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Review

State fragility, failure and collapse in the new world order: A critical assessment of the applicability of these concepts in the case of Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia

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The idea of state fragility, state failure and state collapse emerged, since the end of the cold war in the international system particularly in developing countries. Among others, these situation strongly influenced African states with political instability, violent conflict, economic crises. As a result, political science, international organization and international relation literatures have been concerned with identifying the causes, and impacts of the problem, but each of these institutions have not reached a common understanding on their causes and impacts. In spite of this differences, the focus of this study lays on three key factors that contribute towards state fragility, state failure and state collapse. These are, an economic resource approach, internal political weakness and external policy influence'. By analyzing these key factors, this paper explores, primarily, the theoretical debates and conceptual percepts of these ideas. Secondly, the causes, and impacts of state fragility, state failure and state collapse in the case of Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia states. Finally, it will give an insight, what will be done in the future to resolve the problem.

Keywords: Fragile state, failed state, collapsed state, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Somalia, developed and developing states.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of state fragile, failure and collapse have been recognized in the post 'New World Order'. Especially, the emergence of international terrorism in the wake of 9/11 has provoked the Western countries to highlight the magnitude of state building and prevention of these problems for the sake of their own safety and for the fight against terrorism (Eriksen, 2011: 230; Graf, 2012: 1).

Eventhough, the problem is universal in nature, the

impactes are severe in developing countries. In doing so, most of the developing states characterized by distrustful economic, political and security issues that led to them to low levels of economic growth, political instability and corruption, ethnic conflict, civil war, human rights violation and symbolized by internal political weaknesses. For these reason, most scollars approved that, the developing countries have more devastated by these crisis, because of the inability of the governments to

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maintain their basic function. Then, these states are coined as unsuccessful governments by international organizations (Helman and Ratner, 2001).

However, to resolve the problem, many of the scholars and the international community have become more alert to distinguish on the phenomenon usually named as successful states and unsuccessful states (Brooks, 2005: 1161). Some argued that, the successful states control defined territories and populations, conduct diplomatic relations with other states, monopolize legitimate violence within their territories, and succeed in providing adequate social goods to their populations. While unsuccessful states have a dark mirror image, "lose control over the means of violence, and cannot create peace or stability for their populations or control their territories. They cannot ensure economic growth or any reasonable distribution of social goods: They are often characterized by massive economic inequities, warlordism, and violent competition for resources" (Ibid, 2005).

Then these scholars also associated the word unsuccessful states as "state failure", "failing states", "fragile states", "collapsing states", "broken states", "weak state capacity", or simply "weak states" with continuous poverty, underdevelopment, and warfare (Tusalem, 2016: 448). Means, they defined the concepts of state fragility, failure and collapse synonymously and use interchangeably.

Having these conceptual understanding in mind, many academic literatures have also examined the causes of the problem, in different perspectives. According to theories of state instability, the factors conducive to state fragility, failure and collapse pointed down four core causes, includes- war, revolutions, social mobilization, secession (Clément, 2005: 8). According to Selznick (1984), in an ideal political system, and in an imperfect world, the causes of states instability to perform its activities often occurs as a result of "failed assimilation when a political regime refuses cooptation or during democratic transitions when the old guard is washed away" (p.14).

Moreover, as to Goldstone (2008), the pathways to state fragile, failure and collapse are internal ethnic or religious conflicts, state predation, democratic collapse, guerrilla rebellion and reform crisis in authoritarian states (p. 285). Other academic debates has connected the problem as a result of the political economy of international relations for centuries. The problem was taken seriously by colonial occupiers (Dorff, 2000: 12). Taken the above arguments and justifications separately, inadequate in explaining the state fragile, state failure and state collapse; it takes their combination to reach the conclusion.

In doing so, this article focus on three key factors. These are '*an economic resource approach, internal political weakness and external policy influence*' as a fundamental causes of the problem. In line with this factors, the basic object of this article is: Primarily, to

draws the arguments made by different literatures about the causes and consequences of the problems and for how fragile, failed and collapse states are understood. Secondly, it discusses the critical assessments and applicability of these problems in the case of Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Somalia respectively. Finally, it would recommend solutions for these problems.

The research method of this article uses both secondary and primary data. The secondary sources includes previous scholarly work on the Ethiopia, DRC and Somalia, where as the primary sources are government statistics and observation (particularly in the case of Ethiopia). The three states selected based on the nature of the occurrence and the inability of states to maintain its basic functions within their respective status. These states will help in bringing a variety of experiences and factors that will present the overall picture of state fragility, state failure and state collapse in Africa. This selection method is also permissible to evaluate necessary conditions.

THEORY OF STATE FRAGILITY, FAILURE AND COLLAPSE

As the number of cases of state fragile, failure and collapse emerged in the aftermath of the cold war, the need to analyze this phenomenon became urgent. Defining and explaining the effects of these states are important research and policy questions. In doing so, this article attempts to describe a combination of the most important factors that cause state fragile, failure and collapse. These are an economic resource approach, internal political weakness and external policy influence.

An economic resource approach

According to John (2008), the fragile, failed and collapsed states have appeared on the struggle between political elites and insurgent groups to control an appropriate resources in underdeveloped economic settings. There are two main approaches. The first emphasizes on the role of resource scarcity and the later focuses on the role resource abundance which tends to affect with similar process (p.10-11).

Primarily, the paper describes the related literature on resource scarcity approach analysis on state fragile, failure and collapse. Resource scarcity is central to processes of political violence and violent political challenges to state authority. It can contribute to diffuse, persistent sub-national violence such as ethnic clashes and insurgencies. The incidence of such violence will probably increase as environmental scarcities worsen in some parts of the developing world. As land is valued because of scarcity, and scarcity brings over-use, and land degradation, which in turn fuels poverty and

rebellion then leads to state failure and collapse (Homer-Dixon, 1999: 12-25). Moreover “environmental impoverishment, increasing the conflict over resources, marginalisation of rural people, social and political unrest, displacement and uncontrolled migration lead to further conflict and the outbreak of wars between and within states” (Fairhead, 2000: 102-123).

Secondly, as to John (2008), a resource scarcity argument is inadequate in explaining the state fragile, failure and collapse. For him the resource curse argument is one of the more influential challenges to state authority (p.11). In line with this, he states that:

“The idea that abundance of natural resources, and in particular oil, causes poor growth, and raises the incidence, intensity and duration of conflict. While oil abundance has long been considered beneficial to economic and political development, the recent poor economic performance of oil exporters and the growing incidence of civil wars in mineral rich economies have revived the idea that their resource abundance may be more of a curse than a blessing. Moreover many conflicts occur in countries with resource wealth rather than resource scarcity. He argue that resource abundance creates incentives to capture the state and helps finance rebellions when such resources are ‘lootable’. Examples would include Sierra Leone, Liberia, Biafra, Congo/Zaire, and Angola. (p.11-12)”

Furthermore, most scholars agreed on the impacts of oil abundance, in creating to the onset of civil war in less developed countries in the period 1945-1999. But the difference among analysts are: some argued that, oil exports correlated with the ‘full set’ of civil war onsets, while others express that oil export abundance is associated with a ‘sub-set’ of civil wars, namely, secessionist wars (Collier et al., 2003). But as Ross the link between oil and political violence are supposedly well-known manifestations of the resource curse in oil economies, namely, poor economic growth, high corruption, and authoritarianism (John, 2008: 13).

In doing so, the resource curse argument has also two variants. The first is rentseeking argument, which suggests that oil abundant less developed countries generate valuable rents and the these rents tends to generate violent forms of rentseeking that take the form of ‘greed-based’ insurgencies. Then a war brock out between secessionist as opposed to non-secessionist, the results may leads to a state of failure or collapse (2003: 60-101; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004: 4). The second variant is the rentier state model in which a states gain a large proportion of their revenues from external sources, such as resource rents, the reduced necessity of state decision-makers to levy domestic taxes causes leaders to be less accountable to individuals and groups within civil society. These in turn, can make the state more vulnerable to insurgency (Fearon and Laitin, 2003: 45).

On the other hand, the qualitative thesis argued that when a countries economy undergoes a sector-based change, “disparate groups are increasingly brought into contact and competition with one another fuelling nationalist or separatist movements”. Thus, a substantial variation in a country’s growth rate might precipitate a severe social and political crisis, it may leads to frustration, aggression, revolution and state collapse (Connor, 1972: 319-355).

Internal political weakness

Most scholars in the post-cold awr era argued that, African states have challenged by state failure and collapse, due to the reason of elites in ability to determining the degrees of ‘stateness’, starting on wards preliminary time, to meet classical Weberian criteria of statehood and ending without meeting one of the criteria of ‘successful’ statehood (2008: 23).

The starting point for most of these theories is to explain the emergence of patrimonial and clientelist politics. According to Lockwood (2005), a key factor of these problem is a historical legacy of indirect rule of colonialism, which left three traits: Natives were subjects of tribal leaders and not citizens (legacy of legal dualism); a bi-furcated state that operated differently in urban and rural areas; and a despotic system. The speed with which independence occurred created the context which generated politics based on political patronage. This system has become known by a variety of terms including clientelism and neo-patrimonialism. The need to construct political alliances at short notice with minimal resources and the absence of party organisation outside urban areas meant that nationalist leaders – typically urban, union-based teachers, union leaders and administrators - had to rely on existing political structures. This meant finding individuals - often chiefs or other prominent notables, and using patronage to bind these individuals to the party, and local voters to candidates (p. 70).

The other problem is the institutional multiplicity in developing states is a situation in which different sets of rules of the game, often contradictory, coexist in the same territory, putting citizens and economic agents in complex, often unsolvable, situations, but at the same time offering them the possibility of switching strategically from one institutional universe to another (Crisis States Research Centre, 2006: 5).

Moreover, states incapacity and inabilities interms of skills of personnel and organisational culture, including (to reduce unemployment and poverty; to manage conflict and to win popular support and extend territorial presence) leads to crises. Paradoxically, the capabilities of non-state rivals are important as well, including their ability to win popular support and to extend their presence territorially. In terms of capabilities, there are

important agency factors that always need to be taken into account, including the quality of leadership and the development strategies adopted. These in ability of state to manage non-state actors and crises, leads to state fragile, failure and collapse (Ibid, p.6).

