



## Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Ethiopia: Problems and Prospects

SibuhGebeyawTareke

Department of Political Science and International Studies

BahirDar University, BahirDar, Ethiopia

### Abstract

*In 1991, Ethiopia established an ethnic federal system that gave full recognition to ethnic autonomy, while maintaining the unity of the state. Its constitution provides for the secession of ethnic units, as an exception to the general pattern in Africa. Its new constitution created a federal system largely consisting of ethnic-based territorial units as a reaction to some long-standing historic conflicts. But old conflicts became more entrenched and new conflicts are escalating along regional states due to different reasons. Consequently, federalism in Ethiopia experienced one of the conflicting area and inter-displaced populous state in the world. In doing so, this article explores the structure of ethnic federalism, causes and consequences of ethnic federalism and future prospects of the contemporary Ethiopia.*

**Keywords:** Federalism; Conflict; Ethnicity; Ethnic Parties; Displaced Persons; Humanitarian Funding and Ethiopia.

### 1. Introduction

Ethiopia is one of the oldest states in the world. It is the cradle of mankind and it has been the land of diverse linguistic groups for a long period of time. It also has been the home of diverse political institutions for at least the last 2,000 years (Fisha, 2009:1-4). In spite of this history, since pre-historic times up to Emperor *Menelik II* (who constructed the modern state of

Ethiopia from 1889-1913), it's characterized by intra- and interstate conflicts due to territorial expansion, civil, economic and regional factors(Tiruneh, 1993:1-7).

From the second half of the 19th century up to the second half of 20 century, the country had been repeatedly exposed to external invasion but remained independent. Recently, it recognized by internal ethnic and political conflicts as well as lack of democracy and development continues to be grand failures (Gudina, 2003:141-164).

Thus, the current Ethiopian federal structure is organized based on territorial autonomy for geographically concentrated ethnic groups to resolve these problems (Kefale, 2008:65). As a result, federalism was supposedly chosen to respond to the challenge of ethno-national conflicts that stressed the old Ethiopian state and to serve as a panacea for emerging conflicts in the future of Ethiopia (Turton, 2006:17-30).Thus, ethnicity is taken seriously in the endeavor to reconstruct the state as a multi-national, multi-cultural federal polity, de facto as of 1991 and de jure as of 1995 (Regassa, 2010:53).

Accordingly, Article 39 and 62 of the 1995 constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) declares that:Ethiopia's Nations, Nationalities and Peoples have entered into a binding federal compact by their free and full exercise of their respective right of self determination in order to build one political community based on their respective free will and consent, and the rule of law, and one economic community in order to maintain and promote their rights, freedoms and interests in a mutually supportive manner. Such a federal political community is set up with the objectives of establishing a lasting peace and democracy in the country and enhancing economic and social development for its peoples.

Even though the assumption ofthefederal arrangement of Ethiopia is to address the old ethno-national conflicts in the country; it has been generated new localized conflicts instead of solving the old problems. The first problem is that it reinforces undemocratic political mobilization based on ethnic group protection, leading to discrimination based on identity and ethnicity. As a result, it can generate internal violence when ethnic majorities are intolerant toward minority groups in their jurisdictions. Secondly, ethnic federalism forces citizens to favorer to their ethnic identity rather than Ethiopian identity. The other challenge is its tendency to restrict migration-induced demographic changes. The established ethnic boundaries legitimized any resistance to spontaneous inter-ethnic migration. Such resistance has led to confrontations and violent conflicts in different regions of the country.In doing so,

ethnic-based federalism increases ethnic conflicts rather than minimizing ethnic strives and the imposition of ethnic classifications and division is contributing to state instability (Taddele, 2017:13;Fisha, 2009:19; Taddele, 2017:16; Markakis, 1994:5).

Thus, this research seeks to achieve the following objectives: (1) to assess the determinants of ethnic conflicts in national and regional level and (2) to generate a resolution of conflict management and developing a mechanism for sustainable peace and democracy in the country. The structure of the article is; as follows: Section two, to analyze the theoretical debates of federalism and ethnic conflicts; Section three, briefly discusses the current Ethiopian federal arrangement, causes of ethno-national conflicts and consequences; the final section provides the conclusion and recommendation remark.

The sources of data for this article include public documents and observations. Primarily, the public documents include the present constitution, government statistical data, government and private print media, reports of international organizations, state radio and television. Secondly, regards to observation, I spent most of my time during 2015-2019 years, by observing political crises, the fragility of ethnic parties, ethnic conflicts, public appraisals, displaced persons from different regions and the changing of leadership in the country as they pertain to ethnic federalism and unequal distribution of economic power.

## **2. Theoretical Debates of Federalism and Ethnic Conflicts**

### **2.1. Debates on Federalism**

The term federalism conceptualized in various ways by different authors. Conventionally federalism is a form of non-centralized mode of organizing a polity and refers to a union of separate states in which power is divided and shared between a strong union government and strong state governments (Regassa, 2010:13). According to Carl Friedrich, federalism is actually a “species of the largest genus of constitutionalism and that a federal constitution was a subdivision of the general kind of process involved in modern constitutionalism” (Friedrich, 1962:511–29). Whereas, Riker recognized federalism as a range of phenomena rather than merely a constitutional aspect (Rikker 1975: 101-3). Moreover, it is defined as a normative term, referring to an ideology that promotes a multi-tier government, and political structure. It is an indication arrangement for the accommodation of unity and diversity, or an ideology prescribing a system that has a measure of self rule at the local level and participative in the national scene of shared rule (Watts, 2008:8).

Federalism is also possible to divide federations broadly into two categories. In the first category, there are those federations that ensure territorial power sharing and many of the older western federations such as the US, Australia and Germany fall under this category. Most of these federations resulted from the coming together of their units, which previously existed independently. Their main purpose was to unite people living in different political units, who nevertheless shared a common language and culture (Girma, 2013:26).

