

**ETHNICITY, ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, AND OPPOSITION  
SUPPORT: EVIDENCE FROM ETHIOPIA'S 2005 ELECTIONS**

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Under what conditions will voters support opposition parties in the dominant party systems of sub-Saharan Africa? Scholars generally agree that most of the region's ruling parties manage to win re-election by relying on a set of by now familiar strategies – distributing patronage, exploiting ethnic cleavages, and employing violence (van de Walle 2003; Adejumobi 2000; Diamond and Plattner 1999; Joseph 1997). While the incumbent's deliberate manipulation of the electoral arena is well established in the Africanist literature (Takougang 2003; Makumbe 2002; Crook 1997), we still lack a clear conception of the factors which enable opposition parties to build popular support in countries where democracy has yet to be consolidated. We have no adequate explanation for why some constituencies are more willing to take a risk in opting for an opposition party's candidate over the ruling party's even when it is clear that the government has no intention of leaving office.

Political scientists who examine African elections have ignored such questions mainly for two reasons. First, many regimes across the region fail to meet internationally accepted standards for free and fair elections (Bratton and Posner 1999), so it is assumed that not much insight can be gained from examining the returns from these flawed processes. Second, data at the regional or local level are often unavailable in African countries, so the social and economic factors which may account for variation in party support across a country cannot be easily identified. Indeed, it is only when an alternation in power occurs, as in Senegal in 2000 or Kenya in 2002, that attention is focused on explaining what led voters to back the opposition. The problem with such belated attention is that support for the opposition is then treated as a sudden national phenomenon rather than the result of social or economic trends which may have emerged over time to convince, or enable, voters to switch their support from one party to another.

Ethiopia's 2005 parliamentary elections present a unique opportunity for understanding the factors which lead voters to support the opposition in African countries still undergoing the transition to democracy. Nine elections for a national parliament have been held in Ethiopia under three different regimes since 1957, but the 2005 elections mark the first time that voters have witnessed what approximates multiparty competition.<sup>1</sup> Although the opposition Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) has refused to accept the final election results – and the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) has responded with repressive measures – the results themselves reveal significant patterns of variation that bring into question certain aspects of the conventional wisdom regarding contemporary Ethiopian politics. While ethnic grievances or urban-rural differences are readily cited to account for patterns of opposition to the EPRDF, the results presented in this article show that other factors, such as religious identity and economic conditions, also have a considerable impact on patterns of party support.

I examine in this article how the share of votes received by the major parties at the constituency level were affected by ethno-regional identity as well as economic and socio-demographic variables. Multivariate analyses confirm the importance of ethno-regional identity in determining opposition support, and they also indicate that economic variables play a key role in shaping the opposition's vote share. In constituencies contested by the EPRDF and the CUD, the opposition not only did well in urban areas, but they also made

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<sup>1</sup> Haile Selassie held non-party elections for the Chamber of Deputies in 1957, 1961, 1965, 1969, and 1973. Single-party elections under Mengistu's Workers' Party of Ethiopia were organized for the Shengo in 1987. The EPRDF held national elections for a Constituent Assembly in 1994 and for the House of Peoples' Representatives in 1995 and 2000.

gains in rural areas where farmers use fertilizer more intensely and where khat is intensively cultivated as a cash crop. The EPRDF was favored in constituencies with higher rates of dependence on food aid and predominately Muslim areas of Oromia. The results further show that in constituencies where the EPRDF and CUD competed with the other major opposition coalition, the United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF), ethno-regional variables are still decisive; however, urbanization, the prevalence of poverty, and the levels of food aid dependence are also needed to provide a full account for the variation in party support.

I proceed in this article by first outlining major changes in the Ethiopian party system between the 2000 and 2005 parliamentary elections. I then describe the data and methods used to examine two types of constituencies in the 2005 elections: two-party races contested by the EPRDF and CUD and three-party races contested by the EPRDF, CUD, and UEDF. I move on to discuss the results from the multivariate regression analyses and offer different simulated scenarios to show how changes in social and economic variables could affect electoral outcomes at the constituency level. I conclude with a discussion of implications for Ethiopia's development of party politics and its ongoing political liberalization.

## **POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS SINCE 2000**

Ethiopia's current party system began to take form after the current government led by the EPRDF came to power in 1991, but for several reasons the EPRDF and its affiliates faced little to no competition in the parliamentary elections held since then.<sup>2</sup> Most opposition parties boycotted the first parliamentary elections in 1995. In the 2000 elections, opposition candidates competed in only about half of the country's constituencies, enabling the ten EPRDF parties to claim 516 of 547 seats (94 percent) in the House of Peoples' Representatives.<sup>3</sup> Eleven opposition parties shared 18 seats; 12 others were won by independent parliamentarians who tended to vote with the opposition.<sup>4</sup>

Opposition members have long complained that government harassment, including imprisonment and killings, have prevented them from competing effectively against the EPRDF. The National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), which is responsible for organizing elections and registering parties, has been repeatedly accused by the opposition of

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<sup>2</sup> A multiparty system was introduced for the first time in the country's history by Article 1 of the Charter of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia, which guaranteed citizens the right to participate in political activities and to organize political parties (Transitional Government of Ethiopia 1991). The Transitional Government of Ethiopia formalized the legal status of parties through "Political Parties Registration Proclamation No. 46/1993," later amended by "Political Parties Registration Amendment Proclamation No. 82/1994." Political parties can operate and compete in elections only if they are registered with the NEBE. Proclamation No. 46/1993 sets out the legal definition of a political party as well as the requirements for registering with the NEBE.

<sup>3</sup> The EPRDF is a coalition of ethno-regional parties first formed as Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) was preparing to take power in 1991. Along with the TPLF, the main partners in the EPRDF represent Ethiopia's largest regions: the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), and the Southern Ethiopia Peoples' Democratic Movement (SEPDM). Together, these four EPRDF parties controlled 479 seats in the House of Peoples' Representatives elected in 2000. Six other EPRDF-affiliated parties provided an additional 37 seats to the majority in the HPR, forming part of the government at the federal level and administering their respective regions. These affiliates are the Afar National Democratic Party (ANDP), Argoba Nationality Democratic Organization (ANDO), Benshangul Gumuz People's Democratic Unity Front (BGPDUF), Gambella People's Democratic Movement (GPDm), Harari National League (HNL), and Somali Peoples' Democratic Party (SPDP).

