Trends of Ethnic Conflicts in Post 1991 Ethiopia

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Abstract

After the take-over of state power by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in May 1991, the Ethiopian state was restructured along ethnic/linguistic lines and a federal structure was established basically claimed to solve the longstanding national question through the recognition of the right of self determination up to secession of the various ethnic groups. The consequent political changes impacted significantly the evolving patterns of societal interaction at different levels. The nature of conflicts in the post 1991 Ethiopia has been transformed significantly. There is a high incidence of inter and intra group low intensity conflicts .It stems from the lack of genuine commitment in the process of implementation form the side of the various actors involved. Heightened expectations are not met, fierce competition between elites for power and resources characterizes the political scene and has become the main igniting factor in the conflicts. A federal arrangement with revisions to face the challenges of complex identity patterns and the multi-ethnic setting of the country is important. The right of ethnic groups to exercise the constitutionally granted rights has been manipulated by the multiple parties and elites that claim to represent them. Given the Ethiopian complex identity patterns and multi ethnic setting, reforms should be made to really empower ethnic groups: in general taking into consideration the de-territorialization of ethnicity, de-ethnicization of the Ethiopian citizenship and de-politicization of ethnicity.

1. HISTORY OF CONFLICTS IN ETHIOPIA: a brief overview

1.1. Background

It is reported that more than 80 socio-linguistic groups of various sizes live in Ethiopia. The relationship among these groups has made up a history of conflict, accommodation and integration. The heterogeneity and diversity, as it is referred now, can be traced back to the mid-19th century, the building of the modern Ethiopian State. However, for the purpose of looking at the trends and types of conflicts, instead of the conventional way of looking at the history of the country through the different periods, a broad categorical overview of the types of wars and conflicts across periods will be seen in this section of the paper.

1.1. Categories of Conflicts

The conflicts, following Bairu Tafla's categorization (1994:3), can be roughly identified as wars of defense, religious wars, wars of expansion, and wars of dissatisfaction.

1.1.1. Wars of defense: Reference can be made to records since the fourth century but mainly reference here is made to the fight against European attempted colonization and foreign invasions- the Egyptian-Ethiopian war of 1875-76, the Italo-Ethiopian wars of 1895-96 and 1935-36- particularly demonstrate incidents where the people have laid aside their differences and disputes to resist the invasions. " Ethiopian independence", even to this day, has remained to be one of the "national" heritages that served as impetus for peaceful coexistence and national feelings of people of Ethiopia from Ethnic backgrounds (Bairu 1994).

The fact that the country had remained independent during the colonial era added, among other things, to the symbolic image of Ethiopia even outside its borders. As Teshale puts it, "The Pan-Africanist movement considered Ethiopia to be "the shrine enclosing the last sacred spark of African freedom, the impregnable rock of black resistance against white invasion, a living symbol, an incarnation of African independence" (Teshale Tibebu 1995: xv). Such nationalistic claims have been reflected and emphasized more often throughout the various centralist and dictatorial regimes to the present. Even for mobilizing the people against any external aggressor, past history and victory have been claimed time and again to mobilize the people

Generally, these wars had minimal impact on the recent conflicts except in the case of the Ethio-Somalia boundary question and few claims by Somali groups for independence and the question of Eritrean independence that was more or less assumed to have been solved with the independence of Eritrea in 1993. However, even after the independence of Eritrea, the war that broke out in 1998 marks the continuation of the remaining challenges.

1.1.2. Religious wars can be traced to a certain extent in the history of the country. But no extraordinary religious conflicts were fought. As a country that is identified for early adoption of Christianity, the leaders since the 14th century have attempted to purge followers of indigenous religions and impose Christianity over the rest. The attempt of Yohannes IV (1872-89) to Christianize Muslims of Wollo is one of the pure instances of religious war in the country's history (Bahru 1991).

A proper analysis, however, often would suggest that political domination and economic exploitation have been the driving motives behind such wars that were used by the leaders to mobilize the people (Bairu 1994).

Often the claims made by some political movements along with the general oppression, especially after the creation of the modern Ethiopian state make reference to domination over language, culture and belief etc and makes reference to these religious wars in history.

1.1.3.   As a classical method of state building, many **wars of expansion** were fought in Ethiopia since the ancient historical period as records show. This had resulted in the conquest of people who had their own political institutions but have been assimilated into the dominant society in the subsequent centuries.

As the political center shifted from Axum in the North down to Shewa for economic and security reasons, various wars of expansion were fought depending on the military capability and talent of the leaders. The climax of the process of expansion was in the late 19th century when Menelik II brought under his control all the regions, which constitute the southern parts of the country today.

Menelik expanded his rule from the central highland regions to the south and east of the country and established the borders of Ethiopia that we find today, a country including more than eighty different ethnic groups. He defeated powerful traditional kingdoms, some of them had been not been under the rule of the central highlanders before, such as the Oromo, the Wolaita, the Sidama, the Gurage and the Kafa. The expansion included exploitation and subjugation of southern peoples thereby involving a system of peasant-lordship relationship and introduction of a fixed annual tribute to be administered by soldiers from the North who played a prominent role in the conquest of the areas. In some the process also involved expropriation of land from the southerners that previously owned land and are forced to buy it back from the state. The pattern, is observed by Salih (2001:193) to even be similar to a "settler colonialism" where the northerners or the expansionists became a distinct class, thereby the indigenous and defeated communities were left to a subordinated position. Some other groups, like the pastoralists, also had marginal stake in the expanded Ethiopian state: the Somalis, the Afars, and Boran Oromo are amongst the main ones to be mentioned in this regard (Clapham 1994:31-32). The alienation and conquest at state formation thus created different legacies in different areas of the south in turn creating various reactions to the central power even in the subsequent periods (Ibid), leading to violent conflicts in many areas while brutal methods were used to pacify those who showed resistance (Marcus 1995: 67).