The second category of federation is ethnic based federalism. It is not only recognizing ethnic and linguistic diversity, but also reflects them in their ideology and structures. This federalism as a multinational and ethnic federation which consists in giving to ethnic groups, allowing them to depend on the rules edited by the constituted unities and they locate on ethno-national territory. This federalism gives a self-administration over the cultural, linguistic, ethnic, or religious matters of a constituted unity (Regassa, 2010:74-75).

Regards to this, classical federalist argued that, a federal system allows a diverse society to enhance efficiency, allocate responsibilities and assign liabilities in a manner that improves the quantity and quality of public goods among political unities (Esty, 1996:572-83). It also ensures the right of citizens to move from one region to another through the federation, which brings individual citizens into like-minded communities. Citizens through pushing the central governments to satisfy their diverse policy preferences and they assured a durable peace (Choudhry and Hume, 2010:360). It also promotes regional governments by competing each other for mobile people, resources and money; to ensure economic and political pressure and to enhance economic efficiency across the federal system (Weingast 1995:1-10).

Furthermore, federalism as a multinational and ethnic federation which consists in giving to ethnic groups, allowing them to depend on the rules edited by the constituted unities and they locate on ethno-national territory. This federalism gives a self-administration over the cultural, linguistic, ethnic, or religious matters of a constituted unity (Regassa, 2010:74-75). Classical federalist recognized the role of the courts as an important aspect of federalism when they are an integral part of federal government; they act as a mechanism to resolve jurisdictional disputes (Choudhry and Hume, 2010:359).

In the same token, modern federalism assumes that, a federal state grants the demand for self-determination and self-government then it stops the idea of secession without fragmenting the state in different segments. Even the word secession is a tactic to limit the powers of the central

government and for the reason of as a protective mechanism for the disadvantageous minority nation (Ibid, 2010).

Paradoxically to the above statement, numerous scholars argued that, in a diverse society, ethno-cultural diversity translates into political fragmentation: political claims are refracted through the lens of ethnic identity, and political conflict is synonymous with conflict among ethno-cultural groups (Smith 1995:9). The other challenge of ethnic federalism is its tendency to restrict migration-induced demographic changes. The established ethnic boundaries legitimized any resistance to spontaneous inter-ethnic migration. Such resistance has led to confrontations and violent conflicts. This limited the geographical spaces for movement of traditional communities. Therefore, restrictions on migration and mobility, affects on the liberty of individual citizens and ethnic groups as well as the fundamental human and democratic rights of the modern state (Levy 2007:460-70).

According to Philip Roeder (2009), post-conflict federalism is naturally unbalanced and exemplified by a constant struggle between the two extremes of centralization and decentralization; it's characterized by a frequent crisis of politics and practically it result a much more ambivalent and complex stance to diffuse violent conflict. Others argued that, judicial federalism has attracted less comparative attention. For this reason, in India, debates over state boundaries and the power of the President ambiguous about the role of courts in the federal system. In Ethiopia, when disputes arise between ethnic groups, the power to solve problems given to the house of federation rather than courts (Baylis, 2004:530-40).

In practice ethnic federalism is contentious as it was applied in the case of former Soviet Union, which leads to the disintegration of those states. It leads to institutionalize ethnic discrimination, obstruct individual citizen rights, strengthen centrifugal forces, introduce zero-sum ethnic competition and generate dangerous reactions like ethnic cleansing, expulsion and disintegration rather than ensuring political stability and enhance economic efficiency (Fleiner, 2000:14-16). Currently Ethiopia is one of among other countries in the world which following ethnic federalism. Thus, it allowed self determination up to secession for regional states with other unique characteristics. Following this, the country has been characterized by ethnic conflicts and results in the death of many people's and the displacement of millions of people in the country.

## **2.2. Debates on Ethnic Conflicts**

The term ethnicity refers to the perception of a common origin based on a set of shared attributes such as language, culture, history, locality, and physical appearance (Oomen, 1997:21). On the other hand, ethnic conflict is a conflict in which the key causes and issues at stake involves some elements of ethnicity or the statues of ethnic groups themselves (Kaufman, 2001:15-17). Ethno-national conflicts also can be viewed as a struggle between and/or among diverse groups who, having incompatible goals, use incompatible means to achieve their goals (Regassa, 2010:59).

In much of the academic literature, theories of ethnic conflicts are categorized as ethnic approach, economic approach, strategic-territorial approach and political approach. Primarily, based on ethnic approach, when ethnic groups fear that their existence is threatened and assumes our group is in danger, the next condition, which has to be present in order for ethnic conflict to occur, is political opportunity (Monica, 2003:8). This consists of two elements; first, there must be sufficient political space -weakening or state breakdown, or support from external power. Secondly, a territorial base -for successful mobilization, ethnic groups are either territorially concentrated in some region or they have a territorial base in neighboring countries (Ibid, 2003).

The second category is economic approach; in this approach when resources are scarce, the elite groups have an opportunity to mobilize their ethnic groups into conflict in a simple manner(Blagojevic, 2009:11). Competition over resources means economiccompetition over resources. This happens in the time of economic complexity, in which, when the number of unemployment is increasing, when there is poor living standard and poor prospects for the future, people feel victimized and blame their misfortune on other ethnic groups. Then it leads to violent conflicts and antagonism among ethnic groups (Ibid, 2009).

The third category is strategic/territorial armed conflict. According to Vasquez, the issues of territory should be healed through the use of force. For this reason he notes that, currently man is a territorial animal that is why land has been came as the most war prone issues in conflict studies. Thus, the tendency is seen in the great willingness of people to fight over their homelands, economically and strategically important territories (Vasquez, 1993:18). According to Walker Connor, one of the major problems of multi-ethnic countries like Ethiopia is the fallacy of making ethnic and administrative boundaries. Thus, it leads to unlimited inter-ethnic conflicts and capable of escaping from one to other ethnic groups, if not the territorial

boundary is demarcated based on the consent and agreement of those groups (Connor, 1984:11).