On the other hand, coalitional analysts argued that, the emergence of political violence is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for state collapse. This is because: There may exist a significantly powerful coalition of supporters who benefit from the formal and informal mechanisms of influencing the state. The shifting coalitions of power contribute to state collapse; are forged in order to prevent state collapse; and emerge as a result of state collapse and war. The nature of political coalitions underlying state support (and in particular, the extent to which coalitions survive through activating and maintaining boundaries) determines the extent to which political, economic and social conflicts are more indivisible. The construction and foundation of boundaries contribute to the increase political conflict and violence. This situation has been disintegrated these states in to different factions (Tilly, 2003: 7-16).

External policy influence

According to Leander (2004), the impacts of poor economic performance and instabilities in developing world are generally subject to greater forces of decentralisation and the privatisation of coercion and capital of western liberal ideology. The international financial organizations have lend their money for developing countries are based on the preconditions of adabting policy of liberalization, deregulation and privatization. In order to get debt and investment as well as to protect debt crisis, most developing countries have accepted the preferred policies of international financial actors. These "policies translate as a reduced capacity of the central state to buy support by offering positions in the state bureaucracy, by offering under-priced goods from state industries and by channelling resources to local administrators" (p.17-23).

Following this neo liberal policies unlike their cultural practice and without creating social capital, Africans become the land of casualty, poverty and crises. For example, the Global Monitoring Report 2005 has noted that, every week in the developing world, 200000 children under five die of disease and 10000 women die giving birth. In Sub-Saharan Africa alone, 2 million people will die of AIDS this year. 115 million children are not in school'. almost half of the region's population living on less than a \$1 a day between 1990 and 2001 (World Bank, 2005: 1-2). Thus the decentralised and privatised control over the means of violence and finance, creates havoc with the basic logic by which wars call for an expanded administration (Ibid).

Herbst (2000) has also argued that, the fundamental

problem facing state-builders in Africa is the result of their ex-colonial governors. They have chosen an inhospitable territories that contain low densities of people, to project their authority over local collones (2000: 11). The European model of placing significant assets in the hinterland to protect against outsiders and to make boundaries real was neither viable nor relevant rater it tends to aggrabate state fragmentation and failure in Africa (p. 74).

Tilly (1990), argues that the big problems in post cold war states is not a sort of external interventionist, rother "the back and forth shifting from an interventionist to a non-interventionist environment, because it changes the political opportunity structure". For him, the relationship between external influence and political instability is curvilinear, in which the instability highest at changing levels of external control (p. 208; Zald et al., 1966: 5). Moreover, Zartman (1995) argued that, the end of the Cold War were important transition each followed by a wave of collapse, as illustrated in the case of Somalia, Yugoslavia, Ethiopia, Angola, Mozambique, Sudan, Zaire, and Afghanistan (p. 2-4).

According to Reno (1995), the end of the Cold War and the rise of economic and political liberalisation policies put traditional patterns of patronage under pressure in sub-Saharan Africa. African leaders by nature creates internal threat of warlord politics. Because by integrating their relation with those of old colonizers, exploited the national economy for their own interests. Reno, in his analysis of central African states "Angola, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Zaire/DRC - describes how leaders have based their personal power and derived individual wealth from the overt and clandestine manipulation of markets, at times with the connivance of foreign investors in natural resource enclaves such as oil" (p.8). Furthermore, the tradition of late colonial legacy created incentives for leaders to use disorder as a political instrument. Meant the political elites request to maximise their returns on the state of confusion, uncertainty, failurty and state of anarchy which illustrates African polities (Chabal and Daloz, 1999: 113).

On the other hand, Crisis States Research Centre/CSRC (2006) argued that, there are different arguments whether liberal financial aid has positively or negatively affected the developing states in their state building. The proponents claim that liberalisation is an unqualified good where as the opponents of economic liberalisation insist that it is an unqualified bad. But CSRC believe that, "the actual results have been mixed and that the impact of liberalisation, whether positive or negative for different countries and for different groups within a country, depends on a range of variables" (p. 23). This paper will assess, whether an economic resource approach, internal political weakness and external policy influence have become a factor of state fragile, failure and collapse in the case of Ethiopia, Democratic

Republic of Congo and Somalia respectively.

CONCEPTUALIZING STATE FRAGILITY, FAILURE AND COLLAPSE

Before defining the concepts of state fragility, failure and collapse, it is important to assess the different definitions of the state. According to international law, "a given 'state' exists when a political entity is recognised by other states as the highest political authority in a given territory and is treated as an 'equal' among the international 'community' of states" (Coase, 1960: 12-19). Another common definition in international customary law states that statehood exists only when a given political entity possesses a permanent population, a defined territory, a government, and the capacity to enter into relations with other states (North, 1990: 21-8). In the Hobbesian definition, the state involves the idea of 'social contract', which focuses on the relationship between the state and citizen. This idea was that individuals would voluntarily make a social contract with an absolute sovereign government, the state by giving up some of their freedom in exchange for guaranteed peace and security (2008: 4)

In the Weberian sense, a state can be defined as a territorial entity ruled by an authority that has a monopoly over the legitimate means of violence and that is recognized by members of the polity and the larger international community (Gros, 1996: 456). Thus, currently at least all states need to fulfill three core governance functions: security, effective and efficient delivery of basic public goods and services, and political legitimacy (Brinkerhoff and Johnson, 2008: 2). Whether the responsible parties are one or more peacekeeping forces, an interim government, a newly elected government or international donors and their partners, and the vestiges of the previous regime fulfilling those core governance functions (Ibid, 2008).

In line with the definition of a state, the word 'fragile' failure and collapse are often substituted without a precise change in meaning by 'crisis', 'weak', 'rogue', 'poorly performing', 'ineffective', or 'shadow'; a 'country at risk of instability' or 'under stress', or even a 'difficult partner' (Cammack, 2006: 15-16). In doing so, these definitions have not a common and clear meaning except for those who have employed them. However, the World Bank identifies fragile states by weak performance on the Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA). For the World Bank, fragile states have two common characteristics. Primarily, the state policies and institutions are weak in these countries: making them vulnerable in their capacity to deliver services to their citizens, to control corruption, or to provide for sufficient voice and accountability. Secondly, they are a land of conflict and political instability (Jones, 2008: World Bank, 2003: 5).

The majority of conceptualizations of fragile states treat

fragility as a continuum with state failure and collapse at one extreme, and states characterized by serious vulnerabilities at the other (Brinkerhoff and Johnson, 2008: 3). Most characterizations aimed at some notion of fragility or weakness or failure agree that fragile states have governments that are incapable of assuring basic security for their citizens, fail to provide basic services and economic opportunities, and are unable to garner sufficient legitimacy to maintain citizen confidence and trust (Ferreira, 2015: 4-7; Cammack, 2006: 15-16).

Even if some disagreements exist regarding which features contribute about state fragility, these features are the common factors or causes of fragility. These include: "a history of armed conflict, poor governance and political instability, militarization, ethnically and socially heterogeneous, rampant corruption that delegitimizes government in the eyes of citizens, or outbreaks of ethnic conflict that create insecurity and internally displaced populations, and disrupt economic activity" (Brinkerhoff and Johnson, 2008: 4). Therefore, armed conflict is the ultimate manifestation of state fragility and it is not just an outcome of fragility; it can also be a driving factor of fragility, either continued or in the future (Stepanova, 2008: 43-71). Whereas a failed state as to Helman and Ratner (1993) were among the first analysts to use the term failed state. They were worried about unsettling of new occurrence whereby a "state was becoming 'utterly incapable of sustaining itself as a member of the international community'. They argued that a failed state would imperil their own citizens and threaten their neighbours through refugee flow, political instability and random warfare"(p: 3-9).

The Failed States Index defines a failed state as a state that is "losing legitimacy, maintains few or no functioning state institutions, offers few or no public services, lacks a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, and fails to interact in formal relations with other states as a fully functioning member of the international community"(Baker, 2006: 5). Based on the above definition, the following variables have been selected as indicators of state failure:- when a state is failing, it illustrates as an absence administrative capacity. This absence of administrative capacity, underpins all other dimensions of state capacity, including the existence of inefficient and incapable professional state bureaucracy. In spite of the fact that, state failure is commonly defined as, the absence of state capacity (Timo, 2012: 9).

Moreover, in the absence of the specified criteria like-service provision, a monopoly of violence, and control over territory that constitute a failure, and not the actual properties of the states concerned. Though most states do have a monopoly of violence, in the sense that they are not challenged by armed rebels, many states have little ability to provide services and limited control over their territory (Stein, 2011: 234).

The majority of scholars commonly agreed on its definition as failed states may be recognized as those in which public authorities are either unable or unwilling to

carry out their end of what Hobbes long ago called the social contract, but which now includes more than maintaining the peace among society's many factions and interests (Gros, 1996: 455). A failed state is a condition of state collapse and a state that can no longer perform its basic security, development functions, has no effective control over its borders and can no longer reproduce the conditions for its own existence, but some elements of the state, such as local state organizations, might continue to exist (Ibid).

According to Rotberg (2004), another leading authority on failed states, defines state failure as the inability of states to provide positive political goods to their inhabitants. Moreover, he defined as a "failed states are tense, deeply conflicted, dangerous, and contested bitterly, by warring factions as well as government troop's battle armed revolts led by one or more rival" (Rotberg, 2004: 5). The civil wars that characterize failed states usually stem from or have roots in ethnic, religious, linguistic, or other inter-communal enmity; the fear of the other, that drives so much ethnic conflict stimulates and fuels hostilities between regimes and subordinate and less-favored groups; greediness also propels that antagonism, especially when greed is magnified by dreams of loot from discoveries of new, contested, pools of resource wealth such as petroleum deposits, diamond fields and other minerals as happened in Democratic Republic of Congo (Ibid, 2005).

