** FDRE 2<sup>nd</sup> term election 2000-2004.

Composition of Parties	Seats in the House	Percent
EPRDF	471	86.11
Other Parties	50	9.14
Private Representatives	13	2.38
None Polling Representation	13	2.38
Total	547	100.00



**Figure 2.** FDRE 2<sup>nd</sup> term election 2000-2004.

Furthermore, as **Figure 2**, the relatively high percentage of seats held by other parties, at 9.14%, indicates a modest level of political pluralism and competition compared to the previous term. This may signify a growing diversity of political voices and perspectives within the Parliament, contributing to a more dynamic and inclusive political discourse.

Moreover, the allocation of seats to private representatives and those without polling representation reflects a continued commitment to inclusivity and representation within the FDRE Parliament. The presence of private representa-

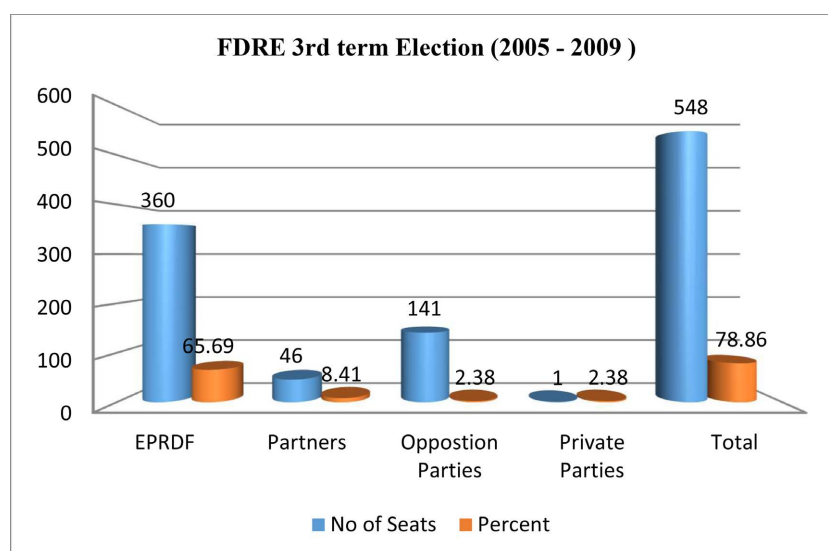
tives and those without polling representation, each accounting for 2.38% of the total seats, suggests an ongoing effort to accommodate diverse interests and promote national unity. This inclusive approach may have been aimed at fostering consensus-building and cooperation among different segments of Ethiopian society, contributing to the overall stability and cohesion of the parliamentary system.

Additionally, the total percentage of seats allocated to these groups, at 4.76%, indicates a sustained commitment to ensuring representation for marginalized or underrepresented communities. Overall, the second term election of the FDRE Parliament in 2000-2004 reflects both the continued dominance of the EPRDF and the Government's ongoing efforts to promote inclusivity and diversity within Ethiopia's political institutions.

### 4.2.3. Third Term Election

**Table 4.** FDRE Parliament 3<sup>rd</sup> term election 2005-2009.

Composition of Parties	Seats in the House	Per cent
EPRDF	360	65.69
Partners	46	8.41
Opposition Parties	141	2.38
Private Parties	1	2.38
Total	548	78.86



**Figure 3.** FDRE parliament 3<sup>rd</sup> term election 2005-2009.

As shown in **Figure 3**, the third term election of the FDRE Parliament, covering the period from 2005 to 2009, illustrates a notable shift in Ethiopia's political landscape compared to previous elections. **Table 4** reveals a decrease in the percentage of seats held by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front

(EPRDF), which secured 65.69% of the total seats. This decline in the EPRDF's share of seats suggests a growing political competition and pluralism within the Parliament as other parties gained a more significant foothold.

The emergence of partner parties, accounting for 8.41% of seats, and opposition parties, holding 2.38%, highlights the increasing diversity of political representation and perspectives within Ethiopia's legislative body. This diversification of political voices may indicate a maturing democratic process and a broader spectrum of interests being represented in the Parliament, contributing to a more inclusive and representative political system.