A significant number of the political movements today frequently refer to these factors and the history of expansion, and the bloody and exploitative nature of administration that was followed

by the leaders. To a certain extent also, it has been one of the claims made by mobilised groups fighting against oppression. This will be dealt and is categorised under the wars of dissatisfaction.

1.1.4. Wars of Dissatisfaction Series of wars have been fought in the country's history which are collectively referred to as civil wars, internecine wars or tribal or ethno-religious wars. The nature of these conflicts shows a general history of centre-region struggles that manifested themselves in different ways revealing the differing motives and frequency of the wars. Oppositions that mostly were manifested in opposition of the central rule may be driven by the issues of succession to the throne, resentment of offended individual notables, individual political aspirants and popular reaction to oppression among others (Bairu 1994: 5-6). These wars are significantly characterized by inter and intra elite conflicts.

Questioning the nature of the state and administration would indicate the general causes to such conflicts. The Ethiopian State has been traditionally autocratic. The Ethiopian political tradition concentrated more on personality cult and failed to develop permanent political and judicial institutions to which the people could orient themselves. The ' one-man-show' rule bestowed all power and authority upon a single personality. Thus almost all the rulers favoured centralism. The significance of the local and regional was given little regard in the political system. This has been the case even in the ancient and modern history of the country. Rulers confused administrative plurality with disintegration and anarchy. This description also fits Bairu's portrayal of the rule of the different Emperors since the creation of the modern Ethiopian State. (1994:6)

> Tewodros II preferred external candidates to local ones for gubernatorial offices, though he turned to the latter at critical moments; Menilik II respected local government in the early years of his reign, but he attempted later to undermine regional autonomy. Haile Selassie I, who admired seventeenth century French absolutism, systematically removed all traditional regional or local prerogatives and perfected centralism. In fact he removed most of the traditional territorial boundaries and clustered different political unites (some of which were old rivals) into arbitrary provinces. His determination to dismantle the Eritrean federal system can be regarded as part of this line of thinking which equated unity with uniformity.

The overcentralized regimes had more often been characterized by oppositions expressed against the central rule. And gradually, during the reign of Haile Selassie and the centralized rule pursued that has even resulted in the domination and marginalization of the majority heightened the frustration and has led to various movements and armed oppositions.

Perhaps here, it will be important to highlight the history of federalism in Ethiopia which is also directly linked to the reason for the heightened frustration and one of wars of dissatisfaction and long armed struggles fought in the history of the country till the independence of Eritrea in 1993. Federalism had unfortunate history in the country. The federal arrangement between Ethiopia and Eritrea, besides the lack of commitment on the side of the imperial regime and expressed violation of the federal constitution at the beginning, it was a tolerated one on both sides for a win-win status of getting part of the shares (Bairu 1994:6). However, a systematic dismantling of the federal structure was followed by a total repeal of the constitution. This aggravated the protests of the intellectuals and students of the 1960s and early 70s.

 The Emperor's response to these problems was a further centralisation of the state and increasingly autocratic style of governance. First peasant rebellions, later ethnically based liberation fronts started campaigns in several parts of the country, in the newly annexed province of Eritrea (1961), in Tigray, in the Oromo areas, in Sidama and in the Somali region of Ogaden. When the agrarian crisis culminated in a large-scale famine in the north of the country in the early 1970s, the Emperor was unable and unwilling to respond properly. This time was a landmark for the proliferation of ethnic parties in Ethiopia, a byproduct of the ascendancy of Marxist-Leninist ideology over the Ethiopian students' movements and educated circles, in the 60s and 70s. (Messay 2001) . However, heightened expectations were never met even with the replacement of the absolute monarchy with centralizing ideology by a military Marxist autocracy in 1974.

Inter and intra elite conflicts characterize the internal scene of the conflicts with a perpetual struggle for power and a basis for political mobilization. The conflict between the elites of the ruling classes since the early 19th century had larger effects in serving as a basis for mobilization. As observed by Merera, the mass mobilization for both national and class struggle in 1974 was the first in the country's history, This was a time where there was heightened frustration against the imperial regime as a common dominating center and the joining of the elites and groups altogether to overthrow it (2002:3).

After 1976, after a period of violent suppression and assassination by the military regime of perceived threats to power with the Red Terror Campaign, Mengistu Hailemariam appeared as the unchallenged leader and the continuities from the imperial era became more prevailing. As Haile Selassie had done, Mengistu saw his regime as synonymous with the Ethiopian state and continued the pattern of extreme centralisation and denial of regional opposition forces. He replaced the monarchical absolutism with military Marxism as the ideology for building the nation and concentrating the power in his hands. During the Derg regime, ethnically based resistance

movements replaced the role of the regional lords as centrifugal forces. Despite the Derg's appeals to Marxism and a non-ethnic policy, the ethnically based opposition defined Mengistu's government as an Amhara suppresser (Aalen 2002:12). The resistance movements represented by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) (Young 1997, 80,99)[1] and Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) were those who finally brought down the military junta and established a civilian government in 1991.

Synthesis: Ethiopian history, identified with centuries of war, has been result of the domination of the center over the regions under the claims of maintaining unity and personalization and centralization of power. The **central-regional struggle** has also mainly been characterized by **continual inter and intra elite conflicts**. Besides, for the arising demands often resulting in outburst violent conflicts or civil wars, the response of the central government has mainly been **overcentralization and suppression**. Referring to the above categories of histories of wars, the wars of expansion and dissatisfaction take the prominence as far as the country's current experience is concerned. The reference point for the domination of the various groups is the time of expansion. It is used and referred to by many elites and political parties to mobilize people of their respective claims. Furthermore, the impacts of these conflicts has also resulted in the persistent struggles against the central government, resulting in a center-region centuries of wars that characterize the country's history.

