

# Towards Forming a More Perfect Union

By

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The preamble to the Constitution of the United States of America starts *we the people of the United States in order to form a more perfect union* and then goes on to outline its foundational philosophies and values. This language emanates from an interest in making an indivisible compact between members and a covenant for groups and of individuals to share in the blessings of the nation through good times or bad. The same language exists in the American pledge of allegiance and has deep meaning. It is an oath or a promise. With their hands on their hearts Americans pledge *we are one nation under God indivisible with liberty and justice for all* and these words show what it means to be an American.

France in its Constitution also says that France is *indivisible* meaning they are unified. Their connection and their nation is a deliberately formed a perfect union.

Kenya declares in its covenant to be *acknowledging the supremacy of the almighty God of all creation* and after having said this they go on to say that *unity* is one of the governing patriotic principles. This shows that the union, the state, of Kenya is indivisible.

Nigeria, well known for its huge number of ethnic groups and estimated 150 languages, says in its Constitution that *the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria have firmly and solemnly resolved to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation under God.*

Israel, the oldest nation on Earth, gathers not under a constitution proclamation but under their people's existing covenant with God. This bond makes them indivisible nation.

Ireland in its highest covenant extends its humble respect to God by starting *in the Name of the Most Holy Trinity, from Whom is all authority and to Whom, as our final end, all actions both of men and States must be referred*. The Irish go on to declare Ireland *indefeasible* which means the Irish union is righteous and not able to be corrupted.

Australia in its highest covenant outlines its foundations saying *whereas the people of New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, and Tasmania, humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God, have agreed to unite in one indissoluble Federal Commonwealth under the Crown of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and under the Constitution hereby established*. This covenant shows Australia's intention is to create a broad and lasting nation.

Norway in its highest covenant maintains *the Kingdom of Norway is a free, independent, indivisible and inalienable realm and its form of government is a limited and hereditary monarchy*.

Switzerland protectively announces *in the name of God Almighty we are determined with mutual respect and recognition to live our diversity in unity*. They put forward their plan to recognize diversity as part of life itself.

Papua New Guinea, the world's most linguistically diverse country, is the first country on earth for number of an estimated 1000 ethnic groups. In their Constitution they declare with overwhelming confidence *we the people of Papua Niugini are united in one nation under the guiding hand of God*.

Why am I giving so many examples of these great and wonderful pledges?

To be clear. It is important to see how the nations on our earth establish their union and shape the lives of their countrymen. As we have seen in these examples nations across the world have made their perfect union and live lives indivisible yet none of these unions are ever based on preconditions.

## **What are the real characteristics of the Ethiopian Union?**

The Ethiopian union is different from the rest of the world's. Our union is not a perfect union. The Ethiopian union is conditional and imperfect.

The so-called entities of nations and nationalities and the people can break from the country and leave at any time they wish as evidenced by Article 39 of the Constitution itself. This makes us different from the other people's unions of the world. This kind of agreement renders the union in Ethiopia incomplete. Our union in Ethiopia, by definition, is not really a union at all.

The Ethiopian conditional union or imperfect union has so many problems. In the first place forming a conditional union is unthinkable when creating a country. A Nation needs a full commitment to have an unconditional agreement to live by and together. There are many problems of engaging in an imperfect union among those let us unravel some of the problems this shortfall creates. What are the disadvantages of living under an imperfect or conditional union?

### **1. Conditional Union & Economics**

A conditional union among ethnicities will be victim of unjust economic distribution. It is crystal clear that this kind of agreement generates economic conflicts. A nation who has no commonwealth and start economic movements based on ethnicity will be divisible where wealth concentrating in the hands of ethnic groups will be potentials for conflicts. It is impossible to build a nation without the idea of building a commonwealth state. In the tradition of the United Kingdom, for example, commonwealth means an independent country. A Conditional Economic Union of a country will bring about group inequality and

distrust among groups. Natural resources and economies must be united in an indivisible nature to create a stable nation. If we are engaged in a conditional economic union it is very clear that this will be a huge problem when working hard for our common good. Further, we won't have a clear vision for the future if we are not united in economies as an indivisible commonwealth. We work for our common good when we are united economies. Being divided economies and shooting for a common good is meaningless. Ethiopians cannot be committed to their common good with fractured economic entities. An Imperfect Union will be hesitant within the common house. It almost goes without saying that a conditional and imperfect union concerning an economic wealth perspective will have big problems.

## 2. Conditional Union & Politics

Political play under a conditional union means establishing ethnic based parties to be an “umbrella” for respective ethnic groups. This kind of divisive politics is a very dangerous idea. This kind of political game is contradictory to that of a multiparty system. A multiparty system does not mean having a bunch of ethnic based parties it means having none at all. Multiparty systems under one indivisible covenant and a cohesive national compact means creating different parties based on ideological or policy differences. Our conditional union is allowing our country to be drawn into local identities while shrinking our national interests. We must get out of politicizing ethnicity. This kind of politics is considered a crime in the modern political landscape and it is a practice which is expressly prohibited by the Constitutions of many countries.

## 3. Conditional Union & Social Issues

Ethnic identities do not have to be assimilated to create a perfect union in a democratic nation. There is a thought that pluralism is concerned with group identities but this is not the case. When Americans say we

are one nation under God they do not mean that we do not respect cultural identities, nor do they mean that they are an assimilated society. Americans respect pluralism. Each cultural identity is respected. However, indivisible means we are united on political issues and economic issues while respecting differences. This is what life with diversity in unity means. Ethiopia's concern around culture goes beyond the ceiling of pluralism, this same thinking invades the areas of politics and economics. This is a wrong and undemocratic way of thinking. As Nations across the world have declared that ethnic politics is unlawful they have also declared that politicizing ethnic identity is a problem. Culture in Ethiopia is highly hurt by politicizing ethnic identity since it is highly entrenched with political gain. This damages our cultures and national unity and more it creates a truly divided nation.