Furthermore, the relatively low percentage of seats held by private parties, at 2.38%, underscores the continued dominance of established political entities like the EPRDF and its partner parties. Despite opposition parties, the EPRDF and its allies maintained a significant majority in the Parliament, enabling them to retain considerable influence over legislative decisions and policy-making processes.

However, the modest increase in seats allocated to opposition parties compared to previous elections suggests a gradual opening of political space and a greater willingness to accommodate alternative viewpoints within the Parliament.

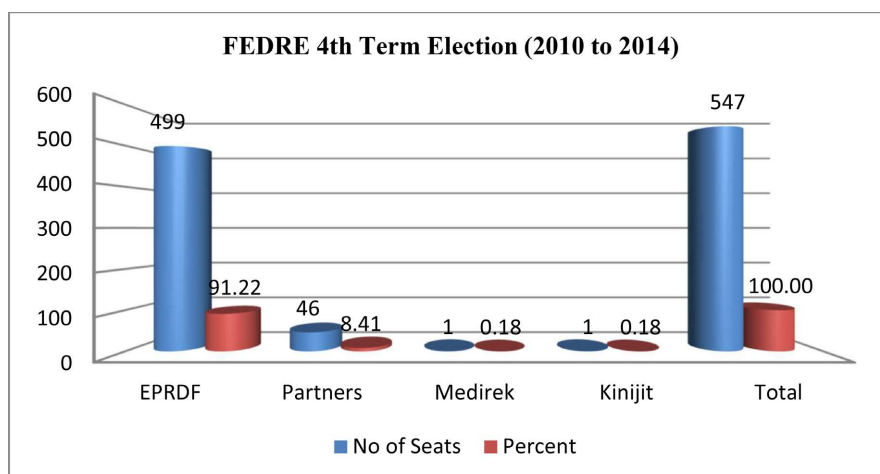
Overall, the third term election of the FDRE Parliament in 2005-2009 reflects a shifting political landscape characterized by a growing level of competition, diversification of representation, and evolving dynamics between ruling and opposition factions within Ethiopia's democratic institutions.

#### 4.2.4. Fourth Term Election

As shown in **Figure 4**, the fourth term election table from the FDRE Parliament in 2010-2014 shows a clear dominance of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in the composition of the parties. With 499 seats out of 547, the EPRDF held a staggering 91.22% of the total seats in the House. This over-whelming majority indicates the solid political influence and control of the EPRDF during this period. The presence of other parties, such as Partners, Medirek, and Kinijit, is minimal compared to the EPRDF. Partners and Medirek each held 46 and 1 seat, respectively, making up 8.41% and 0.18% of the total seats. Kinijit also had just one seat, accounting for 0.18%. This distribution of seats highlights the lack of significant opposition to the EPRDF's dominance in the Parliament during this term.

**Table 5.** FDRE parliament 4<sup>th</sup> term election 2010-2014.

Composition of Parties	Seats in the House	Percent
EPRDF	499	91.22
Partners	46	8.41
Medirek	1	0.18
Kinijit	1	0.18
Total	547	100.00



**Figure 4.** FDRE Parliament 4<sup>th</sup> term Election 2010-2014.

**Table 5** reflects a political landscape where the EPRDF held a near-monopoly on legislative Power, raising questions about the political pluralism and competition within Ethiopia during this period. The disparity in seat distribution between the EPRDF and other parties suggests a lack of diversity in political representation and potential challenges for checks and balances within the Parliament. This data provides insight into the political dynamics and power structures that characterized Ethiopia during the fourth term election period.