 But with the coming of the EPRDF, which represented the coming to power of the "regional forces", there have been high expectations and hopes of bringing the long awaited peace, democracy and reconciliation, a genuine democratic system, constitutional and institutional law rather than personal, and a government based on the separation of powers and respect for human rights, freedom to differ as groups and individuals and to organize themselves around differing ideas to enhance and among others establishment of a genuinely federal Ethiopia.

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[1] Young explains how the EPRDF initially started for the independent Republic of Tigray and later turned to take the lead in the formation of a multi-ethnic coalition party.

2. ETHNIC FEDERALISM AND CONFLICTS IN POST 1991 ETHIOPIA

With the seizure of power by the ruling EPRDF (Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Forces), itself an ethnic coalition, in 1991, the Ethiopian state has radically been reorganized from a Unitarian, military centralist to ethnic federal state with the idea of "self-determination for the nationalities", up to and including secession, being launched and political, administrative and economic power devolved to ethnically defined regional states.

Apt understanding of the post-1991 federal system and the nature of conflicts will require a proper analysis of the socio-economic interactions, structures and processes Vis a Vis the constitutional promises. This will be the aim of this chapter as it will be addresses in the following sections.

2.1. Distinct features of Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia: Irony of promises and implementation

Ethiopia's adoption of ethnicity as the determinant factor in the federal structure is based on a multiple set of factors and arguments. The EPRDF government and mainly the TPLF was the main force that set forth the justifications for empowering ethnicity in politics. Most of the arguments attempt to invoke political, social and economic issues and problems inherent to the Ethiopian State and society (Young 1996:532).

One of the key rationales is grounded on the need to answer the longstanding demand of the "national question" of Ethiopia's diverse ethno-linguistic groupings. Accordingly, by settling the problem of power distribution and enhancing access to state power for the hither to ethnically marginalized groups, ethnic-federalism could be considered as a major positive departure in Ethiopian politics. Thus, the government advanced its reform measures emphasizing that it is imperative to redefine the political premises of organizing the state and society on a clean state (Aklilu 2001). This involved reorienting the state toward ethnic based politics, implementing ethnic-linguistic state restructuring, and promoting mainly ethnic-based civil society and organizations.

Another prominent rationale was based on the argument that ethnic federalism offered an opportunity to promote the rights and benefits of ethnic groups in Ethiopia. Thus, ethnic empowerment was felt to be the single most appropriate instrument to enhance the political, economic and socio-cultural rights and privileges of Ethiopia's "nations, nationalities and peoples".[2] In particular, the issue of developing languages, cultures, and a sense of pride in ethnic identities emerged as a manifest advantage of the political process. Similarly, decentralization of political

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[2] In post-1991 Ethiopia, the various ethnic groups are officially designated as "nations, nationalities and peoples" both in the constitution and in public reference. There is no clear distinction regarding these fluid concepts; and it is not clearly stated as to which groups are nations, nationalities, or peoples

authority to ethnic groups at both regional and local community levels was promoted as a necessary condition to ensure the participation of the people in decision-making process.

The scheme of ethnic federalism was introduced as a means of reversing the repressive, hegemonic practices of previous governments that have led to internal wars (McWhirter and Melamede 1992, 33) thereby emphasizing the conflict management dimension of ethnic federalism. Though some scholars have considered ethnic federalism as innovative that gives a room for thinking differently about ethnicity in the political evolution of Africa (Chabal and Daloz 1999:58), while others considered it as a recipe for state disintegration (Ottaway 1994), for more than a decade of federalization, the Ethiopian state has neither disintegrated nor eradicated conflicts between ethnic groups in the country.

However, looking at the underlying socio-economic and political realities will help in evaluating the implementation of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia.

2.1.1. Underlying socio-economic realities: language as a sole criterion

The Ethiopian federal system is absolutely asymmetrical when it comes to the social, economic and political conditions of each unit. (Aalen 2002:73). Due to the fact that "ethnic identity", or language in practice, has been the determinant factor in the delimitation of the constituent units, the various regions are very different from one another when it comes to ethnic composition, size of population and area, economic development and political landscape. The constituent units have therefore very different capacities to implement the constitutional provisions (Aalen 2002).

For example, the following table demonstrates the asymmetrical composition of the federal units thereby taking the population, area, number of zones and *woreda* of the regions.

Region	Regional Capital	Population 1996/97	Area in '000 km2	Number of zones	Number of *woreda*	Number of special *woreda*
Tigray	Mekelle	3,358,358	60.2	4	35	
Afar	Aysaita	1,131,437	77.0	5	28	
Amhara	Bahirdar	14,769,360	188.8	10	102	1
Oromiya	Finfine*	20,012,952	360.0	12	176	
Somali	Jijiga	1,978,600	215.9	9	47	
Benishangul/ Gumuz	Asossa	492,689	46.8	2	13	
SNNPRS	Awassa	11,064,818	112.0	**9	**71	**5
Gambella	Gambella	194,755	26.1	2	8	
Harari	Harar	143,587	0.3	3	19	
Addis Ababa	Addis Ababa	2,241,964	0.4	6	28	
Diredawa	Diredawa	277,245	1.6	4	23	
Total		**55,765,765**	**1089.1**	**66**	**550**	**6**

Table 1. Population, area, number of zones and woreda of the regional states[3]
Source: Aalen 2002:73

The number of special *woreda* indicates the ethnic heterogeneity of the region. Special *woreda* are designed to protect minorities which live in an area with a majority group and where the group is not large enough to have its own zone or regional structure (Proclamation 7/92). It is the regional governments which determine whether special *woreda* should be established. SNNPRS has the largest number of special *woreda*; Amhara region has one, while the other regional states have not designed any special administrative structures to protect their minorities. However, the continued conflicts within the regions have roots in the asymmetry of social, economic and political claims of the ethnic groups that compose the regions.