<sup>4</sup> Opposition parties claimed to be reluctant participants in the 2000 elections. Article 38 of the "Political Parties Registration Proclamation No. 46/1993" stipulates that a registered party which fails to participate in two national or regional elections can lose its legal status.

lacking the necessary neutrality for its mission (Pausewang, Tronvoll, and Aalen 2002). Moreover, the weakness of opposition parties themselves prevented them from posing an electoral threat to the ruling party. Divided over questions of ideology and strategy, these parties failed for most of the last 14 years to articulate clear alternatives to EPRDF policies or to reach out to voters in an organized way.

Political developments since the 2000 elections, however, indicate that Ethiopia's party system is becoming more coherent as well as more competitive. First, opposition parties achieved an unprecedented level coordination through their coalition-building efforts. Second, the EPRDF agreed to relatively minor changes in the electoral code which ultimately opened the door to opposition candidates across the country. Ethiopian voters thus enjoyed more choice at the constituency level in the 2005 elections than ever before.

### **The Emergence of Opposition Coalitions**

The formation of two major opposition coalitions – the United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF) and the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) – in the year leading up to the 2005 elections marked a significant shift in the nature of Ethiopian party politics. Opposition parties unsuccessfully attempted to forge broad-based coalitions on at least four different occasions since 1993.<sup>5</sup> The UEDF was established as an opposition coalition in August 2003 after two years of consultations culminated in an all-party conference held in Rockville, Maryland. Fifteen parties, five based in Ethiopia and ten based overseas, came together under the UEDF umbrella for the purpose of challenging the EPRDF in the 2005 elections. The five Ethiopia-based parties in the UEDF were the Southern Ethiopia Peoples' Democratic Coalition (SEPDC), Council of Alternative Forces for Peace and Democracy in Ethiopia (CAFPDE), Oromo National Congress (ONC), All Ethiopia Unity Party (AEUP), and the United Ethiopian Democratic Party (UEDP).<sup>6</sup> The UEDF, however, was also an odd alliance, bringing together parties which hold contradictory positions on the questions of land and ethnicity – the perennial controversies in modern Ethiopian politics. Disputes over leadership, ideology, and strategy eventually led the AEUP and UEDP to withdraw from the coalition a year after it was formed.

The UEDF was led into the elections by two veteran opposition leaders. Its chairman was Merera Gudina, leader of the Oromo National Congress (ONC), and its deputy chairman was Beyene Petros, leader of the Council of Alternative Forces for Peace and Democracy in Ethiopia (CAFPDE). For the 2005 campaign, the UEDF parties adopted a common political program and fielded a joint candidate in parliamentary constituencies. UEDF representatives appeared to have few policy differences with the EPRDF, for they did not openly oppose either the ethnically-based federal system or the existing policy of state-owned land. Critiques from UEDF leaders mainly suggested that the EPRDF's political monopoly had

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<sup>5</sup> The Coalition of Alternative Forces for Peace and Development in Ethiopia (CAFPDE) was formed in December 1993 after two Peace and Reconciliation Conferences were held in Paris and Addis Ababa. The Coalition of Ethiopian Opposition Political Organizations (CEOPO) was established at a September 1998 conference held in Paris. In September 1999, the Ethiopian National Congress (ENC) sponsored its own plan for a united front at a Washington, DC, conference. The Joint Action for Democracy in Ethiopia (JADE) was announced by the AEUP, CAFPDE, and ONC in July 2003 in Addis Ababa.

<sup>6</sup> The ten overseas-based parties allied with the UEDF include such groups as the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), the All Ethiopian Socialist Movement (MEISON), and the Tigray Alliance for Democracy (TAND), none of which are permitted to participate in Ethiopian elections because, according to the EPRDF government, they have not officially renounced armed struggle. UEDF leaders have countered, however, that these parties never declared war on the existing regime, and they have lobbied the EPRDF government to permit these parties to return to Ethiopia and openly participate in electoral politics.

corrupted policy implementation in these areas. The UEDF supported the existing federal structure, coming out in favor of regional self-rule while opposing the idea of secession. UEDF leaders further promised to put in place a transitional government for two years and invite all parties, including the EPRDF, to join them. The purpose of this transitional government would be to promote national reconciliation while laying the foundation for a new democratic system.

The CUD was established as a second opposition front in November 2004 by four parties, including two former members of the UEDF. The CUD comprised the AEUP, UEDP-Medhin, Ethiopian Democratic League (EDL), and Rainbow Ethiopia – Movement for Democracy and Social Justice. Led by Hailu Shawel, the AEUP chairman, the CUD brought together a set of ideologically compatible parties with similar views on major issues. The CUD's principal members, the AEUP and UEDP-Medhin, were among Ethiopia's largest and best organized opposition parties.<sup>7</sup> The AEUP claimed to have nearly 900,000 members across the country, though mainly concentrated in the regions of Amhara and Southern Nations. The UEDP-Medhin claimed to have party offices in many of Ethiopia's major towns, though 60 percent of their members came from Addis Ababa alone. The UEDP-Medhin enjoys particularly strong support among urban youth.

While most Ethiopian parties represent ethnic communities, the CUD sought to distinguish itself in the 2005 elections by claiming to group parties that are multi-ethnic in membership and orientation. Critics from the EPRDF and other opposition parties alleged, however, that the CUD merely sought to return the country to a system that served the interests of the Amhara, Ethiopia's historically dominant ethnic group. Others found fault in the fact that some CUD leaders had served as officials in the Derg regime.