Finally, a state collapse, as to Clément (2005), there are three observed stages. These are state collapse, state crisis, and state strength are subsets of each other. "Non state strength is the first step in the destabilizing process. The next stage of state crisis constitutes a more acute subset of instability. Finally, state collapse is the worst possible outcome for states in crisis" (p.13). According to Eisenstadt (1988), the attention of these statelessness should stretch beyond state collapse, in that the situation was probably seems to rebuild a fresh processes of state formation. For him state collapse is, "far from being an anomaly, both in the real world and in social evolutionary theory, presents in dramatic form not the end of social institutions, but almost always the beginning of new ones" (p. 293).

Furthermore, the Hobbesian theorists have argued that, State Collapse is a state without a government society would plunge into a war of all against all, the result of which would be a life that is nasty, brutish, and short (Powell, 2006: 1). One of the known writers of state collapse, William Zartman explains that, if and where state collapse, the result is, it cannot longer perform the functions required for it to pass as a state (Zartman, 1996: 5). For him the concept of function is the right to rule that is when the state loses its right as a sovereign authority, as an institution, and as a symbol of identity (invariably they are intertwined), the right to rule is disappears. He then traces how states lose the right rule, particularly as they lose control over political and economic space. Again, by exemplifying Somali, he

stresses the function of power, participation, and recourses as issues to consider state collapse (Ibid).

States collapse not as a result of an Armageddon cause, they collapse due to stress overload (Clément, 2005: 4). Zartman (1995) argues that collapse is "the result of an excessive burden on governing capacity, a matter of degree but not a difference in nature from the normal difficulties of meeting demands and exercising authority" (p.8). According to Arfi (1998), a collapse state is thus a process that evolves through three consecutive thresholds: These are a widespread negation of political loyalty to the state; a complete erosion of state legitimacy; and a total disintegration of state authority (factionalization drive and communal mobilization; erosion of the idea of the state and legitimation crisis; and state institutional paralysis and assault on state authority (p. 15-42).

Generally, a collapsed state is a rare and extreme version of a failed state; Political goods are obtained through private or ad hoc means; Security is equated with the rule of the strong; a collapsed state exhibits a vacuum of authority (Rotberg, 2004: 10). It is "a mere geographical expression, a black hole into which a failed polity has fallen; there is dark energy", but the forces of entropy have overwhelmed the happiness until now provided some appearance of order and other vital political goods to the inhabitants holed by language or ethnic affinities or borders (Ibid).

I concluded that, though the term state fragility, failure and collapse have similar attributes, they have some distinct features. Primarily, if a state is fragile, a state loses some of its elements among others, such as the security issues, legitimacy and capacity. Secondly, states are considered failed, it consumed by internal violence and cease delivering positive political goods to their inhabitants, loss of control over territory, criminal violence and the rise of warlords. Lastly, when a state failure is occurred, a state collapse has been accelerated by the imposition of levels of state control upon indigenous societies unable to bear state centered norms and such degrees of authority. In short, when a state is fragile, it leads to state failure and state failure leads to state collapse. Totally they have a range of difference, in their inability to maintain the basic function of the government. Albeit these are their differences, in all cases, these states cannot provide public goods efficiently to the citizens; incapable of assuring basic security for their citizens and unable to garner sufficient legitimacy to maintain citizen confidence.

CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE APPLICABILITY OF STATE FRAGILITY, FAILURE AND COLLAPSE ON THREE AFRICAN STATES

State fragility in the case of Ethiopia

Ethiopia is one of the oldest states in the world. It has

been recognized as the cradle of mankind and the home of diverse political institutions for at least the last 2,000 years. It has also known as the land of diverse linguistic groups for a long period of time. (Fisha, 2009: 1-4). Currently, it has more than 80 diversified multi ethnic groups, but it is characterized by intra ethnic conflicts. To respond to the challenge of these multi ethno-national conflicts, Ethiopia adopted ethno-linguistic base federalism since 1995, which is unique in Africa with its federalist political system that gives explicit recognition to ethno-linguistic identities (Regassa, 2010: 53; FDRE, 1995; Art, 39 and 62).

In line with this, John (2009), argued that, the new Ethiopian political ideology, instead of serve as a panacea for emerging conflicts, it situated the country in a vulnerable natural setting and a persistent conflict zone (Abbink, 2009: 4). For him, the Ethiopian government system like authoritarian system of government marked by an overall fixation on control, that is: the dominant ruling party (EPRDF) as the chief political and economic player, (controlled a political and economic space ,control over the executive, legislative and judiciary branches). Moreover, the government control of civic space that is: No grass roots associations, no independent trade unions or media or teachers' unions, and no independent NGOs can operate, in short no autonomous, independent socio-political dynamics can develop. A new middle class, which is inevitable in emerging, and newly self-conscious farming populations, part of which start or want to start entrepreneurial activities, are closely checked and are not allowed to demand representation as such, in their own organisations independent of the ruling party (p. 23)

Thus, in Ethiopia a state that lacks control over its own territory, threatens its own citizens, or does not fulfil essential functions such as maintaining the state monopoly on violence, provision of basic services and protection of legal rights for people, and lacks efficient and fair taxation (p.19).

Moreover, Clapham (2006), describes that, the current government of Ethiopia does not work well for all citizens, as revealed in the constant insecurity and the unpredictability of state action vis-à-vis the populace. The so called constitutional system of government and the idea of 'social contract' which joined up the country with a vision of 'unity among diversity', is remained very fragile. The legitimacy of the state is also fragile. There is no more anticipated community; "indeed it was for years actively discouraged by the ruling government because for ideological reasons (anti-Amhara domination) they proclaimed Ethiopian unity as fictitious and a product of imposition since the 1880s. Many ordinary people are committed to the country but see the social fabric of society crumble" (p. 17-38).

On the other hand, one case study on the feelings of Ethiopian citizens relates to their government specified that, the confidence of Ethiopians in their government was extremely low compared with other African countries

(Abbink, 2009: 38). In Abbink's survey on livelihood activities and social and political opinions that he made in 2007 among 73 ordinary citizens in Addis Ababa and in the South (SNNPRS), only 28% had trust in the government, only 13% in the health care system, and only 24% in the judicial system and the courts. In addition, "rural people see themselves as more vulnerable to livelihood shocks resulting from natural conditions and the policy uncertainties (e.g., related to rights to land, affordable inputs like fertilizer, or market access), and as losing social capital" (p.21).

Because of these governmental problems, different ethnic insurgence groups have created and clashed each other. In doing so, the country has just been characterized by insecurity and active hostilities between and among ethnic groups. The looting and killing were triggered by long-simmering conflict over land and millions of citizens displaced due to inter-communal and cross-border violence, most of them living in protracted displacement situations and this event showed the opening of state fragility in Ethiopia (Taddele, 2017: 9).

According to Fragile States Index (FSI) 2019, several countries have nevertheless stood out for increases in fragility and instability. Among these countries, Ethiopia one of the fragile states in which the culmination of civil unrest in 2016-2019, that included widespread violent protests in the most populous regions of Oromia and Amhara, and even if it improved country on the 2019 (FSI) by 5.3 points to a score of 94.2 in this year's FSI, but still it is a fragile state (Messner, 2019: 25).

Furthermore, the UN, as of January, 2019, Ethiopia stands first in the world regards of the rate of internal displacement peoples, there were approximately 2.9 million IDPs identified conflict, drought, poverty, poor governance as the primary cause of displacement (USAID, 2019: 3). In doing so, the government is not capable of assuring basic security for their citizens, fails to provide basic services and economic opportunities, and is unable to garner sufficient legitimacy to maintain citizen confidence and trust. Thus, the country became highly fragile (Ibid). All these problems initiated with its domestic politics that have produced violence and continuing tension over the past 20 years. The deep shortcomings in the country's democratization and state-building processes may remain unresolved as the worsening instability of the region takes precedence (Smith, 2007: 2).

On the other side, John (2009) argued that, many African states are republics, this republican formula is the gift of their ex colonial powers to governing African nation states as republics with an emphasis on liberty and ruled by people. Though Ethiopia is not an ex-colonial state, but faces similar challenges to develop a sound republican tradition (p.4). Moreover, the western attempted to carry on their neoliberal ideology in the context of Ethiopia for the last two decade, but the government of Ethiopia did not swallow their ideology

with out chawing till recently. However, the machinery of neoliberal ideology (WB, IMF and WTO) directly or indirectly have always influenced the country by financial sanction to the government and financial support for opponent parties, due to the reason of the absence of liberty, democracy and human right issues in the country. Especially, the western interfirance in the country by the name of the undemocratic 2005 elections, and the government forces killing some 190 demonstrators in the same year, contributed for socio-political unrest (p.18).

In general, I argued that, today the health of Ethiopian economy is decreasing, the legitimacy of the state is undermined, and the number of displacement peoples from one ethnicity to another increase, and the number of militant groups increased because of the bad administration of the government. Furthermore, in my observation during the last five years, unlike other states which is failed and collapsed due to external policy influence, the Ethiopian problems are more driven internally, the inability of the government to perform its basic functions; the (unclear boundary demarcation, and an equal distribution of economic power among ethnic groups); the undemocratic nature and hegemonic controle of the system by EPRDF; absence of political coalition among ethnic parties (all parties fashioned ethnic based instead of national based parties); and the so called ideology of ethnic federalism which impacts ethnic conflicts among different ethnic groups which accounted the country to a state of fragile.

State failure in the case of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

The Human Development Index ranking (2011), recognized that, DRC should be one of the largest economic engines on the planet with 68 million people and vast natural resources. Its unused deposits of raw minerals are estimated to be worth in excess of \$24 trillion. Unfortunately, Congo is one of the conflict zone and the poorest country on earth with a shameful 300 USD per year per head (Nienaber, 2012: 2-4).

In the main time of independence, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) had a chaotic transition from its Belgian colonial rule. Since the years of 1960 to 1965, the Belgium Congo were in a situation of unsettling. The transition of governmental leadership happened quickly and often. Starting on wards 1965 until the late-1990s, the Congo ruled by an individual who was very old. In his wake, he would leave a country that was in utter chaos. In the midst of this chaos the state infrastructure would be left in shambles, the citizens starving, war casualties and conflict would be ripe within the region, and there would be little hope for the country's revival (Carmenta, 2003: 412).