Furthermore, There is an apparent paradox in the Ethiopian federal arrangements, which has been noted by several writers (Brietzke 1995). On the one hand, the nations, nationalities and peoples have been granted the right to exit from the federation if certain conditions are fulfilled. This makes the independence of the constituent units more extensive than in other federal systems. On the other hand, the powers of the member states are relatively meagre, and the

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[3] *Oromiya's capital was changed from Finfine (the Oromo name for Addis Ababa) to Adama (Nazret) in 2001.

** The number of zones and woreda in SNNPRS has been changed in 2000, when North Omo zone was split into several zones, and in 2001 when the Silte got their own zone, separated from the rest of the Gurage zone

regional governments remain dependent on the federal level to be able to carry out their duties. As expressed by Brietzke, the constitution "proposes few self-determination remedies, since nothing is specified as lying in the gaps between secession, quite a narrow form of self-determination and a limited cultural autonomy" (1995: 35). The fact that sovereignty in the Ethiopian federation is given to "nations, nationalities and peoples" and not to clearly defined member states means that national groups can secede not only from the federation, but also from each member state. This is clearly a constitutional anomaly, and does not have any parallels in other federal systems today. The Ethiopian federation has to a large extent chosen to do the opposite: asserting the most extreme right to self-determination, the right to secession, at the same time as the powers given to the regions in the administration of daily affairs are quite scanty in a comparative perspective (Aalen 2002:59).

Land and natural resources in the member states, for instance, are administered under federal law. The regional governments have to follow national standards in the conduct of day-to-day affairs. This means in practice that the five-year plans adopted by the EPRDF in the House of Peoples' Representatives have to be followed by the regional governments in every aspect of administration. The regional revenue sources are few and insubstantial compared to those that are left for the federal level, which means that the regional governments have to rely on grants and subsidies from the federal government to be able to carry out their duties (Eshetu 1994:8).

2.1.2. The SNNPR challenge: peculiarities and similarities
The other feature in the federal arrangement that deserves mention is the peculiarity at the same time similarity of the SNNPR to the federal arrangement. Especially in dealing with conflicts, the nature of organization of the region has a major implication towards the federal system.

One of the peculiarities is that, at the time of reorganization of the territories in post 1991 Ethiopia, five of the fourteen regional entities voluntarily amalgamated themselves to establish a single self-government unit of the "Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State". The SNNPR is composed of numerous ethnic-groups that are organized at different levels of government according to settlement and ethno-linguistic patterns. The basis for this amalgamation emanated from *Proclamation No. 7/1992*, which provides that regional government of adjacent nations/nationalities and peoples may agree to jointly establish a larger regional self-government. Pursuant to this, various ethnic based political organizations primarily united to create a broader EPRDF-affiliate of the Southern Peoples' Democratic Forces and then established the SNNPR. The federal arrangement in the case of SNNPR involves a degree of peculiarity *vis-à-vis* other constituent states in terms of the essence of the SNNPR as well as administrative and political influences and

relations that evolved in the process. In the first place, the SNNPR is composed of a large number of diverse ethnic-linguistic groups more than forty-five "nations, nationalities and peoples".

This peculiarity however is not limited to the SNNPR as the other eight regional states are by no means entirely homogenous. It is only by comparison that the SNNPR is can evidently be referred as an exception among the federating members of the country. Therefore, at the regional state level, the SNNPR does not appear to be essentially delineated based on ethnic-linguistic considerations, as is generally the case in the other units.

Secondly, some of the ethnic groups within the SNNPR that are reconfigured into second-tier subordinate units of the Regional State had already experimented with their own national/regional self-government. Thus, their amalgamation into the SNNPR implied reduction of administrative status representing the ethnic groups into less autonomous sub-regional units. Unlike the other eight regional states, the administrative arrangement of the SNNPR is not based on ethnic-linguistic patterns reflecting the predominant ethnic group in the region. Therefore, in order to redress this anomaly and comply with the ethnic criterion of federalism, the Zones and Special *Woreda* in SNNPR are allowed to have a legislative council and executive and judicial organs although these are responsible to the regional government of SNNPR. In the other regional states, such units at the second tier are not similarly autonomous unless they constitute a minority group(s) within a constituent regional state. Where this is the case, the particular Zone is designated as a Special Zone.

The relegation of the earlier ethnic-based self-government entities as lower-tier local government, therefore, has engendered in a distinctive political anomaly and structural inconsistency in the federal experiment and its overriding criterion of ethnicity. In the words of Seyoum (2002:3), talking about the 'dismantling' of the Sidama regional status, "The contempt harbored by the TPLF rulers about the people and the forced marriage of Sidama with the SNNPR meant that the emergence of conflict was inevitable"[4]. While some ethnic-groups, including the numerical minority of the city-based Harari "nationality", were accorded a status of regional state, several numerically and politically significant ethnic groups were refitted into sub-regional entities.

Latest developments also indicate that such conflicts have led to destabilisation of the party , Southern Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Union (SEPDU) , if not the region. One reason for this might be that the ethnic diversity and the existence of many and small ethnic groups that make it

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[4] This has resulted, as foressen by many in a clash in the capital Awassa, on May 24, 2002. Minimun of 15 were killed and 25 wounded in a demonstration against the attempt of making Awassa a chartered city while the Sidama reacted in opposition as they considered Awassa to be a cultural capital of the Sidama. http://www.waltainfo.com/ennews/2002/may/25may02/may25e2.htm, (Seyoum, 2002)

difficult to establish clear alliances and fronts in the regional government. Another reason could be the intervention from political forces like the central EPRDF party and the regional partner to prevent such conflicts to occur. Until now, conflicts on self-government and representation have taken place only at local level in the zones or *woreda*. Examples of such conflicts are the language issue in Wolaita in North Omo zone (Aklilu 2000) which will be dealt in the case study, the Silte's request for their own zone independent of the rest of the Gurage zone (Aalen 2002:70) , conflicts between Suri and Dizi pastoralist groups in South Omo zone (Abbink 1993), the killings in Awassa and Tepi in 2001[5] .