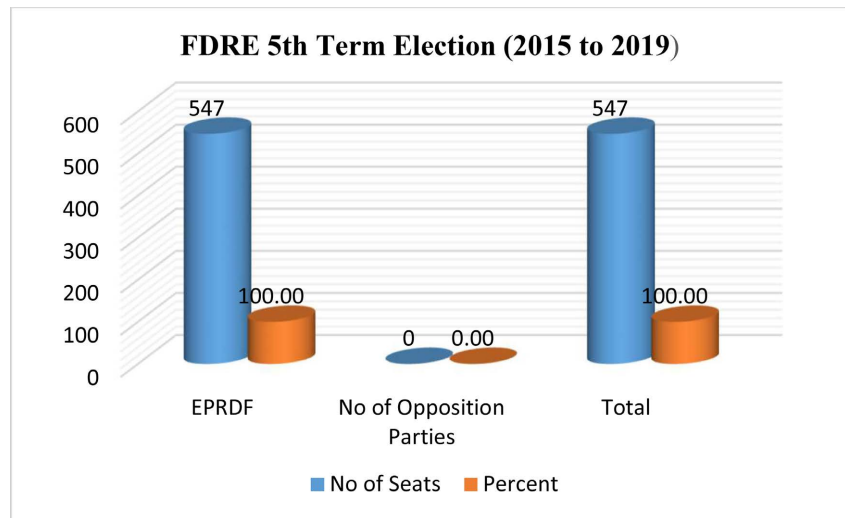
#### 4.2.5. Fifth Term Election

As shown in **Figure 5**, the fifth term election table from the FDRE Parliament in 2015-2019 paints a stark picture of political dominance by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). As shown in **Table 6**, with all 547 seats in the House held by the EPRDF, the party maintained an absolute monopoly over legislative Power, capturing 100% of the total seats. This complete control by a single party raises concerns about political pluralism, competition, and representation within the Parliament during this term.

The absence of opposition parties in the House further underscores the lack of diversity and alternative voices in Ethiopia's political landscape during this period. With zero seats held by opposition parties, there was no formal opposition to challenge or scrutinize the policies and decisions of the ruling EPRDF. This lack of opposition presence raises questions about the functioning of democracy, accountability, and checks and balances within the Parliament. The composition of parties in the fifth term election table highlights a significant imbalance of Power and a potential lack of political inclusivity in Ethiopia's governance structure. The complete dominance of the EPRDF and the absence of opposition parties indicate a concentration of Power in the hands of a single entity, which may have implications for democratic processes, the representation of diverse viewpoints, and the protection of minority interests. This data sheds light on the political and Power dynamics that characterized Ethiopia during the fifth-term election period, emphasizing the need for greater political pluralism and diversity

**Table 6.** FDRE parliament 5<sup>th</sup> term election 2015-2019.

Composition of Parties	Seats in the House	Per cent
EPRDF	547	100.00
No of the Opposition Parties	0	0.00
Total	547	100.00

**Figure 5.** FDRE Parliament 5<sup>th</sup> term Election 2015-2019.

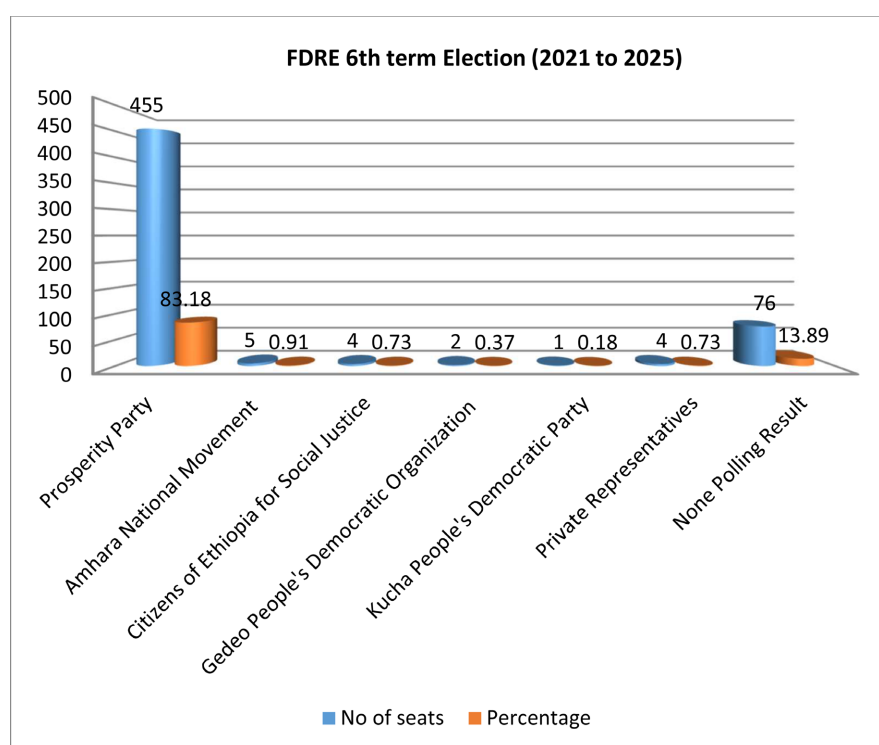
in future electoral processes.