According to Trautman (2013), in his case study of state failure in the (DRC), has illustrated the three key

factors:- 'the degradation of state infrastructure, lack of economic development, and external intervention' contribute to the occurrence of state failure in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (p.4-9). For him, primarily, the external influences were the drive force for the current DRC as an example of a state falling into a downward spiral of mis management, corruption, and a loss of state legitimacy. Meant after Mobutu come to power, without taking in to consideration he baptized again his country by western political ideology. Then his agenda was maintaining his own political position and maintainihg a flourishing state was his ability to use external aid and the already existing colonial infrastructure as an appearance of stability. In doing so, Mobutu had recived a large amount of aid by the name of Congo/Zaire, but it was used by Mobutu and his political elite for their own personal gain. However, the Western donors failure to scrutinize the outcome of the aid distribution and failed to pay attention to developing viable institutions of governance in DRC which could support the independence of new states. That is why, Mobutu's legacy was fueled and pushed forward by external aid and intervention, which undeniably helped to create a dependency for the country and Zaire became a predatory state for its citizens.

Secondly, regards to State Infrastructure development, being Mobutu was an authoritarian government, had export the bulk of Belgium natural resources in international market and instead he got millions of dollars and utilize it for his own, but he chose to rely on the already existing infrastructure to suit his means. The state infrastructure did not evolve as the decades of Mobutu's rule went on. Lastly, considers to lack of economic development, Trautman highlights that DRC was not self-sufficient. The "lack of economic development in the domestic and international state economy was due to corrupt officials and backdoor policies that benefited the elite and not the state or its citizens. In this lack of self-sufficiency, state failure was borne" (p. 9-13). Especially, in 2002, it was considered as a failed state on every level: conflict, economic decline, crumbling infrastructure, transparent borders, lawlessness, and the lack of public services were rampant in the country (p. 45).

Nzongola-Ntalaja (2004) further describes the descent of the country, "... more than 3 million Congolese died between August 1998 and November 2002 of war-related causes such as malnutrition, lack of health care and dangerous living conditions in areas where refuge has been sought in the bush". The country is in a total state of decline due to internal political weaknes and corrupt leadership (p. 5-12).

According to Rotberg (2004), the root cause of conflicts between insurgent groups in the DRC, is its colonizer policy design when it design by the Belgium government, with no consideration for social or tribal makeup, hundreds of different tribes and languages that had never

coexisted together were expected to adhere to a national identity, that leads to its social insecurity. Thus, much of the violence is directed against the existing government or regime, and the inflamed character of the political or geographical demands for shared power or autonomy that rationalize the violence in the minds of the main insurgents rather than maintaining the road or rail access to distant districts becomes less and less of a priority (p.5). Again Rotberg further illustrated the case in which: Even refurbishing basic navigational aids along arterial waterways (as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the DRC) becomes typified by neglect. Where the state still controls such communications backbones as a land-line telephone system, that form of political and economic good betrays a lack of renewal, upkeep, investment, and bureaucratic endeavor. (Ibid, 5).

As pointed out by Christian Lund, (DRC) as a state failure struggled to fulfill its duties can result in a multiple of actors between state institutions and local, more traditional institutions (Moritz, 2013: 2). These different groups negotiate varying alliances in different policy areas to exercise public authority and thus provide a form of governance. That is why, the case of the education sector in the DRC clearly highlights how the state functions can be negotiated and the state structures were interfering with informal actors, governance can also be provided in the absence of a state (Ibid, 2).

Again he referring to Chojnacki and Branovic described that, the existence of state institutions in DRC, fails to transform into the provision of security and positive political goods but it does not lead to a complete absence of these goods. Again, they stressed that, in DRC warlords, for instance, provide infrastructure, and develop a tax system, health services, education and financial services which could be regarded as a certain degree of governance while the quality of service is in question. Plus, Millennium Development Goals, failure scores of 2007 with the likelihood of states to meet the MDG, find that, DRC is low ranking countries covering behind in the fulfillment of the goals (Ibid: 3).

Throughout DRC's history, the leading government instead of unified each ethnic groups and creating coalitional political parties, rather creating a sensible agenda that antagonized ethnic groups each other. Even by supporting regional strong men who plunder resources- sowing confusion, fear and insecurity in the process. Then, it creates a senseless citizens onto statehood could possibly arise out of an expletive system that continues to this day. Therefore, Millions of innocents have lost their lives because of possible genocide, civil wars and under reported outbreaks of diseases due to lack of clean water and basic infrastructure (Nienaber, 2012: 2-8).

Generally, I understood, the attributes of state failure in the case of the DRC is the three factors are linked with the state's current condition. The unstructure of these three factors intertwined to make a perfect storm. That is,

the Western policy influence and disguised agenda; the deep settled corruption of internal government; and the lack of economic development tends to an eventual decay of all aspects of life for the citizens of the DRC, then resulted to a state failure.

State collapse in the case of Somalia

Somalia is a country which consists of different clans and ethnic groups. Prior to independence, the northern region of Somaliland was governed by Britain, while the southern Somali was ruled by Italy. Since Somalia became independent in the 1960s, no sense of national identity existed. Different languages, monetary systems, and styles of government all made central governance difficult. Because the influence and the political culture of their colonizers created a negative impact to live harmoniously as a Somalian identity. Rather, Somalis preferred to be known as the identity of Isaaq, Darood, or Bantu independently, and then they preferred to become loyalty to one's clan, village, and ethnicity took precedence over loyalty to the national government (Powell, 2006: 3).

In the same token with DRC, after independence, the existed Somali national government worked for the benefit of Barre and his allies rather than the average Somalian peoples. In fact, the average standard of living was so low that Somalia had one of the lowest per capita food intakes during the 1980s (Farzin, 1988: 35-42). As to Mubarak's (1997) explained that, the government of Somali did conduct a large public investment program in between 1970s and 1980s, but it was unproductive and created much public debt. To solve this problem, repeatedly the government had got an aid from western countries and controlled the internal natural resources but it was used as to Barre's and his political elite for their own personal interest (p.12). Thus, the impossibility life to live under Barre's exploitation rule, the people of Somalis relied on traditional clan networks and informal markets to survive. These clan networks, which had existed for generations, and the new informal markets that emerged during the 1980s would play an important role in Somalia's economic performance after the national government collapsed in 1991 (Farzin, 1988: 7).

After Barre's government collapsed in 1991, rival warlords forced the country into civil war, each attempting to fit himself as the new dictator; multiple governments in exile have been created, none has been able to establish its rule over a significant portion of the country, this is because they were influenced by the bad legacy of indirect rules and divided rule of Britain, and Italy (Powell, 2006: 9). The current armed confrontations may also have no specific aim, as they are often triggered by boredom, the intoxicating effects of local stimulants, and the emotional immaturity of teenage fighters (Gros, 1996: 462).

Hence, the Somali, as a state fragmented and captured by different warlords, conflicts are aggravated alarmingly between and among ethnic clans; the state apparatus was put in the pursuit of this inter-clan violence and it became the state of stateless. But after all these things were happening, the westerners are going to design the so called effective strategies and instruments of response in which it is dramatic (Doornbos, 2002: 800).

As a result of these factor, today southern Somalia still lacks a regional government. In the north the regions of Somaliland and Puntland have declared their independence, though no international governments recognize them as states. These regional governments do provide some administrative services, but they might be better classified as clan-based governance than the type of national government we in the west conceive of (2006: 9). In the rural pastoral lands the government rarely constructed roads, health clinics or schools. The population did not use the government to settle disputes or administer justice, and the government generally took more in revenue than it gave back in services (Little, 2003: 15).

In doing so, the Somali government lacked firm control, people continued to apply the customary law (Xeer) and Xeer "outlaws homicide, assault, torture, battery, rape, accidental wounding, kidnapping, abduction, robbery, burglary, theft, arson, extortion, fraud, and property damage" (2006:18). Financial services are provided in Somalia through many of the same informal institutions that existed under the national government and loans are traditionally secured through family members, not banks (Ibid, 24).

Totally, as to Menkhaus (2003) explained that, "the revival of a state is viewed in Somali quarters as a zero-sum game, creating winners and losers in a game with potentially very high stakes. Groups which gain control over a central government will use it to appropriate economic resources at the expense of others, and will use the law, patronage, and the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence to protect this advantage" (p. 408). Even today, this is the only experience Somalis had with centralized authority, and it tends to produce risk-aversion and to instigate conflict rather than promote compromise, whenever efforts are made to establish a national government (Ibid).

Normally, I appreciated the fact that, the factor that facilitates state collapse in Somalia is -internal political weakness and lack of economic development, and external influences. Internally, the inability of the state to perform its basic functions resulted to low economic development tends to citizens to live under poverty, and then a growing division of clans in their respective ethnicity, revolutionary wars and conflict between governments clans and different ethnic groups become a norm. And each ethnic clans replace its leaders, or seize power in one region' and violent conflict become one of the agenda of the national, ethnic, religious, or other

communal minorities which resulted for the state of collapse. Externally, the culture of western policy, diluted ethnic clans in order to form national consensus. Additionally, the developed states is less conducive to the maintenance of their colony states in post cold war era, than it was during the Cold War. Moreover, international actors and donor community were not prepared to protect these problems in advance, rather they were preparing themselves for the eventualities of crises of governance.

CONCLUSION

By all means, the ideas of state fragility, state failure and state collapse in the international system is confused. As can be seen in the case of the three countries, an economic resource approach, internal political weakness and external policy influences are associated with the countries current appearance. These are the deep-rooted political and economic corruption of their government and an eventual decay of all aspects of life for the citizens are tends to these countries in disorder. Moreover, the factors identified were a result of leadership failure, misuse of the international aid and the lack of development of state institutions within the these countries. The natural resources are taken for leaders personal use and have been rented out through patron/client relations. The developments of these relationships have hindered the use of natural resources for the enrichment of the country.