The CUD parties fielded joint candidates chosen by a committee that reviewed their educational background, gender, place of origin, political activities, and leadership experience related to politics. The CUD platform, presented in its election manifesto issued in April 2005, stressed the coalition's policy differences with the EPRDF. The manifesto offered a series of proposed constitutional amendments which CUD leaders claimed would enhance individual rights and democratic practices, including limiting the prime minister to two terms, repealing the House of Federation's powers of constitutional interpretation, and changing the electoral system to proportional representation. The CUD specifically promised to amend Article 40 of the 1995 Constitution in order to allow for the privatization of rural and urban lands and a mixed system of ownership in pastoral areas. The CUD also proposed amending Article 39, which provides for the right of peoples, nations, and nationalities to self-determination, including secession. CUD leaders repeatedly criticized ethnic-based federalism throughout the campaign, claiming it threatens the unity of the Ethiopian state. The coalition supports decentralization and recognition of ethnic diversity, but stated its intention to change the regional administrative boundaries drawn by the EPRDF in order to conform with community preferences, historical affinities, language and settlement patterns, and geography.

### **The Number of Parties**

At the time of the 2000 elections, 79 parties were registered with the NEBE, and only nine were national parties. In the months leading up the 2005 elections, 76 political parties were registered with the NEBE, and 18 of these parties were national parties. While these figures suggest some stability in the total number of registered parties between the two

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<sup>7</sup> Prior to the CUD's formation, these two parties had held inconclusive merger negotiations.

election periods, they mask considerable changes due to the creation, dissolution, and merger of parties over the past five years. About 27 parties have been removed from the NEBE register and another 23 parties have been added since the 2000 elections.

Some of these changes involved the reorganization or merging of EPRDF-related parties. In 2003, after the ethnic clashes in Gambella, the EPRDF-affiliated Gambella People’s Democratic Front (GPDF) was disbanded and replaced by the Gambella People’s Democratic Movement (GPDM), which is itself a coalition at the regional level made up of the newly-established Anywaa People’s Democratic Organization, Mezenger People’s Democratic Organization, and Nuer People’s Democratic Organization. Also in 2003, the 20 ethnically-based parties which made up the Southern Ethiopia People’s Democratic Front (SEPDF), an EPRDF member, were formally merged into a single party, the Southern Ethiopia People’s Democratic Movement (SEPDM).

Among the opposition parties, the All Amhara People’s Organization (AAPO) split over whether to remain an ethnically-based party in 2002, leading one faction to rename itself the All Ethiopian Unity Party (AEUP) and another faction to establish a new party under the AAPO name.<sup>8</sup> A series of mergers among another group of parties – the Ethiopian Democratic Party, the Ethiopian Democratic Action Group, the Ethiopian Democratic Unity, and the Ethiopian Medhin Democratic Party – eventually produced the United Ethiopia Democratic Party-Medhin (UEDP-Medhin).

Among the 76 parties registered with the NEBE, 35 competed in the 2005 elections for the House of People’s Representatives. This appears to be an overall decline in the number of competing parties when compared to the 49 parties that participated in 2000. However, the figure for the 2000 elections can be revised to 34 parties if members of the Southern Ethiopia People’s Democratic Front (SEPDF) are counted as a single party in 2000. As Table 1 shows, there is significant variation among the regions in terms of the number of parties competing for seats in the House of People’s Representatives. Their number increased somewhat in most regions, including Addis Ababa, Amhara, Harari, and Oromia. The increase was particularly significant in the regions of Afar, Benshangul, and Tigray, where no opposition parties competed in 2000.

**Table 1: Parties Competing for House of People’s Representatives**

	Number of Parties	
	2000	2005
Addis Ababa	11	13
Afar	1	5
Amhara	5	6
Benshangul	1	2
Dire Dawa	4	3
Gambella	2	1
Harari	3	6
Oromia	8	10
Southern*	12	12
Tigray	1	3

\*The EPRDF affiliates in Southern are counted as a single party in 2000.

Table 1 hints at the fact that most parties tend to compete in only one region of the country. In the 2005 elections, 23 of the 35 parties competed in a single region. Seven parties

<sup>8</sup> The AAPO was founded in 1991 by Asrat Woldeyes to defend Amhara interests in the ethnic-based political system created by the EPRDF. Many of the leaders in both the AEUP and UEDP-Medhin first became involved in post-1991 politics through the AAPO.

competed in two regions; six of these seven parties fielded candidates in Addis Ababa plus one other region. Only the EPRDF – through its member and affiliated parties – fielded candidates in all regions of the country. Among the opposition parties, the CUD managed to contest parliamentary seats in nine regions; it had no candidates in Gambella. The opposition UEDF competed in six regions, but had none in Afar, Benshangul, Gambella, and Dire Dawa.

### The Number of Party Candidates

While the number of parties competing for the House of People’s Representatives has increased only slightly between the 2000 and 2005 elections, the number of party-nominated candidates more than doubled across the country. The increase is mainly due to the improved participation by opposition parties and the ability of the two opposition coalitions in particular, UEDF and CUD, to field candidates in nearly 84 percent of the country’s constituencies. In contrast to the 2000 elections in which EPRDF candidates ran unopposed in nearly half of the country’s constituencies – there were no opposition party candidates in Afar, Benshangul, or Tigray – the number of constituencies with unopposed EPRDF candidates dropped to about 11 percent of all constituencies.

Table 2 below shows that the greatest increase was seen in Afar, where the number of candidates more than tripled from eight in the 2000 elections to 27 in 2005. Party candidates also more than doubled in the three most populous regions – Oromia, Amhara, and Southern Nations. In Amhara, for example, EPRDF candidates faced an opposition party candidate in fewer than 10 percent of the region’s constituencies for the 2000 elections. The situation was reversed in the 2005 elections: only about 5 percent of the region’s constituencies had an unopposed EPRDF candidate.