The last approach is a political approach: According to Larrain (1979), ideological/ political conflict is understood as a conflict that is driven by domestic forces. It can be understood as a moral and legal basis, doctrines, and beliefs that are accepted by groups or justify the use of power by elites. Several scholars have argued that the mere appearance of ethnic parties leads to the ethnification of politics and a spiral towards instability and the collapse of incipient democracies (John, 2009:56). In the same token, Moore argued, when that same political parties losing their legitimacy due to election or other means by another regime, they are provoking their groups to struggle against the other (Moore, 1998: 851-70). This article will assess, whether an ethnic approach, economic approach, strategic-territorial approach and political approach have become a factor of ethnic conflict in the case of Ethiopia.

### **3. The Structure of Ethiopian Ethnic Federalism and Its Distinct Features**

Article 50 of the 1995 constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), endeavors to unite distinct ethno-territorial communities within an overarching political system by distributing power among their common and respective governments in a manner designed to protect and promote the existence and authority of both. It aims not only at the preservation and promotion of ethnic identities by entrenching their autonomy on their local matters in their respective geographic areas, but also in maintaining and enhancing their unity on matters of common concern by ensuring their participation in the national decision making process (Turton, 2006:17-30).

Thus, the 1995 constitution of Ethiopian ethnic federalism has the following distinct features. The first unique feature of the constitutional inscription is recognition of the right to secession is not only a guarantee for respecting the right of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples to self-determination but it is also an affirmation of the consensual basis of the federal union; and the acknowledgment of the right to self-determination, including secession, might help in diffusing ethnic discontents (Article 39 of FDRE constitution, 1995). Ethiopia's political history has proved that the unity of its peoples could not be achieved by a resort to violence; it could only be built up and sustained on the basis of their mutual consent to live together in order to pursue their common interests. So that, if and when people might demand secession, the

Ethiopian constitution attempts to avoid its potential for violence by proving a peaceful and democratic path for its realization (Ibid).

Interestingly, despite the controversy revolving around the right to secession in international law, the FDRE Constitution explicitly articulated the right as the right of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples. Undoubtedly the constitution is unique in its enunciation of the right in the domestic setting. In my observation the secession clause is seen as a divide and rule tactic by the Tigrian Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF)/EPRDF or alternatively, as a justification for the independent of Eritrea without intent of applying equally to other parts of the country. Practically, it has also been objected on the ground that the right of secession will stimulate a surge of nationalism, and it is inconsistent with competitive politics under federal arrangements today.

The second feature is the application of self-rule and shared rule. The proportional representation of the ethnic communities of Ethiopia in the federal state is not limited to the two houses of the federal parliament; it applies to the other branches of the government. The same holds true in the case of the constituent states (Getenet, 2016:15). In addition to the right of every ethnic community to a self-rule and shared-rule, the constitution attempts to accommodate the demands of every ethnic community for statehood within the federation. Although the constitution declares nine member states of the federation, it simultaneously recognizes the right of each ethnic community within the states to establish, at any time, its own states and lays down the procedures for the exercise of such right through ethnic based parties (Ibid, 2016).

Paradoxically, Alem Habtu elaborated about ethnic federalism is that most African countries are multiethnic; the Ethiopian experiment with ethnic federalism is of special interest to students of African politics. Ever since decolonization in the 1950s and 1960s, the belief that ethnic identity should be denied public expression in political institutions has been conventional wisdom in the continent (Habtu, 2003:4-6). The 1960s witnessed the rise of state nationalism in Africa. State nationalists attempted to undermine ethnic nationalism, which they saw as an obstacle to the modern state formation. In Uganda, to take an extreme example, the state altogether disallows ethnic parties; it champions a de-ethnicized unitary state (Ibid).

The last feature is the power to interpret the constitution and conflict management is given to the House of Federation, which is composed of representatives of Nations, Nationalities and



Peoples (Abate, 2004:17-27). Article 62 of the EFDR constitution declares the competences of the House are, therefore, directly interlinked with the need to maintain and promote the constitutional compact of Ethiopia's ethnic communities. In this regard, the relevant competences of the House are the competences of to interpret the constitution; to decide upon issues relating to the rights of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples to self-determination, including the right to secession in accordance with the constitution; to promote the equality of the peoples of Ethiopia enshrined in the constitution and promote and consolidate their unity based on their mutual consent; and to strive to find solutions to disputes or misunderstandings that may arise between and among states. As has been pointed out above, constitutional supremacy is an essential prerequisite to the operation of any federal system.

According to Articles 83 of the constitution, the House of Federation has the authority to decide on all constitutional disputes, it is supported by the Council of Constitutional Inquiry, which is established by the constitution with the power to investigate constitutional disputes. The Council is, however, required to submit its recommendations to the House of Federation if it finds it necessary to interpret the constitution. Yet one can detect from the rationale for the existence of the House of Federation that it is also competent to mediate and arbitrate non-constitutional disputes regard to border and natural resource conflicts arising between the federal state and a member states (Assefa, 2006:21).

Theoretically, the House of Federation is empowered to render a final decision on the basis of the settlement patterns and the wishes of the peoples concerned in regard to questions of state border delineation where the concerned states have failed to reach into agreement. But in practice the division of power is artificial, imperfect, a generalized skeletal thing and all powers are remained on paper. The key powers reside on political executives.

### **3.1. Ethno-National Conflicts and its Consequences**

#### **3.1.1. Problems and Causes of Conflict**

Ethnic federalism presents the challenge of how to make accurate ethnic distinctions in order to demarcate territorial lines for the respective federalist entities. A close analysis of the ethno-federal lines drawn into Ethiopia's system reveal doubt as to whether it is possible to make clear distinctions between the ethnic groups (Gudina, 2004:141-64). The most important factors that still elicit problems from many scholars are the reliance of Ethiopian federalism on ethnicity as its organizing principle and the recognition of secession. Terrence Lyons, for

example, suggested that organizing, politics around ethnicity engendering ethnic tensions, violence and more seriously encourages political activists to organize on parochial ethnic issues and thereby fragments national politics as having in Ethiopian experience (Cohen, 1995:15-33).