On the other side, the influence of westerners' political and economic ideology that aggravated problems internally, because these strategies are far away from the culture of these countries. These factors led to the decay of government. The international economic aid flowing into these states, have also impacted the domestic economic development. Because the amount of aid emerged in to these country (especially DRC and Somalia) with the absence of regulatory factors on behalf of lending institutions and the failure of these international community to address these issues, ultimately the unrestricted distribution of aid can benefit the leaders for personal use and their clients instead of building their country but leaving the majority of the most needy of the society to suffer further for these actions. The combination of these factors has left the country in to a state of fragile, failed and collapsed within the international community.

In general, to bend these states from state fragility, state failure and state collapse, this article recommended the following remedies for both developed and developing countries. Primary, when these states exist as a state, they should be considered their internal affairs as a remedy. That is, if not, competing ethnic groups and political parties are reconciled, corrupt and controlling leaders will continue to benefit from the lack of a national

identity. Without emotional, ethnic, clan, tribal, or national connections, there is no motivation to build a country. Means, without guaranteeing a sense of belonging and security for all its citizens, these countries should not expect any guarantee of peace.

Secondly, the ultimate solution of these problems is vested in the hands of Ethiopia, DRC and Somalia developing. The state would have to make a fundamental change to revitalize the country. State institutions would have to be reengaged to allow the flow of aid and trade to develop the country. Legal systems would have to be put in place as well as enforced to manage the levels of corruption. These countries should be establish a democratic and constitutional system of government; exercising based on the rule of law; their policies should be designed (horizontal to their culture and custom, to give human and democratic rights, to alleviate poverty and unemployment, to guarantee the rights of citizens, at least prompting national identity as the same as ethnic identity and to build national consensus among their citizens). This would possibly reestablish the relationship between state government and the citizens within its boundaries.

Thirdly, without denying the importance of developed states and their international organizations, it counsel to these states to engage when such things happen, they should stretch their hand not only at the time of crises but also they should support their ideas, finance and human skills in advance. Plus, their aid should be, nonvolatile, poorly coordinated, target oriented, and reactive. But it should be well managed, a preventive rather than reactive and human oriented rather than target oriented. Unless, these problems are not limited only in developing countries rather they should evaporate like dew into a hot sun to developed states. So, the developed states should have a duty to integrate with developing states to prevent these problems.

Finally, one of the most important mechanism to investigate is the political elites should be solving their differences through negotiation, collaboration, and conciliation to achieve a panacea for their problem and guaranteeing a sense of belonging and security for all its citizens. Means, the role that national economic strategies, opponent parties and ruling parties have played in building a sense of nationalism and integrating elites as well as large and small scale producers into the state. It is important to point out that the presence of strong national parties does necessarily translate into competitive party politics.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interest.

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Review

Management of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia: The case of Amhara and Oromo ethnic groups

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This paper seeks to examine the causes and management of ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia, with a particular reference to the two major ethnic groups, the Amhara and Oromo. Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic country where various ethnic groups have lived together for millennia, in relative peace. Over the last few years, intra-ethnic conflicts have intensified. Even though the two major ethnic groups, the Amhara, and the Oromo, have much in common, nowadays conflicts have also redefined their relationships. This paper, drawing on social-psychological theory, argues that the causes for the conflict between the two ethnic groups are: competing narratives; institutionalised negative prejudices; and the ruthless campaign of unbridled ethnic entrepreneurs—politicisation of ethnicity. It further contends that the ethnic federalism, which was ostensibly devised in 1994, to alleviate nationalistic passions and manage inter-ethnic conflicts, has compounded ethnic conflict. Finally, it suggests that some of the tenable solutions are to change narratives, settle past accounts through national reconciliation and revisit ethnic federalism.

Key words: Ethnic conflict, Amhara, Oromo, ethnic federalism, narratives, symbolic politics, ethnic entrepreneurs.

INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia is one of the oldest states in the world which is known for its relatively peaceful co-existence of diverse ethnic and religious groups and a home for more than 80 ethno-linguistic groups. The major ethnic groups, both in terms of their population size and political significance, are Amhara and Oromo ethnic groups. A radical detour in the Ethiopian political history took place in 1991, when the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF), a guerilla fighter, after overthrowing the Dergue regime, adopted

ethnic federalism to devolve, to use Young's word, deconcentrate power and diffuse tensions to the regions (Young, 1996). This came as a surprise to the Ethiopian people and the rest of the world because this period was a litmus test for the faltering ethnic federalism in the former Yugoslavia and one of the worst human tragedies occurred in Rwanda due to ethnic conflict.

Ethnic identity in Ethiopia, as elsewhere, is a social construction that exists as an "imagined community"

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(Anderson, 2006, 6). These seemingly antagonistic identities are “products of human action and speech, and that as a result they can and do change over time” (Fearon and Laitin, 2000, 848). As Kasfir succinctly observed, “ethnic identity is fluid and intermittent” (Kasfir, 1979, 365), which is particularly true in the Ethiopian context. A closer look at the contemporary Ethiopian political discourse reveals that, based on an issue at stake, an individual can be an “Ethiopian”¹, “Amhara” or “Oromo”; which the writer calls it “ethnic forum shopping.”² This nature of ethnic identity, “by infusing so many sectors of social life, imparts a pervasive quality to ethnic conflict and raises sharply the stakes for ethnic politics” (Horowitz, 1985, 8). Put differently, “ethnicity is based on a myth of collective ancestry, which usually carries with its traits believed to be innate” (Ibid, 52). Smith was perfectly right when he noted “... ‘ethnicity’ is in the eye of the beholder, that it is all ‘situational’, a matter of time and context, shifting, fleeting, illusory . . .” (Smith, 1986, 2). Ethnic identity carries with it a ‘Myth-symbol’ complex which is deeply embedded into the fabric of the imagined community and transmitted to future generations. It is argued that “Ethnicity is largely ‘mythic’ and ‘symbolic’ in character, and because myths, symbols, memories, and values are ‘carried’ in and by forms and genres of artifacts and activities which change only very slowly, so ethnies, once formed, tend to be *exceptionally durable*” (Smith, 1986, 2) (emphasis added). This shows what makes ethnicity exceptionally durable are the masses who accept the myth-symbol as their shared experiences and values. However, one has to ask: why do the masses follow the narratives of the elites?

This paper argues that “the mass on the ground” can effectively contribute to the project of cascading and internalization of the new narrative(s). Put differently, narratives created through conscious and extensive advocacy of the elites require massive social engineering which should be sustained for long. Fearon and Laitin suggested four possible answers as to why the masses endorse the narratives framed by the elites; namely: discourses that prepare them [the public] to act violently; information asymmetry between leaders and followers; psychological biases of the followers; and followers may not be following at all (Fearon and Laitin, 2000, 868). Nevertheless, they argue that if the elites are just doing what their followers want them to do, then it seems inappropriate to blame the elites (Ibid, 854). Thus, it

shows that without the masses that provide formidable support, Ethnic Entrepreneurs cannot cascade their narratives. A rather different perspective has been put forward by Brass in which he pointed out that, in the Indian context, local people engage in “communal violence” for their disparate motives which are interpreted by “ethnic identity constructors” or political elites along ethnic lines and as such, any ethnic violence can be curbed as long as the government takes effective measures against them (Brass, 1997). True that in mob violence common unifying threads may lack. Nonetheless, for such violence to be effectively mobilized from the outset, there must be some form of allegiance from the part of the masses.

It is worth noting that the existence of ethnic diversity³, is not a problem for “multiethnicity is the rule” (Williams 1994, 50). Rather, it is when ethnic differences are accompanied by hostilities against outgroups (ethnic divisions), which has become pervasive in Ethiopia, that ethnic conflicts materialize. Horowitz defines ethnic conflict as “a struggle in which the aim is to gain objectives and simultaneously to neutralize, injure or eliminate rivals” (Horowitz, 1985, 95). More often than not, without strong feelings of *antipathy* there can be no ethnic conflicts; denoting that negative perceptions of and feelings toward other groups play a crucial role in the process of developing negative prejudices. Hence, ethnic conflict can be defined as a conflict between two ethnic groups with irreconcilable narratives (Kaufman, 2009); manifesting themselves in the form of socially accepted negative prejudices (Uvin, 1997). For example, Prunier, writing about the causes of the Rwandan genocide, reckons that genocide in Rwanda was created not by greed, but by a “social bomb” set by the colonial rulers whereby the hitherto class differences between Hutu and Tutsi were redefined as irreconcilable ethnic differences (Prunier, 1995, 248). This process of redefinition of ethnic identity and ethnic mobilisation is carried out by the ethnic entrepreneurs, or the Cadres, as Roeder noted (Roeder 1995, 84).

Although ethnic conflicts are prevalent among various ethnic groups in Ethiopia, the writer chose the case of Amhara and Oromo ethnic groups because of three interrelated reasons. First of all, “much of the history of Ethiopia can be viewed as a struggle between the Amhara and the Oromo...” (Baxter, 1978, 284). Secondly, symbolic politics is very strong between these two ethnic groups. Lastly, it is not practicable to make an in-depth analysis owing to the limitation of space and time.

¹ Ethiopian, as it is used here, does not refer to citizenship but it indicates one form of supranational ethnic identity for a significant number of people in Ethiopia, including the writer of this piece, prefer to identify themselves as Ethiopians.

² Ethnic forum shopping refers to an individual’s choice of a specific ethnic identity under a given circumstance to achieve some self-interest. In some respect, it shares some features with the instrumentalist view of ethnicity. Nonetheless, the underpinning concept of ‘ethnic forum shopping’ is the social construction dimension of ethnicity, not the everchanging nature of ethnicity with interests at stake.

³ As vast literatures on ethnic conflicts show, ethnic diversity has no causal relationship with ethnic conflict. Indeed, ethnic diversity is the principle in the world politics and Ethiopia is not an exception in this regard. Ethno-linguistic diversity has been there for centuries in the Ethiopian political history but there is no systematic study which found the existence of ethnic conflict to the level we observe today or may be further studies are welcome for it is beyond the scope of this paper.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE AMHARA AND THE OROMO: ORIGINS OF NEGATIVE PREJUDICES AND SYMBOLIC POLITICS

On the origins of the two ethnic groups: the imagined community

To date, the origins of the two ethnic groups are fraught with myths, inconsistent narratives, and contestation on common history, which partly led to the development of *reciprocal* negative prejudices and brought symbolic politics to the fore. Indeed, a contested narrative as to the origin of different nationalism and the formation of the Ethiopian state greatly help to understand the dynamics of contemporary politics in Ethiopia (Sorenson 1992).