#### 4.2.6. Sixth Term Election

As shown in **Table 7**, the composition of parties in the sixth term election table of the FDRE Parliament for the 2021-2025 periods reveals a notable shift from the complete dominance of a single party seen in the previous term. As shown in **Figure 6**, The Prosperity Party, which emerged as the successor to the EPRDF, holds a significant majority with 455 seats, representing 83.18% of the total seats. While this still indicates a firm hold on Power by a single party, there is a notable increase in the presence of other parties compared to the previous term, reflecting a greater degree of political pluralism and diversity within the Parliament. The emergence of smaller parties such as the Amhara National Movement, Citizens of Ethiopia for Social Justice, Gedeo People's Democratic Organization, and Kucha People's Democratic Party, each holding a small number of seats, signifies a more diverse representation of political interests within the Parliament. This diversification of party representation suggests a move towards greater inclusivity and the potential for a broader range of perspectives to be considered in legislative decision-making processes. The presence of private representatives further adds to the diversity within the Parliament, with four individuals holding seats as independent voices. This inclusion of private representatives alongside political parties contributes to a more varied and multifaceted legislative landscape, potentially fostering more significant debate, dialogue, and

**Table 7.** FDRE parliament 6<sup>th</sup> term election 2021-2025.

Composition of Parties	Seats in the House	Percentage
Prosperity Party	455	83.18
Amhara National Movement	5	0.91
Citizens of Ethiopia for Social Justice	4	0.73
Gedeo People's Democratic Organization	2	0.37
Kucha People's Democratic Party	1	0.18
Private Representatives	4	0.73
None Polling Result	76	13.89
Total	547	100.00

**Figure 6.** FDRE parliament 6<sup>th</sup> term election 2021-2025.

representation of diverse viewpoints within the Parliament.

The “None Polling Result” category, representing 13.89% of the seats, indicates that a significant portion of the electorate did not vote for any listed parties or candidates. This suggests a segment of the Population that may not feel adequately represented by the existing political options or may have chosen to abstain from participating in the electoral process altogether. This underscores the ongoing need for political engagement and efforts to address the concerns and interests of all segments of society.

In conclusion, the sixth term election table reflects a more diverse and pluralistic composition of parties within the FDRE Parliament than the previous term,

signaling a potential shift towards greater political inclusivity and representation. While the Prosperity Party remains dominant, the increased presence of smaller parties and independent representatives suggests a more varied and dynamic political landscape that may contribute to more inclusive decision-making processes and governance in Ethiopia.

### 4.3. Elected Women's Parliamentary Members Caucus Information

Elected Women's Parliamentary Members Caucus is an organization established to protect women's constitutional rights by bringing together all female members of Parliament and associate male members since the second term of Parliament. The Parliamentary Women's Elective Caucus is working to achieve its goals by developing a plan to fulfill its responsibilities and periodically checking and evaluating its organization and procedures. The caucus is being strengthened by its improvements every time, and the number of women elected to the Parliament every election period is increasing.