**Table 2: Party Candidates for House of People’s Representatives\***

	Number of Seats	Number of Party Candidates		
		2000	2005	% Change
Addis Ababa	23	80	145	81
Afar	8	8	27	238
Amhara	138	146	331	127
Benshangul	9	9	15	67
Dire Dawa	2	6	4	-33
Gambella	3	3	3	0
Harari	2	5	7	40
Oromia	178	218	490	125
Southern	123	184	398	116
Tigray	38	38	73	92
<b>Total</b>	<b>524</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>1493</b>	<b>114</b>

\*Note: Data for the 23 seats for Somali region are not included.

The growth in the number of opposition party candidates was not produced by any dramatic legal or constitutional reforms. UEDF leaders had begun negotiating with the EPRDF in November 2004 over conditions necessary for holding free and fair elections, but the EPRDF-controlled House of Peoples’ Representatives eventually adopted a watered-down version of their proposals in an amended electoral law on 18 January 2005.<sup>9</sup> Although

<sup>9</sup> UEDF leaders focused on proposals in three main areas. First, they argued for the establishment of an independent election commission to replace the existing NEBE, increasing the number of members from seven to 11 and limiting their tenure to five years. Second, they proposed amending the existing electoral law by removing the article requiring party candidates to produce a list of 500 endorsement signatures in order to register for the election. Opposition parties had long complained that kebele officials used this list to intimidate

the opposition criticized the changes as being insufficient, the amended electoral law did repeal the provision requiring endorsement signatures for party candidates. Opposition parties had long complained that local officials used the signature list to harass their supporters, or that they simply disqualified enough signatures to declare opposition candidates ineligible. The amended electoral law also gave opposition parties the right to call meetings and stage demonstrations during an election period without requesting the permission from local authorities beforehand. Taken together, these changes effectively removed the power of local authorities to control the opposition's access to the ballot or to the public.<sup>10</sup>

The enhanced appeal of being an opposition party candidate may also be reflected in changes seen in the number of independents competing for the House of People's Representatives, which decreased nationally by 6 percent from 2000 to 2005. Independents represented 35 percent of all candidates for the federal parliament in the 2000 elections. This share fell to 19 percent in the 2005 elections. Table 3 shows that although the number of independent candidates increased in eight of ten regions, this was more than offset by the decrease in Oromia. In the 2000 elections, 49 percent of all independent candidates in the country were competing in Oromia constituencies; however, in 2005, the region's proportion of independents fell to 27 percent of the national total.

**Table 3: Independent Candidates for House of People's Representatives\***

	Number of Independent Candidates		% Change
	2000	2005	
Addis Ababa	81	92	14
Afar	2	1	-50
Amhara	49	75	53
Benshangul	9	26	189
Dire Dawa	10	11	10
Gambella	0	1	
Harari	2	4	100
Oromia	185	97	-48
Southern	34	35	3
Tigray	4	11	175
<b>Total</b>	<b>376</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>-6</b>

\*Note: Candidates for Somali region are not included in these calculations.

## The Election Results

The final election results, which are still contested by the major opposition parties as of this writing, gave Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's EPRDF and its affiliates a total of 372 seats in the 547-member parliament, providing them with more than enough seats to form a government for the next five-year term. The four EPRDF parties won 327 seats. Another 45 seats were contributed to the EPRDF majority by its six affiliates: ANDP 8, ANDO 1, BGPDUF 8, GPDM 3, HNL 1, and SPDP 24.

Opposition forces won a combined 174 seats. This result is an impressive gain for the opposition, which held 30 seats in the outgoing parliament. Of the opposition total, the CUD

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or harass their supporters. Third, the UEDF proposed changing the country's electoral formula from a first-past-the-post system to proportional representation, claiming it unjustly denied representation to large segments of the population. CUD leaders refused to join the UEDF in negotiating with the EPRDF over conditions for the 2005 elections.

<sup>10</sup> The requirement of 1,000 endorsement signatures for independent candidates was left unchanged. The residency requirement for candidates was reduced from five to two years, and the residency requirement for voters was reduced from two years to six months.

took 109 seats and the UEDF 52 seats. Eleven opposition seats were claimed by the Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement (OFDM), one seat by the Sheko and Mezenger People's Democratic Unity Party (SMPDUO), and one seat by an independent candidate, former President Negasso Gidada.

**Table 4: Seats Won by Major Parties**

	<b>EPRDF</b>	<b>CUD</b>	<b>UEDF</b>	<b>Others</b>
Addis Ababa		23		
Afar	8			
Amhara	88	50		
Benshangul	8	1		
Dire Dawa	1	1		
Gambella	3			
Harari	2			
Oromia*	109	16	41	11
Somali	23			
Southern	92	18	12	1
Tigray	38			
<b>National</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>12</b>

\*Arsi Negele's seat goes unfilled due to the killing of the UEDF parliamentarian-elect. A by-election is scheduled.

The summary results shown in Table 4 clearly reflect the patterns of ethno-regional support for the major opposition parties. Each of coalition has an obvious ethno-regional base: Amhara and Addis Ababa together provided the CUD with 67 percent of its parliamentary seats, while Oromia accounted for 79 percent of UEDF parliamentary seats. By contrast, the opposition parties won only one of the 43 seats in the four outlying regions of Afar, Benshangul, Gambella, and Somali.

The nature of party competition differs from one region to the next. Parliamentary races in Amhara were essentially two-party contests between the EPRDF and the CUD, setting aside the participation of independent candidates. Among Amhara's 138 constituencies, the EPRDF and CUD went head-to-head in 81 or 59 percent of constituencies. And in the 52 constituencies in which the EPRDF and CUD were joined by the UEDF, the UEDF candidate on average gained only 3.7 percent of the vote. All 50 opposition seats won in Amhara were claimed by the CUD, which provides some evidence for assertions made by Hailu Shawel's AEUP regarding the development of a rural network of supporters in that region well ahead of the 2005 elections.

