

Observation no: 206

Country-year: 1997

1. Did the current regime come to power in a military coup?

No.

Both the Prime Minister and President were members of the EPRDF, which came to power after a quasi-civil war between the EPRDF and the ruling military junta.

2. Has the country ever experienced a military coup?

Yes.

Ethiopia experienced coups in 1960 and in 1974, which led to a military led regime up until the early 90s.

3. Is the country's top leader a former military officer?

No.

While Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was affiliated with former rebel military groups, he was associated with the political element of the group and does not have significant bona fides as a military member. Similarly, the President does not have experience as a former military officer.

4. Is the military officer corps largely closed to those who do not share the leader's ethnic or sectarian background?

No.

Scholarly analyses of the Ethiopian military post-1991 suggest that the government made a significant effort to appoint military officers from a diverse set of backgrounds and ethnicities.¹ However, anecdotal reporting indicates that the reality may be that the senior military corps is dominated by ethnic Tigreans (reporting online suggests 93.5% of senior military officers were Tigrean).²

¹ Luckham, "Soldiers, Armies, and the Nation-State in Ethiopia and Eritrea," pg. 262.

² "The Total Domination of the Ethiopian Army by Ethnic Tigrean Officers," *Ginbot 7 Movement for Freedom and Democracy*, May 30, 2009. Accessed 22 May 2015: <http://www.ginbot7.org/the-total-domination-of-the-ethiopian-army-by-ethnic-tigrean-officers/>.

5. Are there strict ideological requirements for entry into the senior officer corps?

No.

I could find no official requirements regarding ideology; however, most of the senior officer corps initially started in the EPRDF's militia forces and likely shared similar views on the political goals of the country.

6. Is party membership required for entry into the senior officer corps?

No.

Starting in 1995, all officers were required to resign their positions in the EPRDF in order to separate political entities from the military.³

7. Does military training involve extensive political education or ideological indoctrination?

No.

Military training in Ethiopia post-1991 focused on professionalization of the military and separation from political or ideological education.⁴

8. Has the military been used to repress internal dissent in the last five years?

Yes.

Reports claim EPRDF soldiers (government soldiers) were involved in operations against the Oromo ethnic group.⁵

9. Has the military been used to govern the country in the last five years?

No.

³ Ibid, pg. 263.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Mohammed Hassen. "Conquest, Tyranny, and Ethnocide against the Oromo: A Historical Assessment of Human Rights Conditions in Ethiopia, ca. 1880s-2002." *Northeast African Studies* 9, no. 3 (2007): 15-49.

From 1992-1997, civilian governments governed Ethiopia.

10. Is there a paramilitary organization separate from the regular military, used to provide regime or leader security?

No.

While the previous Derg regime boasted a significant paramilitary force and the EPRDF also functioned largely as a paramilitary force in the civil war period, I could find no evidence suggesting a paramilitary force that continued once the EPRDF gained legitimate power in Ethiopia leading up to 1997 (there is now a paramilitary force that was created in 2009).

11. Is there an internal intelligence apparatus dedicated to watching the regular military?

No.

I could find no evidence of an internal intelligence apparatus and this may have been a function of the extreme re-organization occurring within the Ethiopian armed forces and security apparatus during this time.

12. Has a purge of the officer corps occurred in the last five years?

No.

The Ethiopian military was largely in a state of re-building from 1992 to 1997 in which the EPRDF transitioned its militia forces into a professionalized force; there was no rank structure in the militia and therefore it is difficult to characterize any shaping during this period as purging.

13. Is there an institutionalized forum through which civilian leaders and military officers regularly exchange information?

No.

I could find no evidence of an institutionalized forum and none is outlined in the constitution, though a National Security Council was formed in 2000 and significant detail towards security organization was released in a security directive that year.