In doing so, the post 1991 Ethiopia, major and minor ethnic conflicts have been raging in many parts of the country including the capital Addis Ababa. It also has become very common between the Oromo and the Somali ethnic groups; Oromo and Harari, Somali and Afar; Oromo and Southern nations due to ethnic identity, political and economic challenges (Teshome, 2008:21-22). According to the official report of the Ethiopian Federal Police in the 2000 EC (2007/8GC) alone, there were 28 ethnic conflicts in the country (Reporter 09 April 2008a). Universities and schools have also become the center for ethnic conflicts and are frequently closed due to ethnic clashes.

In the same token, the Ethiopian Broad Cast Corporation (EBC) announced that, since 2018, the issue of border, natural resources and identity conflict boom out alarmingly between Oromo and the Somali ethnic groups; Oromo and Southern nations; Oromo and Amhara; Somali and Afar; Amhara and Benshangul Gumuz; Amhara and Tigray ethnic groups were a prototype example of Ethiopian instability.

The core attributes of ethno-national conflicts are the Federal Constitution itself. It establishes a parliamentary system of government with a formally weak bicameral legislature at the federal level (Fisha, 2009:425-60). The lower house is the supreme legislator and the supreme political organ. The upper house has little legislative role; instead it has interpretive and adjudicatory powers. It is a house in which nations, nationalities and peoples are represented in proportion to their numbers. It also provides for a three-tiered, parallel, court system of federal and state judiciary (with the indirect intervention of the executive council) became the issues of contestation among Ethiopian elites (Ibid).

The second cause of ethnic federalism is, Article 39 of the 1995 constitution, which clearly enunciates the right of ethnic groups to self-determination. Thus, the constitutional recognition of the unconditional right of self-determination up to secession was among the most contested points as a result of which federalism remains to be a controversial subject and becomes a source of ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia to date. The efficiency of federal law and policy depends on the state administration and carries with it the risk that the laws and

federal programs may remain merely paper tigers, as a result federal programs could be frustrated (Kefale, 2008:94-97).

The Third, causes of conflicts are the impractical principles and interpretation and limitation of the federal constitution that is:-

The absence of an application clause (that indicates whether they have direct or indirect application), interpretation clause (that clearly indicates the principles, methods, and steps to be used in the construction of human rights clauses), limitation clause (that regulates the manner in which limitations are imposed when necessary), and the ambiguity with regard to the role of courts to interpret constitutional human rights clauses—owing to the bifurcated division of the interpretive power between courts and the House of the Federation—have played a role in the diminished implementation of human rights and tension among political elites in Ethiopia (Regassa, 2010:89-90).

The fourth major causes of conflict in Ethiopia, as Mehari Taddele (2017) noted that, the improper administrative boundaries between regional states; lack of recognition and status of ethnic identities as nationalities; inefficient administrative status as in the case of local government in *Zones and Woredas*; unable to make referenda on identities; conflicts over natural resources, including water and land usage; questions related to Addis Ababa and its relations with the federal and regional state of *Oromia*.

In the same token, the causes of ethnic conflicts are mostly expressed in terms of competition for resources—natural endowments as well as budgetary resources coming to them in the form of fiscal transfer, i.e., subsidies and grants, opportunities—jobs as well as education, and power—at the local, sub-national, and national levels (Regassa, 2010:99). Local elites tend to contribute to the escalation of some kind of conflicts for the purpose of securing a better access to coveted resources, opportunities, and powers. The federal dispensation which was devised to respond to old conflicts which arose out of the quest for ethno-cultural justice did address, more or less, these conflicts. But it triggered a new sort of competition for resources, power and opportunities. Consequently, the threat of fragmentation of states has become a challenge and lack of trust among diverse groups in constant interaction has become another challenge (Ibid).

The fifth cause of ethnic conflict is a poor federal culture and lack of democracy. According to Merera Gudina, the causes of ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia are, contending nationalisms that have emerged and evolved over time in Ethiopia. He also deplores the incomplete transition to democracy as a result of which we continue to have political instability that is rooted in ethnicity (Gudina, 2004: 66). Likewise, Assefa Fiseha makes the observation that poor political culture and poor federal culture continue to serve as the hotbed for ethno-national contentions in Ethiopia as well as the democratic deficit, human rights deficit, and the one party dominance in Ethiopia as the cause of many an ethnic discord (Fiseha, 2009:395-402).

In reality, the major causes of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia as discussed above are 'primordial memory, economic resources, territorial boundary and political power and institutional factors'. Additionally, in my observation, *the design of federalism as ideology, the nature of ethnic parties and media are another cause of conflict* in Ethiopia. Primarily, the architectures of ethnic federalism are TPLF elites that designed to meet the interests of Tigrayan peoples and their dominance. In doing so, the federal state is a de facto one-party state in which TPLF the leading unit in the ruling coalition of (EPRDF). Even if the constitution granted the right of self administration to each regional, state, each ethnic party is a mere satellite of one ethnic party that is Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front.

That is why the leaders of different political parties were arrested and pushed to leave their country via opposed the dominance of TPLF for the last two decades and it becomes a cause of conflict among ethnic parties. Similarly, today the hegemonic dominance of the Oromo Democratic Party (ODP) in power and the demographic expansion of its ethnicity in the capital of Addis Ababa, in relation to other ethnicity that is aggravating ethnic conflict in the country. In doing so, since 2018, the root cause of ethnic conflict in Ethiopia was related to 'identity politics or symbolic politics' that is a threatened change in the prevailing ethnic hierarchy of dominance and subordination. Currently the political elites assumed fragility in ethnic group relations and social construction of identities, and highlighted top-down more than bottom-up mobilization. Thus, the elites are contending for power by manipulating social divisions and blowing them out of proportion, with threats, fear and hate discourse and propaganda, leads to antagonism and conflicts between and among ethnicity in Ethiopia. These problems are emanated from weakness and narrowed perception of Ethiopian ethnic parties, whether the members of EPRDF or other opposing parties. Because, in order to hide their weakness, they mobilize their ethnic identity over the other and one ethnic party makes a

network with the other, to defend another even in the constituent units of EPRDF. On the other hand, the heads of ethnic parties are elected based on, identity rather than a profession and capabilities. As a result, the current noticeable causes regarding to ethnic conflict in Ethiopia, has been escalating as the weakness and bale life of ethnic parties.