2.1.3. Ethnic group identity and political representation

 The majority of the regional states have more than one national group represented in the second chamber of the central government, House of Federation, (HF). Except three, the Afar, Harari and Somali, all the constituent units in the Ethiopian federation have several national groups represented. SNNPRS is the most heterogeneous, with 39 national groups represented in the House (Aalen 2002:65). As stipulated in the constitution, each "nation, nationality and people" has the right to have one representative in the House of the Federation, and larger national groups are given one representative extra for each million of its population. Dire Dawa and Addis Ababa do not have any representatives in the HF, because they are not regular federal units, but multiethnic administrative regions where the administration is directly responsible to the federal government. The 107 members of the HF represent 58 national groups. The number of national groups represented might appear arbitrary and does not correspond with other calculations of the number of ethnic groups in the country. According to the popular census of 1994, there are 80 different ethnic groups in the country (Ibid) in proclamation 7/92, which established the national self- administrations in the transitional period, 65 national groups were acknowledged (Art.3). It seems that the group's ability to express itself in a coherent manner and forward its views to the relevant political bodies or external political forces' attempts of mobilising national groups might be important factors in determining whether a group should be granted representation. It is therefore reasonable to expect that the total number of national groups in the HF will be adjusted to the changing political circumstances in the future. Other factors determining this might also be the size and territorial concentration of the group. Groups that are scattered over a large territory, without a coherent identification and with a relatively small number of members might not be granted representation in the HF.

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[5] http://www.ethiopianreporter.com/eng_newspaper/Htm/No318/r318new4.htm

A close look at the seemingly decentralised party structures also reveals that the process of recentralization is a driving force than what is claimed. The four member parties of the EPRDF, the Oromo People's Democratic Organisation (OPDO), the Amhara National

Democratic Movement (ANDM), the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Front (SEPDF) and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) operate only in the four regions of Oromiya, Amhara, SNNPRS and Tigray respectively. Although they formally are equal coalition partners on national level, the TPLF is the senior. (Horguelin 1999:29). It was the creator of the other parties and is the strongest political organisation. A member of the TPLF central committee explains the TPLF's dominance like this: "It is natural that the TPLF is the strongest political force and that its leader Meles Zenawi is the national leader. TPLF has many senior cadres, well-trained and experienced fighters, and in the beginning the largest numbers of members in the EPRDF coalition" (Aalen 2002:90).

In addition to the member parties, the EPRDF has close allies and affiliate parties in the other regional states of the federation. These parties are formally independent from the ruling party, but cannot be seen as opposition parties because of their tight links to the EPRDF. Currently, there are EPRDF affiliate parties in power in all the regional states not ruled by EPRDF members, and these are also representing the regional governments in the federal institutions. These are the Afar People's Democratic Movement (APDO) in Afar region, the Somali People's Democratic Front (SPDF) in Somali, the Gambella People's Democratic Front (GPDF) in Gambella, the Benishangul-Gumuz Peoples Democratic Unity Front (BGPDUF) in Benishangul-Gumuz, and the Harari National League (HNL) in Harari   The EPRDF has been instrumental in creating all the regional affiliates(Markakis 1996, Young 1997:167).

The competition between the parties and the elites for power and control over a certain group also characterises the conflicts that have occurred in the post 1991 period. In most instances, a group is represented by two or more parties. The PDOs and affiliate parties, directly or indirectly contolled by the central government, have been instrumental in propagating and implementing the central government's decisions and taking measures in instances of perceived and actual threats to their power. This will be investigated in the section that will explore the case studies in detail. Prior to the cases, however, it is essential to look at the observed trends of conflicts in the post 1991 Ethiopia. Though the archive on internal conflicts cannot be obtained and thus a full account of the internal conflicts is not at hand, a brief list of some reported conflicts, few researched ones and, will be analysed. Attempts will also be made as to the similarity of the nature of conflicts, though the immediate causes and claims may differ. A proper highlight will also be made on the distinctive characteristics of the conflicts. Based on that, the selected case

studies will be explored to highlight the situation of conflicts in the post 1991 Ethiopian federal arrangement.

It is thus appropriate to ask what consequences the federal implementation has on the Ethiopian society from the point of view of the transformation in the patterns of conflicts and what effects/ achievements and or failure it has on empowering of ethnicities? This will lead to the next chapter that will deal with the nature and transformation of the conflicts in the post 1991 Ethiopia.

2.2   Ethnic conflicts in post 1991 Ethiopia: Observation, case studies and analysis
2.2. 1. Introduction
 Observations and researches indicate that in the post 1991 Ethiopia, the conflicts within the regions have intensified in number (Aalen 2002, Aklilu 2001, Paulos 1998). The conflicts can be categorized as: within the regions, between regions, between the central state and the regions, but as to the focus of the paper which is on conflicts within the regions, as the data on internal conflicts is not accessible for the research purposes, a list of conflicts that have been reported and some with more explanatory researches will be listed. They are used to be instrumental in looking at the dynamics of the transformation(Annex I, Summary table of reported conflicts from various sources with a summary of the main/immediate causes, human and other costs, and current status (attempts of managing the) conflict . The table gives a summary of the causes, as indicated by the various consulted sources and the human and or material costs. Though the list is not exhaustive, it indicates the existence, if not number of, conflicts in the regions. The objective is not to get a quantitative analysis of the number of deaths per se, but indicate the existence of conflicts and analyze the implications.