The Amhara

No ethnic group is as contested and controversial as that of Amhara in Ethiopia so much so that Amhara could mean everything or nothing, based on one's definition. Mengistu Hailemariam, President of Ethiopia from 1974-1991, contended that the Amhara is not an ethnic group; rather Amhara refers to the way of life.⁴ In support of his assertion, he stated that the name "Amhara" comes from two Hebrew words; "Amma"—meaning people and "Hara"—meaning Mountain. Hence, Amhara means people living around the highlands of Ethiopia. But this claim is not corroborated with shreds of evidence. The closest myth that we can find today is the *Bete-Israeli*, the Ethiopian Jews who lived in the northern part of Ethiopia for Millennia (present-day Amhara Regional State) and who adopted Judaism as their religion.⁵ Indeed, it was in tune with this myth that one of the largest evacuations in history, *Operation Solomon*, was undertaken by the State of Israel in May 1991, to bring more than 15,000 Ethiopian Jews to their promised land of Israel.⁶ However, the irony is that virtually all Amhara who live in the northern part of Ethiopia still claim their Jewish descent through King Solomon of Israel and Queen Sheba of Abyssinia (the present day Ethiopia). Because of this myth-complex, the Oromo and other ethnic groups call the Amhara as "Buda", which means Witchcraft, "Antari", meaning Foundry Men and "Mikegna", meaning Stingy People—all denoting the inferiority of Amhara; of course, from the perspective of the Oromo and other ethnic groups. Admittedly, all these derogatory terms are

used within a specific local community and it has never been used to the Amhara people across the board.

Debates as to the origin of ethnic Amhara had continued wherein on a televised interview of 1991⁷, Mr. Meles Zenawi, the late Prime Minister of Ethiopia, who led Ethiopia for more than two decades, claimed that the Amhara people is a distinct ethnic group with their own culture, language, and ancestry, but without providing elaborate and convincing analysis. Responding to Zenawi's assertion, Mesfin Woldemariam⁸ strongly argued that there is no ethnic group known as Amhara, mostly basing his reasoning on the fact that the Amhara people mostly identify themselves with their locality, as Orthodox Christians or at best, simply Ethiopian. Pausewang similarly observed the complex identity of the Amhara, in which he stated: "the term 'Amhara' changed its meaning depending on local conditions. In many contexts, it just signified a Christian. The practice of conversion to Christianity involved taking a new, Christian (baptismal) name, usually a biblical Ge'ez or Amharic name. Thus, assimilated people could no longer be identified as Gurage or Sidama or Wolaita by their names" (Pausewang, 2005, 277). Furthermore, Levine argues that Amhara is a 'supra-ethnic group' composed of different subgroups (Levine, 1974).

This claim is particularly true for Muslim dominated areas and nowadays, even in other regions where Orthodox Christians are the majority, whereby everyone who is a follower of "Orthodox Christianity" are labeled as Amhara settlers or the "Neftegna"⁹, to mean a group of Amhara Viceroy who invaded Oromia and southern part of Ethiopia under the leadership of King Minilik II. As such, it is not surprising that the extremist Oromo groups have converted themselves to Protestant religion, and waged indiscriminate attacks against Orthodox Christians in Oromia Region on October 23, 2019, where 87 people were slaughtered in broad daylight and the Oromo Nationalist are in the process of establishing Oromo Orthodox Church, where Amhara Priests will no longer be needed. To be more specific, only from October 2019 to October 2020, the Neftegna (Amhara) people were persecuted and murdered in more than five different localities in Ethiopia. To mention just a few of them, the

⁴ Mengistu Hailemariam's Speech about the Amhara identity is available here: <https://youtu.be/5TXvOpp5VYY>, last accessed on 03/07/2021.

⁵ For a comprehensive and excellent historical accounts of *Bete-Israeli*, readers are strongly advised to read Steven Kaplan, *The Beta Israel (Falasha) in Ethiopia: From Earliest Times to the Twentieth Century* (1995, New York University Press).

⁶ For the brief history of Bete-Israeli and how Operation Solomon was conducted, the readers might refer to this link: <https://youtu.be/DJIQIQsMeUA>, last visited on 15/02/20.

⁷ The full interview is available here: <https://youtu.be/CmdgqTwSkQY>, Accessed on 26 January 2016.

⁸ Professor Mesfin Woldemariam is a prolific writer, human rights pioneer and veteran politician of Ethiopia.

⁹ The term *Neftegna* literally and originally, meant Gun Men or Soldiers of the Monarchy, which used to have no negative connotations whatsoever. More generally, its equivalent would be 'Viceroy' sent to the southern and western part of the country by the Kings of Abyssinia to effectively rule the Empire. But with the passage of time and as animosity between the Amhara and the Oromo grew, mostly owing to the institutionalised negative prejudice against Amhara over the last three decades, it got its current meaning—interchangeably used to refer to the Amhara, Orthodox Christians and people with pro-Ethiopian ideology inclinations. By historical coincidence, the Amhara people fulfil virtually all the manifestations of Neftegna, which makes their plights unparalleled. An Anthropological study of the 'Neftegna' and its socio-political dimension has been discussed in John Sorenson, "History and Identity in the Horn of Africa", *Dialectical Anthropology*, Vol.17, No.3, (1992), pp.227-252.

ethnic cleansing in some areas of Oromia Region in June 2020, the organized murders in Metekel Zone of Benishangul Gumuz Region in October and the mass killing in Gura-Ferda Zone of Southern Nation, Nationalities and Peoples Region in October 2020; ethnic cleansing in Guliso area in the Wollega Zone; the gruesome massacres of majority ethnic Amhara in the Mai-Kadra area¹⁰, are the clear indications of the extreme hatred towards the Amhara people.

Until most recently, the Amhara people have mostly been identifying themselves as Ethiopian and showed strong distaste to ethnic stratification and the baggage that comes with it, notably ethnic federalism. In his empirical study, Michael noted that “today, most people labeled by outsiders as Amhara, refer to themselves simply as Ethiopian, or to their province (such as Gojjame from the province Gojjam)” (Michael, 2008, 396). Nonetheless, with the introduction of Identity Card which provided for ethnic identification a mandatory requirement, the Amhara people were forced to accept the reality. This, in turn, has further institutionalized ethnic divisions and paved the way for negative prejudices.

This study contends that the Amhara people have been specifically targeted over the last three decades due to institutionalized negative prejudices, which have been sponsored and orchestrated by the government.¹¹ For instance, the preamble of the Constitution of Ethiopia which clearly stipulates historical injustice; the TPLF Political Manifesto which had been taught to students in schools about the oppressive history of Amhara; the mass killings, displacements, the alleged forced sterilizations of Amhara Women, and government acquiescence to all these crimes, are only some of the manifestations of the institutionalized negative prejudices and ethnic-based attacks against the Amhara people.¹²

Furthermore, being an Amhara, had been considered as a privilege, in the sense that Amhara people are educated, civilized and politically well-organized, in the same ways the Tutsis in Rwanda were treated before the onset of the genocide. As Michael noted, “becoming Amhara signifies elevation to a superior status and while becoming Oromo, on the other hand simply means

joining a new community at the expense of giving up elite privileges” (Michael, 2008, 278). The Amhara are known for their culture of adoption and assimilation in which those who are baptized, became Orthodox Christian and the Amharic language would be treated as a full member of the community. In this regard, Chernestove alluded that Amhara’s identity is primarily defined by the culture of assimilation and the consciousness of superiority to other ethnic groups (Sevier, 1993).

Thus, based on the foregoing discussions, the Amhara people are targeted for their perceived historical superiority on the one hand, whereas they are treated as evil and inferior people with Jewish, Semitic descent or on the ground of the socially constructed narratives of historical domination in the Ethiopian politics, on the other hand.

The Oromo

There is a dearth of literature on the origin and history of the Oromo people mainly owing to the oral tradition that characterized the culture of the Oromo people¹³ and/ or due to the lopsided approach to Ethiopian history. In other words, the written history of Ethiopia is preoccupied with the northern part of the country, which had ruled the country until the downfall of the Solomonic Dynasty in 1974. There are divergent claims about the origin of the Oromo people as they have little written historiography, which remained unexplored before the 16th century. Lewis, who has made extensive research in this area asserts that “there is no known reference to the *Galla* before the middle of the sixteenth century” (Lewis, 1966, 32). Some Oromos believe that their ancestors had migrated from Madagascar to Ethiopia (Jaenen, 1956, 176). Nevertheless, the prevailing view on the origin of the Oromo people is that the Oromo lived around *Meda Welabu*, part of Southwestern highland of Ethiopia and massively migrated to northern and eastern parts of the country during the mid-16th C. (Hassen, 2012; Gidada, 2001). Before the late 20th century Oromo people were called *Galla*, which signifies pagans, savages or uncivilized people (Jalata, 1995, 171), the term which is nowadays generally accepted as a derogatory and a social taboo. The Oromo were predominantly nomadic pastoralists and their major expansion of the 16th C. was mainly driven by a search for vast areas of lands to accommodate a rapidly growing population (Levine, 1974, 80). Even though Hassen (Hassen,1990) has attempted to show that the Oromo used to live in the southern part of Ethiopia long before the 16th C., his claims are bedeviled by lack of strong historical evidence. To be fair, there are growing literatures on the Oromo

¹⁰ For an in-depth account of the ethnic cleansings and mass murders, readers may refer to the following the following sources: <https://minorityrights.org/2020/07/22/ethnic-cleansing-oromia/>, <https://apnews.com/article/race-and-ethnicity-united-nations-abiy-ahmed-ethiopia-war-crimes-b33880834d7cb67b9de3c4f460cb2b9c>, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/11/ethiopia-over-50-ethnic-amhara-killed-in-attack-on-village-by-armed-group/>.