On the other hand, the media are the means of ethnically based political parties to take power. Thus, when TPLF loses its dominance in the early 2018; they are exploiting and provoking ethnic/national hatred through their media to other ethnic parties, especially to Oromo Democratic Party and Amhara Democratic Party and vice versa. As a result, the hate-prone politicians of these parties in control of their ethnic media production that provokes national intolerance and hatred in the population leading to violent ethnic conflict among these regions and generally in Ethiopia.

In general, the Ethiopian federal system is designed to prevent or handle some conflicts, but it failed to comprehensively respond to the quest for a better regime of minority rights protection. As a result, it does not prepare to solve for new conflicts initiated by the new minorities. It also does not prepare to respond to conflicts caused by the local elites' competition for new resources (state budget); opportunities (education, jobs, network, and other forms of social capital, etc.); ethnic, political parties (political power and positions at the local, sub-national, and federal levels).

All these problems show that, Ethiopian federalism is ill-articulated to solve conflicts rather than a panacea to other conflicts. In doing so, It can be said that, ethnic federalism has failed to solve ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia. Because, these conflicts have led to the death of many innocent people, the destruction of property, and the dislocation of millions of people in the country.

### **3.1.2. Consequences of the Conflict**

One of the objectives of Ethiopian ethnic federal arrangement is to address the main causes of long-standing unrest and civil war in the country. However, the federal arrangement also spawned new localized conflicts that results to internal displacements; it limits the movement of capital and manpower required to take advantage of economic opportunities; and freedom of movement exhibit special causes, dynamics, and consequences and it creates entitlements that

can block development and leads to irrational use of energy and other resources in the Ethiopian federal system today (Cohen, 1995:168-75).

The first consequence of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia as we observe today, promotes instability through the entrenchment of ethnic difference rather than promotion of state unity as well as the demarcation of territories based on ethnic lines promotes ethnic identity as more important than state identity (Abate, 2004:58). For example, in any government offices and ethnic party membership, all the interactions and relations of citizens depend on their ethnic membership or ethnic classifications. This imposition of ethnic classification is resulting in a challenge of state unity and for about 85 diverse ethno-linguistic groups of Ethiopia. Especially, the southern peoples of Ethiopia consists of more than 50 ethnic groups, but today each ethnicity is competing each other and questing the right to be a regional state within their separate entities.

The second consequence is the Ethiopian constitution of ethnic federalism has decisively transformed politics, although, not always with the hoped-for consequences. It has not resolved the national question. Ethnic conflicts have not disappeared, but have been transferred from the national to the *regional*, district and *kebele* levels or it has been contained by the security forces (Asnake, 2009:41). Relations between ethnic groups have become increasingly competitive, as they oppose for control of administrative boundaries and government budgets in addition to land and natural resources (Aalen, 2002:17-32).

The third anticipated consequences are to reinforce undemocratic political mobilization and platforms based on ethnic or religious group protection, leading to discrimination based on “son of the soil” alienation and violence (Taddele, 2017:18). The implication of such behavior fortifies exclusive and un-democratic political practices and mob-group dynamics that ultimately stifle voices of reason and inhibit any possibility of reasonable and rational deliberations. These problems have led to politics of intolerance and zero-sum political games, politics of fear, the politics of resentment and the politics of hate in society as we show different parts of the country. Protests, violence, and local and armed conflicts are easily turned to target ethnicities and produce conflict-induced displacement in the country today (Ibid). These problems are the result of the weakness of the constituent members of the EPRDF ethnic parties’ and the implementation of the constitutional protection of minority rights and ethnic security.

The other major consequence of Ethiopian ethnic federalism is its tendency to restrict migration-induced demographic changes. The ethnic boundaries created by the federal constitution of Ethiopia have legitimized any resistance to spontaneous inter-ethnic migration (Asnake, 2009:41). Such resistance happened in different ethnic groups. For example, from Anywaa to the Nuer, and from Ari to the Mursi in terms of migration has led to confrontations and the death of hundreds of people. Such projects have limited the geographical spaces for movement of traditional communities. Thus, migration and mobility encounter more restrictions in an ethnically-based federal system than in a unitary system (Ibid). In the same token, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre of Ethiopia estimates that as of July 2015, “there were over 413,400 Inter Displaced Persons in Ethiopia due to ethnic conflict, land grazing, and cross-border violence, most of them living in protracted displacement situations, with the Somali region being the most displacement-affected region” (Taddele, 2017: 9).

Similarly, in the month of January 2016, there were 30,183 persons internally displaced in the country due to conflict-induced displacement and Natural disaster-induced displacement (in Oromia regional state -19,080 IDPs, Somali regional state -9,498 IDPs, and South Nation Nationality Peoples regional state -1,605 IDPs). In total, more than 65 percent of the 30,183 inter displaced population is due to ethnic group’s competition over the survival of different socioeconomic and political aspects to confer particular benefits on individuals and groups as well as the willingness of people to fight over their homelands, economically, and strategically important territories (Taddele, 2017: 16).

Again, in late 2017, inter-communal conflict (based on administrative boundaries between regional states; the recognition and status of ethnic identities as nationalities; referenda on identities; conflicts over natural resources, including water and land usage; religious-based tensions and conflicts) intensified throughout Ethiopia, particularly along the border between Oromia and Somali displacing hundreds of thousands of people in the two regions and exacerbating humanitarian needs (USAID, 2019). Since April 2018, renewed inter-communal violence in Oromia and SNNP has resulted in the displacement of nearly one million people. Displacement along the Oromiya–SNNP regional border continued through September, straining local resources and exacerbating existing humanitarian needs in the regions (Ibid).