The table demonstrates the following facts:
- The fact that in many of the units in the Ethiopian federation, there have been or are currently conflicts between different majority groups or between the majority and the minorities.It is in Tigray region that has not been any reported outright conflict between different groups. However, the groups are closely related to ethnic groups in Eritrea. Tigray is composed of three ethnic groups: Tigraway, Kunama and Irob/Saho (Aalen 2002: 75). There is a convergence of common languages of the Tigrians, Kunama, Agew and Erob and even Afar whose speakers are also in Eritrea. But taking the case of conflicts between or within groups, the Tigrai region exhibits no significant records.
- The other related element observed from the collected cases is that, all the other regions, with different degrees of intensity and availability of detailed information, face the challenges of inter and intra group conflicts.

- Among the mentioned causes by the different studies and various sources, the main ones include:

  - Inter group tensions between majority and minority groups for competition over power (The conflict between the Nuer and Agnuwak in Gambella[6], Amhara and Oromo in Arsi, The Harari (Ge'usu people) with the Oromoin Harari[7], and the Oromo and the Somali in Jigija, and the fight between the different Somali tribes among others.[8] The triggering causes could be conflict over resources or some having their origins from " minor" clashes in villages spreading to the area at large. Some of such conflicts have exisited previously. But the dimension of the conflcts has been transformed . The inter clan conflicts, that hav been more 'traditional' but now the role of elites is predominant. The central government as well as regional and other opposition parties play a dominant role.

  - The other dimension of the conflict has to do with the new conflicts, that is, those for their causes have little to trace from the past. These are the cases like the Wolaita, Awassa, Tepi from the SNNPR[9], and the conflicts that have to do with the post 1991 policy and administrative changes that have not carefully responded to the territorial dimension of the federal setting of the ethnic groups. This has resulted in outright violence, fierce competition for power at the regional level, and reaction by certain groups that felt dominated by the impositions of some policies that have not taken the interests of the people in to consideration.

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[6] The western lowland regions of Benishangul-Gumuz and Gambella have both a majority consisting of two major ethnic groups and a minority of several smaller ones. In both states the two majority groups have fought against each other for the control of the regional government. In Benishangul-Gumuz, the Berta and the Gumuz, which together make up the majority of the population, have been at odds with each other. The Berta dominated the first years after the transition, but were outnumbered when a new political party was established by assistance from the EPRDF in 1998 (Young 1999: 335). This party was a result of a merger between different ethnic parties, representing the major ethnic groups in the region. In Gambella, the Nuer and the Anwak have fought for regional hegemony. (News24, 2002:1).

[7] In Harari state, the indigenous Ge'usu people have been granted the right to govern the regional administration, and have a veto in the regional council, despite the fact that the Ge'usu are a minority in the region. The party in power since 1991, Harari National League, has half of the seats in the regional council and shares the executive power with the majority group, the Oromo (Gibbs 1998).

[8] In Somali, the conflicts have been between different pastoralist clans of the Somali tribe. The clans have been mobilised for political and military purposes by political entrepreneurs (Tronvoll in Aalen 2002:69). After the fall of the Derg, the Ogaden tribe dominated the regional administration, but later twelve clans united against them and the Ogaden party was ousted from the regional government. This has led the Ogaden National Liberation Front to resort to violence to fight the new regional administration and the central government (Markakis 1996).

[9] In the southern region, SNNPRS, there is a large potential for inter-ethnic struggles for regional hegemony because of the region's ethnic heterogeneity.

- In almost all the cases, the role of the central government is witnessed. In some, the federal army and police forces have intervened to suppress the arising conflict often resulting in killings. In others, the government have been involved in imprisoning those who are accused to have been leading or involved directly or indirectly in the conflicts and mainly targeting on "oppositions".
- Though the given figures may not be relaible given the constraints of accuracy, while in other instances there is the lack of information, the conflicts have resulted in the death of people, displacement of a larger number, with a lot of property destroyed.

2.3. Exploring the cases

Justification: The two case studies selected for the purpose of this study are based on the following justifications.

- Both fit to the criteria of conflict within the regions
- The Arsi case demonstrates an instance of aggravation of a pre-existing conflict and the transformed nature and the North Omo case basically demonstrates to have been caused or aggravated by the recent changes
- The regional disparity: The Arbagugu Arsi conflict from Oromiya while the Wolaita case is from SNNPR (the peculiarity and similarity can be compared)
- The availability of researched information[10]
- The time range that is the Arsi occurred at the wake of ethnic federalism while the Wolaita is amongst the recent conflicts, thereby, it will be able to observe the persistent problems.

4.2.1. Arbagugu case- Oromiya

Immediately after EPRDF's control over state power, a number of ethnic based political organizations emerged with objective to liberate the ethnic groups of their claims. An ethnic group represented by more than one party became a common phenomena where some affiliated or coming under the umbrella of the central government controlling state power and others expressing their discontents in various ways. Widespread inter and intra grup conflicts arose in the different regions inflamed by fierce competition between elites for power and mobilization of the people. The politicization of ethnicity and inter elite competition extended its impacts in transforming the nature of the conflicts.One of such cases is the conflict in Arsi. It occurred at the wake of empowering ethnicity and the launch of ethnic federalism and lasted for three years.

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[10] The main references for the two cases, The Arsi and Wolaita, are mainly based on research reports by Paulos Chanie and Aklilu Abraham, to OSSREA and Addis Ababa University, Department of Political Science respectively. Both researches are based on primary data collected through interviews and questionnaires. Other sources of evidence are also used to support the arguments. The analysis thus is based on a comparative view of these cases and the compiled observed cases in Annex I.

Exploring this case and identifying the typical and common elements with other conflicts will highlight the flaws that will need to be considered in studying conflicts and their transformation.

Exploring this case highlights a number of significant elements that can be helpful to analyze the transformation of conflicts and the impacts of the post 1991 arrangement. It mainly highlights the element of competing and conflicting interests of elites as a triggering factor behind the conflict in Arbagugu *awraja*/ district between the residing Amharas and Arsi Oromo groups.