¹¹ In addition to the above cited violence against the Amhara people, some of the documented ethnic based attacks against the Amhara during the last ten years can be accessed at: <https://addisstandard.com/commentary-increasing-accounts-displacement-violence-ethnic-amharas-solving-priority/>; <https://ecadforum.com/blog/ethiopia-gura-ferda-and-crimes-against-humanity/>; <https://theconversation.com/persecution-of-ethnic-amharas-will-harm-ethiopias-reform-agenda-98201>.

¹² This by no means entails that other ethnic groups have not been stigmatized in Ethiopia; rather, the thrust of this research is on systematic, persistent and institutionalised prejudices.

¹³ It should be noted that until very recently, the Oromo people, like many other ethnic groups in Ethiopia, had no well-developed literatures and as such, scholarly works are very limited.

people's folklore, language, and culture over the last two decades, both in local and international languages. However, there are dearths of research works that may strengthen Hassan's thesis as to the origin of the Oromo people.

The Oromo constitutes more than one-third of the Ethiopian population, based on the latest census conducted a decade ago, and most fertile lands and natural resources of the country are found in Oromia Regional State. The Oromo people have an indigenous 'democratic system' of governance or social organization known as the *Gada* system, whereby responsibilities are distributed across social stratum and power passes from one generation to succeeding generations. The *Gada* system is one of the cultural assets which are highly revered by the Oromo people (Legesse, 2001). The "original Oromo" were neither Christian nor Muslim, rather they worship *Waaqa*¹⁴, a traditional belief system that is more cultural than religious. Through *Irreechaa*, a thanksgiving ceremony, homage is paid to *Waaqa* Oromo once in a year. Jaenen has succinctly pointed out this traditional way of life as: "[t]he pagan Galla avoid the arduous fasts of the Orthodox Church and generally enjoy a better diet than their Christian or Muslim fellows" (Jaenen, 1956, 175).

It has to be noted that, ever since the 16th C. the Amhara ruling elites had been deeply concerned about the aggressive expansion of the Oromo and Islam (Baxter, 1978, 285). Furthermore, the Amhara believe, Baxter notes, the Oromo were, by and large, uncivilized people due to their passionate rejection of Christianity (Ibid, 286). As Jalata observed, although the Oromo are a numerical majority, they have been political minorities (Jalata, 1995, 166). He regards this scenario as the colonization of the Oromo people by Ethiopians. Nowadays, this narrative is widely shared by the "extremist" Oromo elites and Political Parties, currently represented by the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) and the vast majority of the young generation. To be fair, the contemporary Oromo politics cannot and should not be understood as being represented by extremist groups. In fact, as Tronvoll and Østebø have argued, the contemporary Oromo politics could be interpreted as constituting three positions: unitarist, federalist and secessionist (Tronvoll 2020), the unitarist group being quite insignificant.

In sum, the main negative prejudice against the Oromo emanates from the fact that they cannot trace their history back longer than 16th C., their traditional belief

system [in the past], lack of literacy and insignificant roles they played in the long history of Ethiopian politics. To these, one may also add the Neftegna discourse, mainly advocated by the Oromo extremists, against the outer group (the Amhara) which produced a reciprocal prejudice.

Symbolic politics: myth-symbol complex and competing narratives

Symbolism is powerful in ethnic conflict, according to Horowitz, because it masks ethnic claims in ideas and associations; thereby appealing to strongly shared moral symbols (Horowitz, 1985, 218). Most importantly, it is so powerful in highly divided societies that issues such as national language, the design, and color of the flag, name of places, national hero, etc., which appear to have trivial par values, at times lead to devastating ethnic conflicts. This is no less true in Ethiopia where the Amhara and the Oromo ethnic groups (of course, only as represented through their political parties and elites) incessantly fight over the symbols. Gudina, who has been in the Ethiopian politics for more than four decades and still the Chairman of the OFC Party, warned that "competing ethnic nationalisms tend to create the problem of majorities and minorities concerning basic rights in the ethnically reconstituted regions" (Gudina, 2004, 40). He made this observation at the time when Amhara nationalism was fledging. Now, with the advent of a strong Amhara nationalism, which took many by surprise, Gudina's observation is as relevant today as it was decades ago. Although the elites, Statesmen and Youth Protestors from the two ethnic groups have tactically cooperated to bring the TPLF dominated regime to an end in April 2018, the relationship between the two ethnic groups has reverted to its old days of animosity and incompatible narratives shortly after.

These competing narratives and their attendant symbolic politics will be discussed by taking some selected examples. To begin with, the derogative term *Galla*, as discussed above, represents a symbol of inferiority and as such, has never been welcomed by the Oromo. As Jalata puts it, while the name *Galla* characterized defeat, inferiority, and subordination because it was bestowed by the Ethiopian colonizers, Oromo nationalists perceive the name Oromo as *symbolizing* a glorious past, democracy, egalitarianism, bravery, pride, and victory (Jalata, 1995, 171). On the contrary, for the Amhara elites, *Galla* is simply an everyday language used to describe the non-Christians (pagans) as it was originally used, but not anymore.

Taking the example of a national hero, for the Amhara and many others, Emperor *Minilik II* is the national hero, modernizer, the founder of modern Ethiopian State and above all, the symbol of independence; whereas the same leader is portrayed as the oppressor, killer and even a "wild beast" by the Oromo elites. The Oromo

¹⁴ *Waaqa* is a traditional belief system which is still practiced by the Borana tribe of Oromo and collectively celebrated once in a year in the form of *Irreechaa annual festivity*. It is considered as primitive belief system because of its mode of celebration; large group of people gathered from all over the country marches to Hora (river); throw some fresh grasses into the river, get blessings from the Abba Geda (Leader of Geda system) and at times, anoint the nearby trees with butter.

elites¹⁵ constructed these narratives about Minilik II and employed it as a potent tool to mobilise the people and most recently, radicalize the group called *Qeerroo*.¹⁶ The narrative can be summarized as follows: before Emperor Minilik II made southward expansion and colonized the Oromo land, the Oromos were independent people with their own homeland and political organisation. Then Minilik came, killed many Oromo People, subjugated them, exploited their resources, and brought the Neftegna with him to the Oromo land. However, except for the fact that Ethiopia took a modern shape around the dawn of the 20th century, there is no evidence which point to the alleged massive crimes committed against the Oromo. Yet, what really matters most is the acceptance of the narrative by the young generation, which has proven to be quite successful if seen from the vantage point of the ethnic entrepreneurs.¹⁷

Related to the above narrative is the controversy over the capital city, *Addis Ababa*. For most people and the residents of the city, the name of the capital city has never been in doubt. To the contrary, the Oromo elites (and the majority of the 'Qubee generation'¹⁸) believe that the original name of Addis Ababa was "Finfinne." Despite the absence of compelling historical records that support this "imaginary city", in the world of Oromo Activists and their followers, Finfinne has always been the rightful name of the capital city and accordingly, the ownership of the city belongs to the Oromo people. Recently, with a view to counter this claim, the Amhara elites¹⁹ came up with new and controversial counter-narrative. This narrative claim that before the city was renamed by Impress Taitu, Addis Ababa used to be known as

"Berara" (Tegegne, 2020). These competing narratives have played their roles in the growing animosities and sporadic ethnic conflicts over the last few years.

Regarding the national language, the Oromos demand for recognition of *Afaan Oromoo* as an additional official language of the federal government. It should be noted that *Amharic* was chosen as the official language of the federal government because it is widely spoken in virtually all parts of the country while *Afaan Oromo* is *mainly* confined to the present-day Oromia Region but second only to Amharic in terms of the number of people who speak it. Undoubtedly, the demand is legitimate (Bulcha, 1997) from historical, legal, and factual point of view. But the problem lies in using hatred towards the Amharic language as a means to justify the legitimate claim. In so doing, a hitherto legitimate claim has brought the Oromo nationalists in conflict with the Amhara elites due to its symbolic implication; the Oromo nationalists perceive Amharic language as an instrument of Amhara domination of the other ethnic groups including the Oromo.

The last, by no means least, an example of symbolic politics is signified in the issue surrounding the national flag. As recently as on the 20th of January 2020, the symbolic value of a flag led to an ethnic clash between the Muslim Oromo and the Orthodox Christian followers (who were celebrating epiphany festive in Harar and Dire Dawa towns) that resulted in few casualties from both sides. The bone of contention was about the legitimacy of the flag used during the celebration. The current flag has been practically rejected by the Amhara people and other pro-unity groups and the Orthodox Church has always been using the 'original Ethiopian flag' (green-yellow-red colors without any other symbols or marks on it). It is customary to decorate the streets with the (original) flag on major Orthodox Christian holidays, such as epiphany. Consequently, as the decorations were underway, the *Qeerroo* started removing the flags, followed by a burning ceremony. As they were burning the enemy's flag to ashes, they passionately chanted; "we are burning the symbol of Neftegna, of oppression and ancient regime."²⁰ To which, expectedly, the "Neftegna" had retaliated in kind.

In a nutshell, as shown above, disagreements on the origin of the two ethnic groups and political history of the country led to negative prejudices. These, in turn, resulted in incompatible narratives and counter-narratives, carefully exploited by ethnic conflict Entrepreneurs by making use of polarized media platforms²¹ and political mobilization, culminated in sporadic ethnic conflicts

¹⁵ Among others, a famous Oromo Singer, Kemer Yusuf, released a song entitled "Minilik Bineensa", which portrays Emperor Minilik II, the national hero who routed Italian invaders at the battle of Adwa, as a Wild Beast who committed a genocide against the Oromo People and calls up on all Oromo to fight against any sympathizers of Minilik (indirectly referring to the Amhara). The song is available here: https://youtu.be/Ajqj_3l2Psk.

¹⁶ *Qeerroo* is an informal youth network created during the Oromo Protest against the previous regime. The group was responsible for the October massacre (on October 23, 2019) against the Neftegna in the Oromia Regional State. It carried out the slaughter under the direct order of the well-known Oromo Activist called Jawar Mohammed, who was planning to run for the upcoming election and currently in jail for alleged incitement of violence and other criminal charges on June 29, 2020.