Parliamentary races in Oromia were not only contested by a larger number of parties than in Amhara, but opposition support in the region also appears to be more fragmented. With 41 of 177 seats, the UEDF won 23 percent of constituencies in this region, the largest share among opposition parties. The CUD won 16 seats, nine percent of all constituencies, and the OFDM took another 11 seats, six percent of all constituencies. The OFDM, which fielded parliamentary candidates in Addis Ababa and Oromia on a platform emphasizing a defense of Oromo culture and language, became the only opposition party outside the two main coalitions to gain a significant share of seats. Within Oromia, OFDM's base of support was concentrated in party leader Bulcha Demeksa's zone: six of its 11 seats come from West Wellega.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> It remains an open question why opposition parties representing the Oromo remained divided in the period leading up to the 2005 elections. While some segment of the Oromo elite remain sympathetic to the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), no other Oromo party has yet to attract the same kind of support across the region. The most prominent, the Oromo National Congress (ONC), has struggled to gain a following beyond its founder

The CUD and UEDF essentially split opposition support in Southern Nations, partly reflecting the ethnic bases of party leadership. The CUD took 18 seats, 15 percent of the 123 constituencies in the region. Ten of these seats came from Gurage zone, home to the ethnic kin of Berhanu Nega, the chairman of the CUD election campaign. The CUD gained four seats in Gamo Gofa, two in Welayita, and one each in Gedeo and Awasa. The UEDF won in 12 constituencies or about 10 percent of all seats. Seven of these victories came from Hadiya zone, which the region of Beyene Petros, the UEDF deputy chairman. The UEDF's five other seats came from Kembata Tembaro zone.

## A CONSTITUENCY-LEVEL ANALYSIS

### Data and Methods

Are ethnicity and region enough to explain patterns of opposition support across Ethiopian constituencies? What other factors affected the share of votes received by the major parties? I attempt to provide answers to these questions by estimating linear regression models of party support at the constituency level. I use a unique dataset which includes data for a sample of 323 out of Ethiopia's 547 parliamentary constituencies. The data are based on publicly available information from the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia, the Central Statistical Authority, the Central Agricultural Census Commission, and the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2004; 2003; 1998).<sup>12</sup>

The dependent variable is the percentage of the vote received by each of the major parties at the constituency level.<sup>13</sup> Constituencies are divided into two groups and analyzed independently. The first group of 155 constituencies are those in which the EPRDF and CUD were the only major contestants. The second group of 168 constituencies were contested by all three coalitions – the EPRDF, CUD, and UEDF. Each party's vote share is then estimated separately in order to allow for the possibility that certain variables may have different effects on the individual parties.

The explanatory variables used in this analysis are coded at the constituency level. The socio-demographic variables are the constituency's region, ethnic fractionalization as a measure of local diversity, the percentage of Muslims, and the percentage of the urban population. I also add an interactive variable to control for the possibility that party support is partially determined by the overlay of Muslim and Oromo identities. The economic variables are the percentage of population living below the poverty line, the percentage of the population receiving food aid, the average amount of fertilizer used per hectare by local farmers, and whether the locality is a khat or coffee producer. Other variables include voter turnout and the average number of voters per polling station. Tables 5 and 6 report descriptive statistics for the two samples.

As Table 5 shows for the sample of two-party contests between the EPRDF and CUD, 26 percent of the constituencies are located in Oromia and another 17 percent are located in

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Merera Gudina's West Shoa zone. And since the 2000 elections, the ONC has been more active in working with parties outside Oromia than in building links with other Oromo parties.

<sup>12</sup> Election results are available at the NEBE website: <http://www.electionsethiopia.org>.

<sup>13</sup> Vote shares for the major parties are obtained after subtracting annulled votes and votes for independent and minor party candidates from the total vote count in each constituency. Independent and minor party candidates generally represented a small fraction of the total vote. All independent candidates combined, on average, received about two percent of the total vote in constituencies. Similarly, minor party candidates received, on average, a combined four percent of the total vote in constituencies.

Southern Nations. Muslims represent, on average, 28.99 percent of a constituency's total population; this figure ranges from zero percent in some constituencies to nearly 98.68 percent in others. The urban population in a constituency is about 11.95 percent on average. The percentage of individuals living below the poverty line is 42.93 percent on average. Food aid recipients account, on average, for 9.59 percent of a constituency's total population. Among all constituencies in this sample, 21 percent are khat producers and another 33 percent are coffee producers. Farmers use an average of 0.77 quintals per hectare; this number ranges from zero to 2.04 quintals per hectare. Voter turnout in these constituencies was 83.46 percent on average. The average number of voters per polling station in these constituencies was 868, ranging from 178 to 1273 voters.

**Table 5. Descriptive Statistics for EPRDF-CUD Contests (N=155)**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
Constituency located in Oromia	0.26			
Constituency located in Southern Nations	0.17			
Ethnic Fractionalization	0.20	0.21	0	0.80
Muslim Population (% total)	28.99	34.00	0	98.68
Urban Population (% total)	11.95	18.00	0	100.00
Population Below Poverty Line (% total)	42.93	8.07	31.38	65.28
Population Receiving Food Aid (% total)	9.59	14.36	0	100.00
Fertilizer Use (quintals/hectare)	0.77	0.48	0	2.04
Khat-producing Constituency	0.21			
Coffee-producing Constituency	0.33			
Voter Turnout (% registered voters)	83.46	8.04	55	99
Registered Voters per Polling Station	867.58	205.16	178.16	1273.92

Table 6 shows that the sample used in the analysis of EPRDF-CUD-UEDF contests differs somewhat from the EPRDF-CUD contests: more constituencies are located in Southern Nations, the average Muslim population smaller, and the average urban population larger. The average percentage of food aid recipients is lower as is the average use fertilizer by farmers. There are proportionally fewer khat-producing constituencies but more coffee-producing constituencies. Voter turnout is also slightly lower in these three-party races, and the average number of voters per polling station larger.

**Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for EPRDF-CUD-UEDF Contests (N=168)**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
Constituency located in Oromia	0.22			
Constituency located in Southern Nations	0.37			
Ethnic Fractionalization	0.27	0.25	0	0.82
Muslim Population (% total)	20.48	31.54	0.42	98.39
Urban Population (% total)	23.79	33.16	0	100.00
Population Below Poverty Line (% total)	44.69	11.14	14.9	65.77
Population Receiving Food Aid (% total)	6.48	9.74	0	53.88
Fertilizer Use (quintals/hectare)	0.55	0.49	0	1.85
Khat-producing Constituency	0.14			
Coffee-producing Constituency	0.40			
Voter Turnout (% registered voters)	79.68	9.87	48	99
Registered Voters per Polling Station	941.48	277.70	78.48	2938.05

Before moving on to a discussion of the linear regression models, three caveats are in order. First, the explanatory power of this analysis is limited by the very fact that these multiparty elections were Ethiopia's first. Comparable studies of elections in developed countries attain much of their explanatory power by controlling for a party's vote share in previous elections; that is, Democrats will tend to do well in constituencies where they already performed well in the past. Second, due to data limitations, the variables used here help to explain how conditions in Ethiopian constituencies at a fixed moment in time may affect party support. They show, for example, how party support changes as the percentage of people living under the poverty line varies across constituencies. They cannot show how party support is affected by economic changes within a constituency over the past five years.

The third caveat involves the reasonable doubt concerning the validity of the final election results issued by the NEBE. The principal source of controversy stems from the manner in which the complaints investigation process was handled by the NEBE.<sup>14</sup> Complaints were filed in 299 of 523 constituencies, that is, 57 percent of all constituencies contested in the May elections. The manner in which the NEBE handled the investigation

<sup>14</sup> Another source of uncertainty is due to the high percentage of invalid votes. Nationally, approximately 14 percent of all votes cast were annulled by election officials, meaning they were not allocated to any candidate for various reasons – e.g., a voter's mark did not clearly indicate which candidate she supported. Ethiopia's percentage of invalid votes ranks it among the worst performers in Africa. Data from 42 parliamentary elections held since 1990 indicate that the average level for invalid votes across Africa is 3.6 percent. The significance of these invalid votes is linked to their potential impact on the distribution of parliamentary seats among the parties. Of the 523 seats distributed through the May 2005 elections, the number of invalid votes was greater than the number of votes separating the first and second-place candidates in 93 constituencies. The EPRDF claimed 57 of the 93 seats. The rest were divided among the main opposition parties: CUD 22 seats, UEDF 11 seats, and OFDM 3 seats.

process remains was critiqued by the opposition parties and foreign observers, especially since 18 seats won by the opposition in the first election were awarded to the EPRDF through re-run elections held entirely or partially in 31 constituencies. Nevertheless, the Carter Center observation mission concluded that the “majority of the constituency results based on the May 15 polling and tabulation are credible and reflect competitive conditions” (The Carter Center 2005).

### **Analysis of EPRDF-CUD Contests**

I begin the analysis of two-party contests between the EPRDF and CUD by estimating how the socio-demographic and economic variables affect the CUD’s vote share. As shown in Table 7, I build up to a complete model by progressively adding variables and then removing those which are shown to be statistically insignificant. The results discussed here are based on the coefficient estimates from column 4, the complete model.

The results in Table 7 indicate that, as is conventionally assumed, support for the CUD was strongly affected by ethno-regional identities. Constituencies in Southern Nations voted for the CUD at lower rates than the rest of the country. The same is true of Oromia, but not as a whole. It was in mostly Muslim constituencies of Oromia that the CUD fared especially poorly. For example, a CUD candidate running against an EPRDF candidate in Oromia could expect to lose 3.1 percent of the vote with a 10 percent increase in the local Muslim population, holding all other variables constant. It would seem that efforts by the EPRDF and other opposition parties to depict the CUD as an Orthodox, Amhara party did resonate with Muslim voters in Oromia.

Less understood is the degree to which economic variables shaped CUD support. With the exception of the indicator variable for coffee-growing constituencies, all economic variables in Table 7 are statistically significant, and they substantially improve the model’s explanatory power. What is more, these economic variables help to tease out the complex relationship between the government and Ethiopian society under persistent economic crisis. On the one hand, a 10 percent increase in the number of people living below the poverty line in a constituency is associated with a 5.9 percent increase in support for the CUD, holding all other variables constant. It would seem that for such voters, the 2005 election was a referendum on the EPRDF’s economic record. But on the other hand, a 10 percent increase in the number of people receiving food aid in a constituency is associated with a 4.9 percent decrease in support for the CUD, *ceteris paribus*. Ethiopians who depend on the state for their basic food requirements are evidently voting for the ruling party, but the motivation is not clear: they may do so out of their own belief that only the EPRDF can ensure the continuation of such assistance, or local officials may have suggested that aid would be withdrawn unless they vote for the EPRDF.

The rural-urban split is typically thought to distinguish the EPRDF and CUD’s respective bases of support. The CUD sweep of Addis Ababa, in particular, dramatized the extent of urban support enjoyed by the CUD, and this is reflected in the linear regression model. Historically, the extension of the Ethiopian state has also meant that most urban centers in the country, even in the southern half of the country, will have a significant concentration of ethnic Amharas, which tend to favor the CUD. However, I also find greater variation among rural constituencies in their willingness to vote for the opposition. Constituencies with higher average levels of fertilizer tend to favor the CUD over the EPRDF. This finding contradicts claims repeatedly asserted by opposition leaders regarding the ability of local officials to threaten voters with the withdrawal of fertilizer or the recall of loans for past fertilizer purchases. Farmers with higher levels of fertilizer dependence would

be expected to vote for the EPRDF at higher rates if such threats were being made and were credible, but the results here point in the opposite direction. Similarly, khat cultivators are opting for the CUD over the EPRDF. Khat is a lucrative cash crop which has grown in popularity in recent years, but for these very reasons, the crop has been increasingly taxed by the government. The preference of khat cultivators for the CUD may be a response to these actions.

Higher levels of voter turnout favor the EPRDF. A 10 percent increase in a constituency's voter turnout is associated with a 7.2 percent decrease in the CUD vote share, holding all else equal. It is not apparent whether this relationship indicates the use of coercive measures by local officials in getting out the vote, as some opposition members claim, or whether it simply reflects the mobilization of sincere EPRDF supporters who feared their party would be voted out of office.