Arsi, historically constituted the largest branch of the Oromo ethnic group. A significant recorded history of migration into the area started during the period of Menilik's expansion and continued in the subsequent periods. The migrants moved to Arsi for various reasons : land rewards and grants to royal favorites from Shoa, the search for fertile land and employment were among the main. The groups include, Amharas, Shoa Oromos, Gurages and others. After such a period of migration and settlement, the relationship between the different groups witnessed various forms of interaction: conflictual and non-conflictual. Not only were the conflicts between the other groups but also within the sub-groups that constitute the Oromo ethnic group. For example, the conflict between the Kerayu and Jile with the Arsi Oromos have also been witnessed. The conflictual relation with other groups after resistance against the regime in Shoa however characterized the period of Menilik's expansion often resulted in outburst killings, looting and fighting . The period of Italian occupation(1937-41) was one of the instances that witnessed outburst killings and lootings of the Amharas and Shoa Oromos with most Arsi Oromos except for the notables and few others, allied with the Italians who promised to help end the domination. The other attached dimension to the conflicts in the area is the religious aspect as the majority of the Arsi Oromos are Muslims while the other ethnic groups are Christians (Paulos 1998: 40-43).

After the expulsion of the Italians with the reorganization of the different regions, Arsi also became one of the provinces under the administration of the central state. There was a clear stratification between the landed aristocrats and the subordinated majority . The nature of the conflict at this time was not mainly amongst the commoners but between the aristocrats and the peasantry(Ibid 44).

The land reform proclamation, later by the Derg, and the eviction and dispossession of the aristocrats that followed had changed the conflictual relationship between the different groups that it seemed to have hardly existed. Smooth relations were not also uncommon. Social organizations, marriage alliances and shared cultures and norms as a result of the long time interaction between the groups were easily observed, still with the inter group differences maintained by the respective group members.

The immediate causes for the outbreak of the Arbagugu conflict between Amhara and Oromos in 1991 range form religious differences to plunder over cattle between the Amhara and Oromo group members in some areas within the Arbagugu district later spreading to the other areas in the district (Paulos 1998: 54-58). Though there has been a committee assigned to investigate the conflict by the then transitional government council of prople's representatives, the results of the investigation were neither open to public nor accessible afterwards. So the controversial debates about the causes is not clear except for the one-sided information that has been released from independent groups. However, an important feature of the conflict is the fact that it was significantly shaped by the different political parties. The ruling party TPLF and the OLF, among others (OPDO, IFL, and AAPO), have been accusing each other of taking responsibility for the fighting and execution that occurred. The political parties were behind the different fighting groups and most active actors in the violence.

The conflict was finally contained by involvement of the central government military forces followed by a strong security mechanism. Opposition parties were made inactive in the process., with members of opposition parties were either detained or no more in the political scene.

As the study by Paulos indicates, many of the triggering causes interestingly do not indicate any causal link between earlier conflicts, either the Menilikan or the imperial and post imperial times. Rather it indicates the worsened level of political struggle between the parties following the downfall of the Derg regime. Daniel Kinde has also observed the conflict as pre-existing conflict but politicization of ethnicity and inter elite competition played a dominant role in transforming the nature of the conflict into an intense one with 320,000 Amharas displaced and hundreds killed, (150 Christians), villages burned alive.(Daniel 2001:17).

2.3.2. North Omo Zone- SNNPR

Accordingly, until the recent reorganization of sub-regional administrative structures, the SNNPR was composed of *nine* Zones and *five Special Woreda* that have horizontally equivalent status below the state level. The nine Zones comprised Sidama, Gedeo, North Omo, South Omo, Kambata-Alaba-Tembaro (KAT), Hadiya, Gurage, Kaffa-Sheka, and Bench-Maji. And the five Special *Woreda* were Yem, Knoso, Derashe, Amaro, and Burji. With the exception of North Omo and South Omo, which are named after River Omo traversing the area, the rest are named by the predominant ethnic group(s) in the *Zone* and Special *Woreda*.

By the end of the year 2000, there has occurred a substantial rearrangement of the administrative structures of Zones and Special Woreda in the SNNPR. The reorganization led to the creation of

new Zones and Special Woreda for certain ethnic groups that were previously subsumed under the North Omo, South Omo, Gurage, and Kaffa-Sheka Zones. These newly introduced units include: *Dawro Zone, Gamo and Gofa Zone, Kaffa Zone, Sheka Zone, Silte Zone, Wolaita Zone, Konta Special Woreda, and Basketo Special Woreda.* As indicated above, the Zones and *Special Woreda* are structured based on ethnic and linguistic patterns. However, most of these units in turn are composed of distinct and competing ethnic groups. This study is mainly focuses on the Wolaita ethnic group that was recently embroiled in a situation of political turmoil vis-à-vis regional, sub-regional and central political authorities on the one hand, and inter-group conflict with other ethnic groups of the former North Omo Zone.

The distinction along ethnic/linguistic claims of difference takes broader bases of identity expression in terms of historical, cultural and some degree of ethno-linguistic variations that provides the basis for common identification into an ethnic group in both local and national contexts. This distinction seems to have obtained a steadily growing emphasis since growth of political control and influence of central government and competitive exposures to modern administrative and educational institutions. In particular, in the post 1991 period, the prospect of ethno-national empowerment and self-rule of groups in sub-regional and local administrations appears to have intensified the articulation of ethno-linguistic competitions and feelings of being distinct groups. This has been manifested in the form of ethnic/linguistic (between groups), tribal or clan based (within the same group) and often sub-regional parochial terms that could refer to common district, town or village irrespective of clan or sub clan differences. (See Aklilu for the details demonstrated in the case of North Omo Zone of SNNPR). However, it should be noted that the ethno-linguistic groupings distinguished as such strongly share a number of common attributes of ethnic origin or ancestry, cultural traditions, language affinity, historical backgrounds as well as geographical settlement in this areas.