In late 2018, violence in Somali Region's Dawa Zone, including in and around Moyale town, which spans the Ethiopia –Kenya border, displaced up to 150,000 people and destroyed civilian infrastructure, according to international media and relief actors. Similarly, inter-communal violence happened along the BenishangulGumuz–Oromiya regional border since September 2018. As of late December, insecurity displaced at least 57,000 people within BenishangulGumuz's Asosa and Kamashi zones, and 198,000 people to Oromiya's East Wollega and West Wollega zones (Ibid). In my practical observation in the areas, the reason for these problems are during the phases of political transition in 2018, the dissatisfied ethnic parties lead to the ethnification of politics and a spiral towards instability and the collapse of incipient democracies and the regime.

In September 2019, conflict spreads to BenishangulGumuz and Ethiopia's capital city of Addis Ababa, resulting in civilian deaths and additional displacement. In so doing, EBC announced that, this problem results due to the reason of political reform took place in the country; the power of some political elites is declined. Thus, these elites are going to conflict to restore the preexisted power. As a result, humanitarian organizations should be responding to acute needs across the country. But inter-communal clashes and insecurity continue to displace populations and disrupt humanitarian efforts in various parts of Ethiopia (EBC, 2019).

According to the UN, as of January, 2019, due to the above conflict induced problems, it results in death and large number of internal displaced people; as a result Ethiopia stands first in the world with regards to the number of internally displaced people, there were approximately 2.9 million IDPs in Ethiopia-more than 2.4 million IDPs identified conflict as the primary cause of displacement (USAID, 2019). In doing so, Ethiopia is currently requesting \$ 492,545,99 from international humanitarian's organization to manage IDPs in the table below.

USG HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE ETHIOPIA RESPONSE IN FY 2018 AND FY 2019

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER	ACTIVITY	LOCATION	AMOUNT
<b>USAID/OFDA</b>			
CRS	Agriculture and Food Security	Oromiya, SNNP	\$1,999,962
GOAL	Nutrition, WASH	Somali	\$2,600,000
iMMAP	Humanitarian Coordination and Information Management	Countrywide	\$1,000,000
International Organization for Migration (IOM)	Economic Recovery and Market Systems (ERMS), Humanitarian Coordination and Information	Countrywide	\$16,300,000



	Management, Logistics Support and Relief Commodities, Shelter and Settlements, WASH		
International Potato Center (IPC)	Agriculture and Food Security	Amhara, SNNP	\$1,499,743
International Rescue Committee	Nutrition, WASH	Countrywide	\$8,330,287
OCHA	Humanitarian Coordination and Information Management	Countrywide	\$16,250,000
Oxfam	Agriculture and Food Security, ERMS, WASH	Somali	\$3,000,000
Save the Children/U.S. (SC/US)	Nutrition, WASH	Afar, Somali	\$2,900,000
UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)	Health, Nutrition, Protection, WASH	Countrywide	\$6,900,000
UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS)	Humanitarian Coordination and Information Management	Somali	\$300,000
UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS)	Logistics Support and Relief Commodities	Somali	\$750,000
U.S. Forest Service	Humanitarian Coordination and Information Management	Countrywide	\$200,000
Program Support	\$1,824,864		
<b>TOTAL USAID/OFDA FUNDING</b>		<b>\$63,854,856</b>	

USAID/FFP2			
CRS/IEOP	244,640 MT of U.S. In-Kind Food Aid	Amhara, Dire Dawa, Oromiya, SNNP, Tigray	\$143,148,636
CRS/Development, Food Security Activities	1,950 MT of U.S. In-Kind Food Aid, Cash Transfers for Food	Dire Dawa, Oromiya	\$2,243,417
Food for the Hungry (FH)	2,400 MT of U.S. In-Kind Food Aid	Amhara	\$1,954,152
IRC	870 MT of U.S. In-Kind Food Aid	Countrywide	\$2,450,010
Relief Society of Tigray (REST)	6,130 MT of U.S. In-Kind Food Aid, Cash Transfers for Food	Tigray	\$5,181,766
UNICEF	910 MT of U.S. In-Kind Food Aid	Countrywide	\$4,362,994
WFP	176,147 MT of U.S. In-Kind Food Aid and Local and Regional Food Procurement	Somali	\$121,865,549
	62,251 MT of U.S. In-Kind Food Aid and Local and Regional Food	Countrywide	\$44,979,785

	Procurement for Refugees		
World Vision	3,900 MT of U.S. In-Kind Food Aid	Amhara, Oromiya, SNNP	\$3,384,462
<b>TOTAL USAID/FFP FUNDING \$329,570,771</b>			

<b>State/PRM3</b>			
Action Against Hunger (AAH)	Nutrition Assistance for Refugees	Gambella	\$1,000,000
Center for Victims of Torture (CVT)	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services for Refugees	Gambella, Tigray	\$2,500,000
Dan Church Aid (DCA)	Livelihoods, Nutrition, and Food Security for Refugees	Gambella	\$1,000,000
Danish Refugee Council (DRC)	Child Protection, Gender Based Violence (GBV) Prevention and Response, and Psychosocial Support for Refugees	Gambella	\$1,000,000
GOAL	Nutrition Assistance for Refugees	Gambella	\$1,000,000
IOM	Shelter and WASH for Refugees	Gambella	\$1,250,000
International Medical Corps	GBV Prevention and Response, Health, Mental Health and Psychosocial, Nutrition, and Reproductive Health Services for Refugees	Gambella, Somali	\$4,000,000
IRC	Multi-sectoral Assistance for Refugees	BenishangulGumuz, Somali, Tigray	\$3,250,000
Plan International	Child Protection, Education, and Psychosocial for Refugees	Gambella	\$1,500,000
SC/US	Child Protection and Education for Refugees	Gambella, Somali	\$2,000,000
UNHCR	Protection and Assistance for Refugees	Countrywide	\$80,070,072
UNHAS	Logistics Support and Relief Commodities	Countrywide	\$550,000
<b>TOTAL STATE/PRM FUNDING</b>			<b>\$99,120,072</b>
<b>TOTAL USG HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE ETHIOPIA RESPONSE IN FY 2018 AND 2019</b>			<b>\$492,545,599</b>

1. Year of funding indicates the date of commitment or obligation, not appropriation, of funds; USG funding represents publicly reported amounts as of February 5, 2019
2. Estimated value of food assistance and transportation costs at the time of procurement; subject to change.
3. State /PRM funding in Ethiopia includes assistance to Somali and South Sudanese refugees who are sheltering in Ethiopia, which is also included in the regional USG response totals for Somalia and South Sudan.