### **What are the ways out for the Ethiopian Union?**

In general, living with conditional unity is living with too many threats. This is why Ethiopia needs an exodus from its conditional union to a more perfect union. The journey of our transition must be directed to forming a more perfect union. In my opinion the transition should focus on the following recommendations as a roadmap.

1. Exodus to forming a more perfect union by amending the Constitution  
The Ethiopian constitution has to be amended and it has to show that Ethiopia is an indivisible nation *under God*.
2. Exodus to forming a more perfect union by moving towards a multiparty system in Ethiopia  
As I mentioned, having over one hundred ethnic based parties would mean not having a functioning multi-party system. The Multiparty system

should be separated from the magnetic force of ethnic based politics. Ethiopia should move forward to melting its identity parties to more national parties and union parties should be created to exercise democratic processes such as national elections.

3. Exodus to forming a more perfect union by building a pluralistic society  
Pluralism means not only having diversity among ethnic groups but also having diverse ideas in politics and thought. Political pluralism must exist along with diverse ideas being seen as political capital. In religion and media we have to encourage pluralism. When we have this culture we can achieve real democracy.

4. Exodus to forming a more perfect union by carrying out free and fair elections

Free and fair elections could be one chapter of our current transition with the following basics factors for free and fair elections.

➤ **Independent election board**

I think the move to build an independent election board is good and more needs to be done in this area. For all intents and purposes this entity is the most desirable when we talk about free and fair elections.

➤ **The importance of having quality candidates and parties**

No matter how much we have a free and independent election board if we have failed to build quality parties our transition won't be successful. Parties must be the best at what they do. We need at least two high quality and very organized parties. There is no need for 100 parties. Two or three **high quality** parties is enough. Elections with geographic parties and identity parties will create chaos. Let us examine the personalities of our parties before we rush into an election.

➤ **Fair campaign**

One of the indicators for free and fair election is having a fair campaign. Let parties introduce their programs in a fair way. Being fair to the parties means being fair to the people's choices.

➤ **Independent institutions**

Security, police and other institutions must be free to hold their own free and fair elections. We need to work hard to make sure these institutions stand for their values.

5. Exodus to forming a more perfect union by building civic societies  
There won't be any real democratic transition without the participation of civic organizations. Civic societies are the ones who fill up the gaps or incompleteness of the government. Government alone cannot fill the gap between its people's demand and the supply of the government. There will always be a gap between the people's demand and governments supply. Civic organizations will see this need and fill or narrow the gaps. They are essential for our union. The government must lift laws that create obstacles and open doors for them. To move forward to a better union civic organizations should be able to play their role. In India studies shows that for every 400 Indians there is one Non-Governmental organization, Ghana has nearly 300,000 NGOs which means for about every 100 Ghanaians there is one civic organization. Ethiopian has the lowest NGOs per capita. Some estimate there are no more than 3,000 registered NGOs in Ethiopia. This means that for 36,600 Ethiopians there is only one civic organization. This disparity must be overcome in our transition.

6. **Exodus to forming a more perfect union by moving towards a free media system**

Free media means not only being just free. Free media means governing by the principle of media. In Ethiopia right now the suppression by the

government seems reduced but as a country on the whole Ethiopia has violated the principle of media. At its very core the media would never be shaped by identities in a democratic society. In Ethiopia on the contrary ethnic media groups have been established. Oromo media, Amhara media, Tigre media, and so on. This is a violation of the principle of media. In transition any omission should be corrected.

**7. Exodus to forming a more perfect union by moving towards nation building**

Ethiopia was very successful in building an independent state. One of the oldest countries in the world. We have a great history. The issue of nation building which comes along with building our state infrastructure is still an unfinished task. We have much work left in building our union both inside and out. A great engineer is however needed to fix the problem of nation building in Ethiopia. The transition should lead to building a perfect union by harmonizing national identity and ethnic identity. Both identities have to receive adequate attention and the supports that they need.

**8. Exodus to forming a more perfect union by giving acknowledgment to the Almighty God.**

Every time I think about this thing I wonder why Ethiopia has not given acknowledgment to God in its Constitution. I have searched the constitutions of many countries and have found that a lot of nations have given great respect to God. Israel, the USA, Australia, Canada, Ireland, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Norway, Argentina, Germany, Sweden, Rwanda, South Africa and more have given the highest respect to the Almighty and relying on the strength of God. The US even prints in God we trust on their dollars.

Ethiopia is one of the most religious countries on earth. Studies show that 98 percent of Ethiopians believe that religion is the most important thing in their life. This percentage makes them number one in the world

for religion being a huge part of their lives, but their constitution does not give thanks to God.

When nations say thank you to God for their blessings in their Constitution they do not mean that there will be a state religion. Citizens can believe in their denominations. However, as a nation, we should give respect to the Almighty God in our covenant.

Now one of our first accomplishments should be this. Acknowledge God in our Constitution when we amend it and put forth our covenant in action.

At this time our country's focus should remain on structural changes and moving forward to examining the form of its union and making it a more perfect union in order to live more stable lives. Nations when they build states enter into a covenant to live together throughout their ups and downs. They do not put conditions on their future lives. They do not reserve anything when they decide to be united. Ethiopia's imperfect and conditional union was never merited by Ethiopians. Traditionally people say Ethiopia is a covenant country under God. We need a national covenant that represents our perfect union. We need to move forward to complete our union during this transitional time.

May God Bless the United States of Ethiopia.

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