¹⁷ The massive violence that erupted in the Oromia Region following the murder of Artist Hacaalu Hundessa on 29 June 2020, is a clear testament. The youth group carried out the mass murder and looting by targeting the 'Neftegna', based on the feeling that their hero was murdered by the Neftegna people. The investigation by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission clearly pointed out the systematic nature of the conflict. The executive summary of the report is available here: <https://addisstandard.com/news-analysis-123-people-killed-in-june-july-unrest-76-by-security-forces-attacks-constitute-elements-of-crime-against-humanity-ethiopia-rights-commission/>.

¹⁸ The Qubee generation refers to the young generation who was born during the current regime (since 1991) or studied in their mother tongue, which is *Afaan Oromo*.

¹⁹ With the establishment of the nationalist Amhara political party called National Movement of Amhara (NAMA), the Amhara nationalism, which hitherto had been passive, took a new form and nature mainly designed to counter Oromo ultra-nationalism and to fight against ever growing ethnic violence against the Amhara (Neftegna) people.

²⁰ These are the words (in *Afaan Oromoo*) the protestors used as they were burning the flag on the same day (translation is mine).

²¹ Both the Oromo and Amhara have had mass media used to propagate their narratives and mobilise their followers through Oromia Media Network and Asrat Media, respectively, until they were shut down the government in July 2020. In addition, social media has been serving as the easiest and cheapest platforms to do mass mobilisation, though it has shown a decreasing trend.

between the Amhara and the Oromo ethnic groups.

MANAGEMENT OF ETHNIC CONFLICTS THROUGH ETHNIC FEDERALISM

To contain ethnic wars and avoid the risk of disintegration of the country, it was originally claimed, ethnic federalism had been adopted. Accordingly, nine regional states (10 states as of July, 2020) and two city administrations were created. In the constitution, the right to unconditional self-determination up to *secession* was recognized.²² It should be noted that no country in the world has guaranteed the right to unconditional self-determination, nor does such right has been envisaged in any of the international human rights instruments. This fact—the fact that Ethiopia has envisioned its own self-destruction—has been neglected by many analysts of the Ethiopian politics. If anything, this strange arrangement federal arrangement, as will be further elaborated below, has institutionalized the prejudices and laid down the foundation for competitive ethnic interactions. Besides, the federal structure has created ethnic homelands and notwithstanding Henry Hale’s (Hale, 2004, 179) classification of the Ethiopian ethnic federalism as lacking core ethnic groups, almost all of the regional constitutions reserve the rights of self-administration, including political participation only to the ‘owners of the region’. Moreover, the Amhara and Oromia Regional States alone constitute close to 70 percent of the population and hence, parliamentary seats. Thus, in effect, the majority-minority problem has been created and strong incentives to vying for an ‘imagined ethnic homeland’ is in place.

That being the case, shortly after its adoption, some have hailed the ethnic federal structure as the ingenious move whilst most experts of comparative constitutional law and politics had rung the alarm bells early on. In this regard, it did not take more than a year for Lorch to observe that “...in recognizing ethnicity for what it is; a very powerful issue...They [the Ethiopian people] are sitting on an ethnic *time bomb*. They have come up with a possible solution, which is to tackle it pre-emptively. It is a frightening experiment. Will it work? I do not think anybody knows.” (Lorch, 1995, 3, emphasis added). In a similar vein, Cohen opined that ‘devolution of power to *large regions reinforces* the demands of some ethnic groups for regional secession or partition (Cohen, 1995, 168). Cohen’s concern seems to have been confirmed by Oromo Nationalists’ usual rhetoric of secession and the recent surge of statehood quests by various ethnic groups.²³ Writing about the danger of ethnic federalism,

Kefale pointed out that “the adoption of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia, unfortunately contributes to the accentuation of ethnic otherness and causes mistrust and at times violent conflicts tearing apart common ties that took several generations to develop” (Kefale, 2009, 5).

The Amhara elites have rejected the ethnic federalism from its inception and still do, but as there were no genuine deliberations during the adoption of the Constitution, the Amhara People feel they were not represented in the process. One of the scholars who closely observed the adoption process of the Constitution succinctly stated the following:

Many Amhara rejects ethnic federalism and argue for the “historic unity of Ethiopia and for the Amharas’ right to live and to act politically in all parts of the country (...) A right of secession will stimulate a surge of nationalism, and it is inconsistent with a competitive politics under federal arrangements: rather than practice the political art of compromise, some or most opposition parties will simply threaten to leave the state (...) Article 39 provisions on secession seem like a recipe for disaster, at least without a redraft or an interpretation (Brietzke, 1995, 28-35).

The Amhara and other pro-unity camp rejected the Constitution, not only because of its exclusionary adoption process but also because the new Constitution was nothing more than TPLF’s Party Manifesto. That is, the Constitution has been suffering from a legitimacy crisis. The Constitution, especially the secession clause, is earnestly loved by the extremist Oromo elites; while on the contrary, it is ardently loathed by the Amhara and pro-unity camps. The Amhara strongly defends the unity of Ethiopia mainly because they believe that they disproportionately contributed to the long process of building modern Ethiopia. Here again, the symbolic politics is given constitutional clothing, in the sense that the same document has different symbolic meaning for the two ethnic groups, not to mention other ethnic groups such as the Tigray Liberation Front (the TPLF).

It has to be noted that ethnic-based conflicts in Ethiopia, both in terms of its nature and magnitude, have intensified after the ethnic federalism came into force, which has caused massive internal displacement²⁴ and ethnic cleansing as highlighted in section two above. This argument is in tune with Wilkinson’s assertion that India’s

consequence of the federal arrangement and years of sustained narratives of ‘ethnic independence’ through ethnic entitlement to homeland—homogenisation of regions.

²⁴ Ethiopian Human Rights Council Report (2017, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia). The report indicates that *systematic* and well organised ethnic based attacks against Amhara in different Regional States, including Oromia, have *not been reported* before the introduction of ethnic based federal structure came into existence. Moreover, the displacements and ethnic attacks were undertaken by the perpetrators emboldened by the ‘we-feeling’ of belongingness to the region and ‘the others’ who are outsiders and at times, invaders; all provided in the notion of ‘self-determination’ enshrined in the (in)famous constitution.

²² Article 39(1) of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia provides that “Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession.”

²³ Over the last 2 years, all the major ethnic groups in the Southern Nations and Nationalities have asked for their own regional autonomy (ethnic region), of which the Sidama people has secured an independent region while the claims of others are still on hold. These claims are not random phenomena, but the

increased consociational character resulted in more inter-ethnic violence (Wilkinson, 2000, 767). Consequently, the ethnic federalism has embroiled the relationship between the two ethnic groups instead of pacifying it, as it was ostensibly claimed. After all, it was naïve to institutionalize ethnic prejudices exactly in the same year (1994) when the former Yugoslavia with similar federal structure was disintegrating and not far away from Ethiopia, Rwanda was experiencing the worst genocide in Africa. Thence, if we have unprecedented ethnic conflict in Ethiopia which springs from symbolic politics of the constitutional design and the federal arrangement, it is a conflict by design.

An alternative argument can be made as to the enabling environment for the ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia. The liberalization with less centralised decision-making process brought about by the current regime has, notably, empowered the ethnic entrepreneurs to play the ethnic card. Nevertheless, it has been possible only within the context of the preexisting institutionalized prejudices, symbolic politics, and strong ethnic consciousness.

The other structural defect of the Ethiopian ethnic federalism is an election system along ethnic line. Not surprisingly, out of the registered political parties operating in Ethiopia, only less than 4 percent are multi-ethnic in their programmes and composition. Elections in ethnically divided society are nothing more than having rounds of ethnic census. In this regard, Ishiyama correctly observed that "...elections in ethnically divided societies will produce *census elections*" that are inimical to democracy. This is because such elections tend to create impermeable blocs that detract from inter-ethnic accommodation" (Ishiyama, 2010, 290). He further observed that, based on empirical research, a partisan election is higher in Ethiopia as compared to other African Countries. It would have been extremely surprising had the result been different. It is unlikely that this trend will change as long as the ethnic federalism is in place and unless the electoral system is changed to incentivise (or legally require) political parties to organise themselves in multi-ethnic form such that transition towards politics based on ideology and competition of ideas will be possible. Democratisation in a divided society such as Ethiopia requires an innovative electoral system, in which inter-ethnic compromises and coalition should be a norm and that aims at mitigating the recurrent risk of inclusion and exclusion from politics, can contribute to an endeavor to manage ethnic conflicts.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to show that ethnic identity is very fluid and intermittent in the Ethiopian context. To this end, the case of the Amhara and the Oromo ethnic groups has been critically discussed. It has specifically argued that much of the conflict between the Amhara and the Oromo ethnic groups have stemmed from competing

narratives about ethnic origin, the roles of the respective groups in state-building and contested political history of Ethiopia. These competing narratives are accompanied by reciprocal negative prejudices, which are reinforced by an unbridled nationalistic passion of the ethno-nationalists and the institutionalised prejudices in the constitution and other documents. These, in turn, morphed into symbolic politics that has been relentlessly manipulated by ethnic entrepreneurs. Accordingly, it suggests that the starting point to bring about national reconciliation and heal the divided society is by changing the incompatible narratives and "replacing the inter-group symbolic politics of ethnic chauvinism with a politics that rewards moderation" (Kaufman, 2006); strengthen the ongoing work of the Truth Commission and giving transitional justice a proper chance (Teshome 2020); making substantial amendments to the Constitution that suffers from "legitimacy deficit" (Hessebon, 2013); restructuring the federations territorially and make people, instead of ethnicity, the sovereign since the "Constitution has tried to reify something which is by nature fluid and shifting: ethnic identity" (Abbink 1997, 172); and more generally, bring about national reconciliation before embarking on other political programmes to avoid recurrent ethnic conflicts and the risk of state disintegration. Indeed, it has been observed that the chances for continued state unity, particularly in divided societies, are high when the ethnic federal systems are divided into many small units to avoid core ethnic regions (Hale 2004, 193) and in the Ethiopian context, to further neutralise the quest for unceasing ethnic homelands.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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