Finally, in my intimate observation, the whole federal arrangement organized along ethnic lines and the inclusion of the secession clause will result greater Ethiopia to crumble, because currently the Ethiopian federal system seems to be a con-federal system of government. The

reason is that, in different national and international issues, the regional governments act as an independent state and sovereign power without the common authorization of the central and regional governments because of lack of political legitimacy of the new regime. Even the central government has not a jurisdiction, power over most areas of the constituent units. It has no sovereign control over regional states in different issues. Thus, it seems the product of the temporary union of states which do not surrender their sovereignty.

Theoretically, a federal government acts as a balance of equilibrium between the forces of centralization and decentralization; or a compromise between unity and diversity; autonomy and sovereignty; the national and the regional governments (Smith, 1995: 5-6). In the case of Ethiopia today, these features are incorporated into the constitution, but in practice neither the federal government keeps the centrifugal as well as centripetal forces in equilibrium, nor the regional governments completely united and completely separated from the central government. As a result, this political antagonism may lead to quest the right to self-determination up to secession, which would be the logical culmination of the nation-building project in Ethiopia. All these consequences are emanating from the regional states and their leading parties are working independently without the common sense of the central government and the leading party of EPRDF. In doing so, the destination of future Ethiopia will be frustrating.

#### **4. Conclusion and Recommendation**

##### **4.1 Conclusion**

Federalism as a system of government is becoming a debatable issue for most scholars in the area. Some scholars assumed that, it is used as a panacea for ethnic problems of multi-lingual and multi-cultural societies while many of other scholars have been observing that it is a cause of conflict, especially for ethnic diversified society (Alemante 2003:56). However, whether it recognizes a self-administered over the cultural, linguistic, ethnic, or religious matters of a constituted unity, in order to exploit the benefits of federalism by managing ethnic conflicts and tensions, the focus should not be on the federal design only, but depending on the context of political culture and the nature of ethnic based political parties (Brancati, 2009:12-34).

The considerable evidence suggests that, the current Ethiopian federalism system was born as a result of addressing the century-old national questions of the different ethnic based political

organizations and liberation movements. But the results were both a response to old conflicts and a cause of new conflicts. It seemed too replied to ethno-national conflicts. In fact, conflict is rising due to economic resources and boundary sharing between different ethnic groups. The major cause of conflicts in the current Ethiopian is, the politicization of ethnic identity by self-seeking political leaders causes political instability. Means ethnic, political parties who lose the power and legitimacy and their leaders are manipulating their ethnic identities at the expense of their weakness that escalating ethnic conflicts as it observes in today's Ethiopia.

The desire of the self-seeking political leaders is manifested through using their media and politicization of tribal identity, design of the federal states, fiscal federalism and ethnic party cause ethnic conflict and anomaly throughout in the country. That is why Ethiopia has become one of the conflicting areas as a result; it stands first in the world with regards to the number of internally displaced people. In doing so, if not the new government re-designed the federal structure like those of corporate pluralist western countries, Ethiopia may face the same fate as the USSR and Yugoslavia.

#### 4.2.Recommendations

To resolve all the above problems, I recommend the following resolutions to the Ethiopian government and all ethnic, political parties for future Prospects of Ethiopia as a state. Primarily, in Ethiopian federal system, constitutional rethinking might be needed at some places such as in the areas governing the upper houses both at the federal and sub-national levels as well as their representatives should be electing based on ability to contribute for the overall goals of the future Ethiopia ; reviewing the structure of federalism into geographical federalism instead of ethnical based federalism; avoiding article 39 - secession clause of the constitution; changing the power constitutional interpretation given to the house of federation and balancing powers of self rule and shared rule between the federal and regional states.

Secondly, it is also important to make a more aggressive use of resources that are hitherto underutilized such as the state constitutions. It is also imperative that state constitutions are designed in such a way that they respond to specific local demands and needs. Such responsiveness to realities and diversifying institutional and procedural devices will indeed enrich the federal experiment thereby making the state laboratories of democracy. The federal government should be responsible for equal distribution of economic power among all regions based on justice and criteria.

The third remedy is the constituent parties of EPRDF and other ethnic, political parties should establish only national parties like Uganda and indoctrinate all the societies as Ethiopian identity more than ethnic identities. Further, the parties equipped with the necessary institutional, procedural, and manpower, infrastructure, can be part of the scheme to prevent, manage, and transform conflicts. The leading party and other opposition parties should nominate and empower their membership based on their capacity and profession rather than identity. To meet these challenges, it is imperative that the government develop a full-blown policy and strategy for conflict and also need to work on the refinement of the norms, institutions, and procedures pertaining to federalism and its experimentation.

The fourth resolution is a re demarcating the regional boundaries. Means the government should measure a multicultural federalism in the right direction to the extent that it attempts to integrate historically marginalized groups and establishes constituent units whose boundaries coincide with the territorial and geographical bases rather than ethnic identity. Such measures should be ensuring the survival of the Ethiopian state as well as minimizes localized ethnic conflicts.

Finally, the government should insure sufficient institutional mechanisms for guaranteeing shared functions to the constituent units and emphasis on self-rule should be complemented by at least a shared policy-making at the center, in the civil service, in the executive and the judiciary. The triangulation of check and balance system and accountability should be existing in the federal, regional states and among the leading parties, opposition parties and in government civil servants in general. The relevant institutions will have to work on the basis of the rule of law, more than on the basis of a common party ideology to the survival of federal system.

## 5. References

- Aalen, L. (2002). *Ethnic federalism in a dominant party state: The Ethiopian Experience 1991-2000*, Report.
- Abate, N. (2004). *Ethnic federalism in Ethiopia: Challenges and opportunities*. University of Lund.
- Alemante, G.S. (2003). Ethnic federalism: Its promise and pitfalls for Africa. *The Yale Journal of International Law*, 28 (51).