#### 4.3.1. Elected Women Parliament Members Caucus from 1931-1991

**Table 8.** Elected women parliament members from 1931-1991.

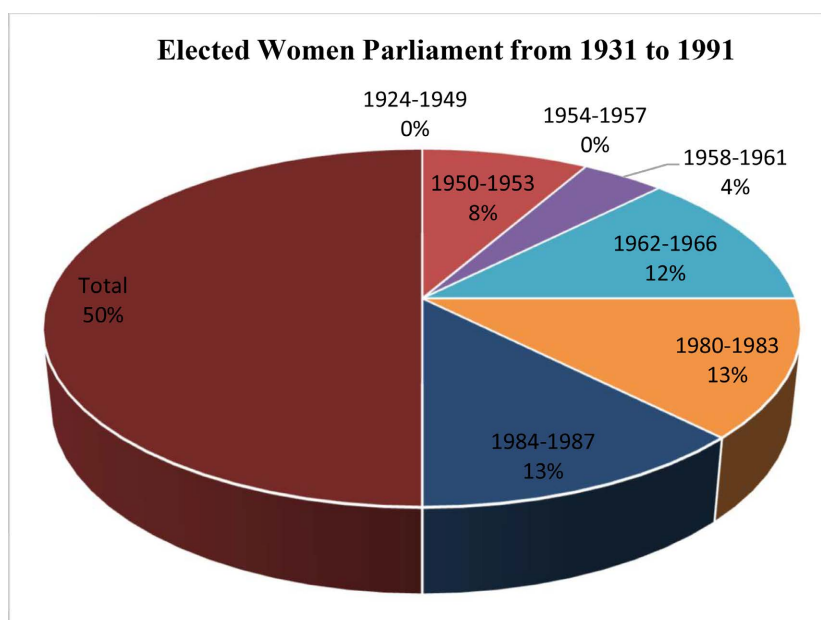
Election Term	Elected Women Parliament
1931-1956	0
1957-1960	2
1961-1964	0
1965-1968	1
1969-1973	3
1987-1990	3
1991-1994	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>

**Table 8** above outlining the number of elected women parliament members from 1931 to 1994 reveals a gradual but limited increase in female representation within the Ethiopian Parliament over the specified period. The data shows that from 1931 to 1956, no women were elected to Parliament, indicating a significant lack of gender diversity in political representation during this time. This absence of female voices in the Parliament reflects historical gender disparities and barriers to women's participation in political decision-making.

The subsequent election terms show a slight improvement in female representation, with two women elected to Parliament from 1957 to 1960. While this represents a small step towards greater gender inclusivity, the number of elected women parliament members' remains relatively low compared to the seats available.

In the following years, they continued to see fluctuations in the number of

women elected, with one woman in 1965-1968, three women in 1969-1973, and another three women in the 1987-1990 and 1991-1994 election terms. The 12 elected women parliament members over the specified period underscore the slow progress in achieving gender parity in political representation in Ethiopia. The presence of only a few women in Parliament highlights the ongoing challenges and obstacles women face in accessing positions of Power and influence within the political sphere. This limited representation also raises questions about the extent to which women's perspectives and interests were adequately considered in legislative decision-making processes during this time.



**Figure 7.** Elected women parliament members from 1931-1991.

As illustrated in **Figure 7**, the data on elected women parliament members from 1931 to 1994 points to a gradual but modest increase in female representation within the Ethiopian Parliament. The low numbers of women elected highlight the need for continued efforts to promote gender equality and empower women to participate more actively in political leadership roles. Addressing systemic barriers and promoting inclusive policies are crucial steps towards achieving greater gender diversity and ensuring women's voices are heard and valued in shaping the country's political landscape.

#### **4.3.2. From 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Terms Elected Women's Parliament Members Caucus Data (1995-2025)**

**Table 9** below detailing the number of elected women parliament members from 1995 to 2025 reflects a significant increase in female representation within the Ethiopian Parliament over the six terms analyzed. The data reveals a clear upward trend in the seats allocated to elected women parliament members, signaling a positive shift towards greater gender inclusivity in political decision-making processes. In the 1995-1999 terms, were 14 seats available for women parliament

members, marking a notable increase from previous years. This initial boost in female representation suggests a growing recognition of the importance of gender diversity in political leadership and legislative decision-making.

**Table 9.** 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Term elected women's parliament members caucus (1995-2025).

Election Year	No of Seats for E/W/MP
1995-1999	14
2000-2004	42
2005-2009	117
2010-2014	152
2015-2019	213
2021-2025	197
<b>Total</b>	<b>735</b>

This term's relatively small number of seats underscores the historical underrepresentation of women in Ethiopian politics and the need for greater gender parity. The subsequent terms from 2000 to 2019 show a substantial rise in the number of seats allocated to elected women parliament members, with the highest number of 213 seats available in the 2015-2019 terms. This steady increase in female representation reflects efforts to promote gender equality and empower women to participate more actively in shaping legislative agendas and policies.

The significant jump from 117 seats in 2005-2009 to 152 seats in 2010-2014 underscores a commitment to enhancing women's participation in political decision-making. The 735 seats allocated to elected women parliament members across the six terms highlight a positive shift towards greater gender inclusivity within the Ethiopian Parliament. The consistent increase in seats available for women parliament members signifies progress in addressing historical gender disparities and promoting women's voices in political processes. This upward trajectory also suggests a growing awareness of the importance of diverse perspectives and experiences in shaping inclusive and equitable policies that benefit all segments of society.