**Table 7. Estimated Coefficients of Linear Regression Models of CUD Vote Share**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Constituency located in Oromia	8.76 (6.47)			
Constituency located in Southern Nations	-3.62 (4.33)	-10.87** (5.25)	-16.62** (5.25)	-15.85*** (4.80)
Ethnic Fractionalization	20.84*** (7.81)	-11.07 (8.86)	-8.27 (8.78)	
Muslim Population (% total)	-0.00 (0.07)			
Muslim Population (% total) in Oromia	-0.50*** (0.11)	-0.39*** (0.06)	-0.30*** (0.06)	-0.31*** (0.06)
Urban Population (% total)		0.47*** (0.10)	0.49*** (0.09)	0.45*** (0.08)
Population Below Poverty Line (% total)		0.58*** (0.20)	0.54*** (0.19)	0.59*** (0.18)
Population Receiving Food Aid (% total)		-0.56*** (0.11)	-0.49*** (0.11)	-0.49*** (0.09)
Fertilizer Use (quintals/hectare)		7.53** (3.17)	7.29** (3.14)	8.59*** (3.03)
Khat-producing Constituency		12.48** (5.06)	11.13** (4.89)	9.90** (4.61)
Coffee-producing Constituency		-0.08 (3.32)	0.31 (3.20)	
Voter Turnout (% registered voters)			-0.85*** (0.22)	-0.72*** (0.20)
Registered Voters per Polling Station			-0.01* (0.01)	
Intercept	42.86*** (2.55)	17.44* (9.34)	100.18*** (24.76)	73.86*** (17.84)
R <sup>2</sup>	.31	.49	.54	.53

Note: N=155. Standard errors are in parentheses. Significance levels: \* p<.10, \*\* p<.05, \*\*\* p<.01.

The results reported in Table 7 indicate that, on the whole, CUD support in two-party races is the product of both ethno-regional and economic factors. The simulated scenarios in Table 8 illustrate how changes in these variables can influence the CUD's vote share in a constituency.<sup>15</sup> Consider a hypothetical constituency in Oromia, a region in which neither the CUD or EPRDF is thought to have an advantage, with all variables set to the regional average: Muslims represent 42.7 percent of the population, 13.6 percent of the population is urban, 39.4 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, and 5.69 percent of the local population receives food aid. This is not a khat-producing constituency. Farmers use nearly a quintal of fertilizer per hectare. Voter turnout is 88.1 percent. Under such conditions, the CUD could expect to win, on average, about 31.7 percent of the vote in that constituency.

Now consider the changes made to some of the key variables, as shown in Table 8, while holding all other variables at their mean values. If this hypothetical constituency's Muslim population is lowered to the regional minimum of zero percent, then the CUD vote share rises to 45.18 percent; if the Muslim population is increased to the regional maximum of 97.34 percent, the CUD vote share plummets to 14.56 percent. In a constituency where khat is not extensively cultivated as a cash crop, the CUD vote share is expected to be about 31.71 percent. If khat were to be cultivated in this constituency, the CUD would then win 41.6 percent of the vote.

**Table 8. Simulated CUD Vote Shares for an Average Constituency in Oromia**

	Party Vote (%)
	CUD
<b>Muslim Population (% total)</b>	
Minimum (0.0)	45.18
Maximum (97.34)	14.56
<b>Urban Population (% total)</b>	
Minimum (0.0)	25.68
Maximum (100.0)	70.97
<b>Population Below Poverty Line (% total)</b>	
Minimum (31.38)	27.04
Maximum (65.28)	46.87
<b>Fertilizer Use (quintals/hectare)</b>	
Minimum (0.0)	23.82
Maximum (2.04)	41.60
<b>Khat-producing Constituency</b>	
Non-producer	31.71
Producer	41.60

<sup>15</sup> The simulated values were generated with CLARIFY, a software used to draw 1,000 values for each parameter and provide confidence intervals for point estimates (Tomz, Wittenberg, and King 2001).

## Analysis of EPRDF-CUD-UEDF Contests

I now turn to examining constituencies which were contested by all three major parties – the EPRDF, CUD, and UEDF. The variables used in the previous analysis are again used here. An indicator variable for constituencies located in Oromia is also added. Unlike the two-party races between the EPRDF and CUD, it seems that the Oromo ethno-regional identity does come into play when the UEDF joins the parliamentary race in a constituency. More generally, as shown in Table 8, a variable can have very different effects on voter support for the individual parties, even when considering only the two opposition coalitions.

As in the earlier analysis, the ethno-regional variables account for much of the variation in party support. Among constituencies with three-party contests, those located in Oromia and Southern Nations voted for the CUD at lower rates than the rest of the country. The opposite is true for the UEDF. The impact on the EPRDF is mixed: Oromia constituencies voted for the ruling party at lower rates, but constituencies in Southern Nations did so at higher rates. Again, the CUD is particularly penalized in Muslim constituencies in Oromia, though the UEDF suffers no such effect. By contrast, the EPRDF gets a bonus in Muslim areas of Oromia. This may partly be due to the social profile of the leaders in the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), the local EPRDF party. Many of the EPRDF's high-profile Oromo members come from the region's Muslim areas.

Not all opposition parties do well in urban areas. While CUD support increases along with levels of urbanization, the UEDF enjoys no such relationship. The EPRDF loses approximately four percent of the vote with a 10 percent increase in the urban population, all else equal.

Regarding the impact of economic variables, the most interesting pattern shown in Table 8 is that they have opposite implications for CUD and UEDF voter support. The CUD continues to gain in areas where a relatively larger proportion of the population lives under the poverty line. The UEDF, by contrast, loses about four percent of the vote with each 10 percent increase in the proportion of the population living below the poverty line. And the same relationship holds true for the EPRDF. This suggests that Ethiopian voters may not only be treating the election as a referendum on the EPRDF's economic record, but that they may also be able to distinguish between the economic programs offered by the opposition parties. In party debates broadcast on television and radio during the election campaign, CUD representatives drew sharp distinctions between their own economic proposals and those of the EPRDF, while UEDF leaders seemed to be closer to the EPRDF in their approach to the land tenure and economic development.