- Baylis, E.A. (2004). Beyond Rights: Legal Process and Ethnic Conflicts. *Michigan Journal of International Law*, 25.
- Blagojevic, B. (2009). Causes of ethnic conflict: A conceptual framework. *Journal of global Change and Governance*, 3(1), City University: New York.
- Brancati, D.(2009). *Peace by design: Managing intrastate conflict through decentralization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Choudhry, S., and Hume, N. (Eds.).(2010). *Federalism, devolution & secession: From classical to post-conflict federalism*. Research Handbook on Comparative Constitutional Law, Tom Ginsburg: Rosalind Dixon.
- Cohen, M. J. (1995). Ethnic federalism in Ethiopia: *Northeast African Studies, New Series*, 2 (2). Michigan State University Press.
- Connor, W. (1984). *Eco- or ethno-nationalism*. In *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 7.
- Esty, D.C. (1996). Revitalizing environmental federalism, *Michigan Law Review*, 95.
- EBC.(2019). The Ethiopian Broad Cast Corporation, Ethiopia, Addis Ababa.
- FDRE (1995). The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Article 39, 62, and 83.
- Fisha, A.(2006). *Federalism and the accommodation of diversity in Ethiopia: A comparative study*. Nijmegen: Wolf Publishers.
- Fisha, A. (2009). *Federalism teaching material*. Prepared under the Sponsorship of the Justice and Legal System Research Institute of Ethiopia: Addis Abeba.
- Fleiner, L. (2000). *Can ethnic federalism work?*- Paper for the conference on facing ethnic conflicts. Center for Development Research (ZEF Bonn): Bonn, Germany.
- Friedrich, C.J. (1962). Federal constitutional theory and emergent Proposals' in A.W. Macmahon (Ed.), *Federalism: Mature and Emergent*, New York: Russell & Russell.
- Getenet, A. et al. (2016). *Federalism: The Ethiopian experience*. A report on the Course of Politics and Government in Ethiopia.
- Girma, Y.(2013). *Implication of Ethiopian federalism on the right to freedom of movement and residence: Critical analysis of the law and the practice*, (MA Theses, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia).
- Gudina, M. (2003). *Ethiopia: Competing ethnic nationalisms and the quest for democracy, 1960-2000*, Addis Ababa: Chamber Printing House.

- Gudina, M. (2004). The state, competing ethnic nationalisms and democratisation in Ethiopia. *African Journal of Political Science*, 9(3), African Association of Political Science.
- Habtu, A. (2003). *Ethnic federalism in Ethiopia: Background, present conditions and future prospects*. Paper Submitted to the Second EAF International Symposium on Contemporary Development Issues in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- International Crises Group (ICG). (2009). *Ethiopia: Ethnic federalism and its discontents* (Crisis Group Africa Report N°153). Nairobi/Brussels. Retrieved from: <https://www.Crisisgroup.Org/Africa/horn-Africa/Ethiopia/Ethiopia-ethnic-federalism-and-its-discontents>.
- John, I. (2009). *Do ethnic parties promote minority ethnic conflict? Nationalism and ethnic politics*. Routledge: University of North Texas.
- Kaufman, S.J. (2001). *Modern hatreds the symbolic policy of ethnic war*. Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press.
- Kefale, A. (2008). *Federalism and ethnic conflict in Ethiopia: A comparative study of the Somali and Benishangul-Gumuz Regions*, (PhD Dissertation, Leiden University, the Netherlands).
- Larrain, J. (1979): *The concept of ideology*. Athens: The University of Georgia Press.
- Levy, J.T. (2007). Federalism, liberalism, and the separation of loyalties. *American Political Science Review*, 101.
- Markakis, J. (1994). Ethnic conflict and the state in the Horn of Africa', in K. Fukui and J. Markakis (eds), *Ethnicity and Conflict in the Horn of Africa*; London: James Currey.
- Monica, D.T. (2003). *The geography of ethnic violence: Identity, interests and indivisibility of territory*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Moore, W.H. (1998). Repression and dissent: Substitution, context, and timing. *American Journal of Political Science* 42 (3).
- Oomen, T.K. (1997). *Introduction. In citizenship and national identity from colonialism to globalism*. London: Sage Publications.
- Regassa, T. (2010). Learning to live with conflicts: Federalism as a tool of conflict management in Ethiopia -- an overview. *Mizan Law Review*, 4 (1).
- Reporter. (09 April 2008). Bekililochbezendrowamet 28 gichitochtekestewal (In the current year there were 28 conflicts in all regions of Ethiopia").

- Riker, W.H. (1975). Federalism' in F.I. Greenstein and N.W. Polsby (Eds), *The Handbook of Political Science*, 5. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Roeder, P.G. (2009).Ethno-federalism and the mismanagement of conflicting nationalisms.*Regional & Federal Studies*, 19.
- Smith, G. (1995). *Federalism: The multi-ethnic challenge*.London: Longman
- Taddele, M.M. (2017).*Causes, dynamics, and consequences of internal displacement in ethiopia*.Working Paper FG 8, SWP Berlin.
- Teshome, W. (2008).Federalism in Africa: The case of ethnic-based federalism in Ethiopia. *International Journal of Human Sciences*3(5).
- Tiruneh, A. (1993). *The Ethiopian revolution, 1974-1987: A Transformation from an aristocratic to a totalitarian autocracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge university press.
- Turton,D.,(Eds.). (2006). *Ethnic federalism: The Ethiopian experience in comparative perspective*, Addis Ababa University Press.
- USAID.(2019). *Ethiopia-complex emergency and humanitarian funding*.The web site at <http://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/working-crises-and-conflict/responding-times-crisis/where-we-work>.
- Vasquez, J. (1993). *The war puzzle*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Watts, R.L. (2008). *Comparing federal systems* (3rd ed.), Kingston, Can: Institute of International Relations, Queen's University.
- Weingast, B. (1995).The economic role of political institutions: market-preserving federalism and economic development. *The Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization*, 11.