Looking ahead to the 2021-2025 term, where there are 197 seats allocated to elected women parliament members, it is evident that efforts to promote gender diversity in Ethiopian politics are ongoing. The slight decrease from the previous term does not diminish the overall positive trend of increasing female representation. It will be important for policymakers and stakeholders to continue supporting initiatives that further enhance the participation and influence of women within the Ethiopian Parliament.

In conclusion, the data on elected women's parliament members from 1995 to 2025 demonstrates a commendable trajectory towards greater gender inclusivity within the Ethiopian Parliament. The consistent increase in seats available for women parliament members reflects a commitment to promoting gender equal-

ity and empowering women in political leadership roles. Sustaining and building on these gains will be essential for fostering a more representative and responsive political system that reflects the diversity of Ethiopia's Population.

## 5. Challenges of Parliamentary System Development: Ethiopian Trends

Developing a parliamentary system in Africa, particularly in countries like Ethiopia, faces numerous challenges due to historical, social, and political factors. Here are some specific difficulties to Ethiopia's parliamentary system development, along with relevant citations:

Ethiopia has a history of authoritarian rule, including periods of imperial autocracy and military dictatorship. Transitioning to a parliamentary system requires overcoming entrenched authoritarian practices and building democratic institutions. According to [Abbink and de Bruijn \(2015\)](#), Ethiopia's political culture has been shaped by authoritarian governance, posing challenges to the establishment of democratic norms and practices, including within the parliamentary system.

Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic country with diverse linguistic and cultural groups. Ethnic tensions and conflicts can complicate the functioning of a parliamentary system, especially if political parties are primarily organized along ethnic lines. As argued by [Abbink \(2005\)](#), Ethiopia's ethnic federalism, while intended to address historical grievances, has also contributed to ethnic polarization and challenges to national integration, which can affect the stability of the parliamentary system.

Developing effective parliamentary institutions requires building administrative capacity, ensuring the rule of law, and promoting transparency and accountability. In Ethiopia, weak institutional capacity hampers the functioning of the parliamentary system. According to [Desta \(2015\)](#), Ethiopia's parliamentary institutions cannot effectively oversee the executive branch, hold it accountable, and ensure checks and balances, limiting their ability to fulfill their constitutional roles.

The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), now succeeded by the Prosperity Party, has dominated Ethiopian politics for decades. The dominance of a single party can hinder the development of a vibrant multi-party system and parliamentary democracy. As [Young \(2018\)](#) noted, Ethiopia's political landscape has been characterized by the hegemony of the ruling party, which has restricted political pluralism and limited the space for opposition parties to operate freely within the parliamentary system.

A robust parliamentary democracy requires respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression, assembly, and association. Restrictions on civil liberties and press freedom in Ethiopia challenge democratic development. [Human Rights Watch \(2020\)](#) has documented restrictions on freedom of expression and association in Ethiopia, including arrests of opposition politicians and journalists, which undermine the functioning of democratic institutions, including the Parliament.

## 6. Conclusion

Invest in building the capacity of parliamentary institutions to carry out their oversight and legislative functions effectively. This includes training MPs, enhancing administrative procedures, and improving resource allocation for parliamentary activities. Create an enabling environment for political pluralism by relaxing restrictions on political parties, fostering a level playing field for competition, and ensuring freedom of expression and association. This can enhance the vibrancy of the political landscape and promote democratic governance.

Strengthen the rule of law by promoting judicial independence, ensuring accountability for human rights violations, and upholding constitutional principles. A robust legal framework is essential for safeguarding democratic institutions and promoting public trust in the parliamentary system. Encourage civic participation and engagement in the democratic process by promoting civic education, supporting civil society organizations, and facilitating public dialogue. An informed and active citizenry is essential for holding government institutions accountable and ensuring democratic governance. By implementing these strategies, Ethiopia can overcome the challenges facing the development of its parliamentary system and advance towards a more inclusive, accountable, and democratic form of governance. These recommendations are supported by academic research and analysis, offering practical insights for policymakers and stakeholders involved in democratic reform efforts.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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