Higher levels of food aid dependence favor the EPRDF in three-way contests. This time, however, it is the UEDF that pays the biggest electoral cost. A 10 percent increase in the number of people receiving food aid is associated with a three percent decrease in the UEDF vote share. The impact of this variable on the CUD appears to be statistically insignificant in three-way races.

Conversely, it is now the UEDF that appears to gain the support of khat cultivators at the expense of the EPRDF, which loses nearly 10 percent of the vote in such constituencies, holding other variables constant. The effect on the CUD is statistically indistinguishable from zero. Why would khat cultivators, who seem to be consistently voting against the EPRDF in both two-party and three-party contests, shift their votes from the CUD to the UEDF? The bulk of khat production takes place in Oromia, and in two-way races, khat cultivators may simply have been giving their vote to the CUD in protest. But they may prefer to go with the "local" party when a UEDF candidate is an option.

**Table 9. Estimated Coefficients of Linear Regression Models of EPRDF-CUD-UEDF Vote Shares**

Variables	CUD	UEDF	EPRDF
Constituency located in Oromia	-24.11*** (4.28)	42.40*** (4.73)	-18.29*** (4.82)
Constituency located in Southern Nations	-32.22*** (3.66)	19.85*** (4.06)	12.37*** (4.14)
Muslim Population (% total) in Oromia	-0.20** (0.08)	-0.04 (0.09)	0.24*** (0.09)
Urban Population (% total)	0.48*** (0.05)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.44*** (0.05)
Population Below Poverty Line (% total)	0.77*** (0.15)	-0.41** (0.17)	-0.37** (0.17)
Population Receiving Food Aid (% total)	0.05 (0.15)	-0.33** (0.17)	0.28* (0.17)
Khat-producing Constituency	2.28 (3.91)	7.69* (4.32)	-9.97** (4.41)
Voter Turnout (% registered voters)	-0.03 (0.15)	-0.56*** (0.16)	0.59*** (0.16)
Intercept	11.05 (13.74)	67.12*** (15.20)	21.83 (15.50)
R <sup>2</sup>	.69	.50	.45

Note: N=168. Standard errors are in parentheses. Significance levels: \* p<.10, \*\* p<.05, \*\*\* p<.01.

The effects of these variables are best illustrated through simulated scenarios. This time I focus on a hypothetical constituency in Southern Nations, where the EPRDF was generally much stronger than either the CUD or UEDF, with all relevant variables set to the regional average: 8.5 percent of the population is urban, 51.5 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, and 8.67 percent of the local population receives food aid. This is not a khat-producing constituency. Voter turnout is 77.2 percent. Under these conditions, the CUD could expect to win, on average, about 21.09 percent of the vote, the UEDF 19.83 percent, and the EPRDF 59.47 percent.

Table 10 shows how the party vote shares would change with different values on the key explanatory variables. By increasing the urban population in the hypothetical constituency sketched above to the regional maximum of 30.8 percent, the EPRDF vote share falls below 50 percent, much of which is transferred to the CUD. The UEDF experiences a negligible drop in its vote share. If the number of people living below the poverty line is raised to the regional maximum of 65.8 percent, the net gain in votes goes to the CUD at the expense of both other parties, though the EPRDF still manages to hold onto its majority. When the percentage of people receiving food aid is increased to the regional maximum of 48.2 percent, the EPRDF expands its winning margin, most of which it takes from the UEDF.

**Table 10. Simulated Party Vote Shares for an Average Constituency in Southern Nations**

	Party Vote (%)		
	CUD	UEDF	EPRDF
<b>Urban Population (% total)</b>			
Minimum (0.0)	17.03	19.93	63.08
Maximum (30.8)	31.75	18.74	49.68
<b>Population Below Poverty Line (% total)</b>			
Minimum (34.6)	3.96	26.99	69.41
Maximum (65.8)	27.95	14.30	57.93
<b>Population Receiving Food Aid (% total)</b>			
Minimum (0.0)	20.66	22.45	56.83
Maximum (48.2)	23.13	6.57	70.81
<b>Khat-producing Constituency</b>			
Non-producer	21.09	19.83	59.47
Producer	19.20	27.89	53.26

## CONCLUSION

The May 2005 elections mark a significant evolution in Ethiopia's political development. The EPRDF-led government made small, but important changes to the electoral law which enabled opposition parties to field more candidates than they might have otherwise. And not only were opposition parties seriously participating in the electoral process for the first time, but they also achieved a degree of cohesion through their coalition-building efforts that made them a viable choice for many voters, as indicated by the election results. In a country with no history of democratic competition or peaceful alternation in power, it is no small feat that nearly a third of constituencies, if election results are accepted as they are, opted for the opposition over the EPRDF.

This article has sought to underscore that ethno-regional factors alone cannot fully account for the variation in party support across Ethiopia's constituencies. Without survey data on voters, it cannot be known at this point whether individuals were casting votes based on policy alternatives represented by the parties or seeking to punish the incumbent party for its economic record. Nevertheless, the results presented in this article indicate that opposition support in Ethiopia is not merely an ethnic or urban phenomenon. Economic and other socio-demographic factors played a part in determining party choice at the constituency level.

The finding that economic differences across constituencies influenced patterns of party support provides new insights into the politics of post-Derg Ethiopia. Rather than assuming opposition support solely depends on urban and ethnic bases, students of Ethiopian politics – as well as the parties themselves – must now turn to understanding how economic change is affecting the traditional composition of political coalitions. What should be particularly interesting in the Ethiopian context is this paper's finding that economic cleavages within the rural electorate – defined here by the type of cash crop grown or the level of dependence on chemical fertilizers – exhibit different patterns of party support and could be further exploited in the future.

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