The Wolaita insurrection was a result of attempting to experiment a top-down policy of cultural homogenization by uniting the Wolaita, Gamo, Gofa and Dawro groupings into a single ethno-linguistic identity. The medium of instruction for schools being an issue under consideration, the main characterization of the conflict has to do with the political party reorganization and the consequential impacts on the imposed attempt of hybridizing languages.

Four political organizations each representing Wolaita, Gamo, Gofa and Dawro within the Zone made a political merger or union to become constituent parts of the Southern Peoples Democratic Revolutionary Front (SPDRF), an EPRDF-affiliate governing SNNPR. The new political organization out of the merger in North Omo came to be referred to as the WOGAGODA Peoples' Democratic Organization taking the first syllable of the names of the ethnic groups of Wolaita, Gamo, Gofa and

Dawro. The new party and the leadership of the North Omo Zone endeavored to attain greater integration among the four ethnic groups that shared a substantial degree of cultural, ethnic, tribal and traditional similarities with the hope of creating a strong base and economies of scale for economic development, labour mobility, and for easing of population pressure in the highly densely populous areas of Wolaita by carrying out resettlement schemes to the less dense areas of North Omo.

In so doing, the party proceeded with creating a linguistic union by hybridizing the four languages for educational instruction in schools as the first step for encouraging gradual union of the four ethnic groups in the long run. Thus, under the tight supervision of the party, a new language was designed by hybridizing the four languages of Wolaita, Gamo, Gofa and Dawro and teaching materials and new textbooks were produced in this language. And, the new language came to be named as "WOGAGODA" in the same manner with the name of the political party created by the merger. It was noted that the new textbooks and teaching materials largely constituted terms and accents of the Gamo and Gofa languages (Daniel Aberra, 2002).

In spite of its grandiose and partly benign ideals of a rather bizarre ethno-linguistic homogenization, the political leaderships of the Zone undertook such a drastic measure of social and ethnic engineering without any sort of consultation and involvement of the members of the four ethnic groups. Nor was there any effort to inform and sensitize the people about the potential advantages and opportunity costs of the new scheme. The entire design of party, language and ethnic union was designed at the top-level political officials thrown down on the population to be complied without question in the same manner of implementing other administrative and political affairs. More importantly, the scheme of hybridization of language and identity did not lend adequate considerations to sensitive and complex historical, cultural and ethnic variables of identity formations and it attempted to force down a new ethnic and linguistic identity in a mechanical and rigid manner.

The Wolaita ethnic members expressed their opposition emphasizing on arguments that the unprecedented experiment of the hybrid medium of instruction would have serious disadvantages against them. Political demands of the Wolaita ethnic group for creation of a separate zonal administrative structure was pursued. The general sense of dissatisfaction gradually accumulated into a mass discontent in various parts of Wolaita.

The degree of human and other costs shows that : Police arrested those who objected, there was also killings of demonstrators following the arrest (10 people were killed), hundreds injured and about a thousand detained most released but some remained for months (Daniel 2001: 17).

Role of Central /regional and or/sub regional governments: There has been a considerable failure of the authorities to mitigate the demands of the people for an immediate termination of the imposed hybrid language and a separate zonal administration was received with the resort to exercise some measure of political pressure from the authorities/ the central (and regional) government. The resultant discontent however was not limited to demonstration and appeals alone but turned to a widespread rebellion and "out of control" situation that even involved looting of non-Wolaita and especially Gamo Gofa and Dawro people and even attempts of expulsion of non-Wolaitas from the area (Sodo town). Consequently, regional and federal authorities intervened in the situation and regional police and security forces as well as contingents of the federal army were deployed. This was followed by a prompt withdrawal of the policy with official acceptance of the problem and the implementation.

 It is a case that shows political turmoil vis-à-vis regional, sub-regional and central political authorities on the one hand, and inter-group conflict with other ethnic groups of the former North Omo Zone (Aklilu 2001:7)

Responding to the conflict: Administrative interventions to mange tensions and conflict situations that the previous Zone of North Omo was restructured and in its place new Zones were introduced more or less reflecting ethnic homogeneity in a zone. And **Wolaita became a separate Zone** in response to the sustained demand of the people for its creation (Ibid:.20)

However, from the achievement of a sustainable peace and stability, it is important to question how seemingly it has solved the problem. A seemingly paradox seems to exist with the development of satisfaction with the political changes on the one hand, and widening of animosity and inter-ethnic discord on the contrary. (Ibid.)

It shows the problem of implementing the principle of federal arrangement in the context of complex identity patterns existing in the multi-ethnic setting of Ethiopia and the way the boundaries and regions are drawn. (Aklilu, 2000).

Synthesis:
Comparing the two cases, both instances shade light on the post-1991 changes that have been introduced. They are also, whether explicitly or implicitly, are characterized by competition for power and how elites especially use incidents to mobilize people. This has often resulted in a massacre of peaceful cohabitants.

A related element to be noted that , even in the post-1991 changes, not only the policy or the changes introduced in the post 1991 Ethiopia but also the various political parties and the elites have played and are playing a major role in the transformation of conflicts in Ethiopia. No significant break has been made between the past and the present due to the continued competition for power and resources by the contending political groups. Instead time and again references are made to past incidents to

A main element of flaws in the constitutional provisions that become basic problems to the implementation includes the duplicitous implementation of the promises and a system actually controlled by the central government directly or through the PDOs where the heightened expectations vis a vis the promises could not be fulfilled.

Regional elites are also important focus of attention in the implementation . Even government sources(Walta Information Center News 14th and 24th ,September 2002) have acknowledged that the cause for the recent decadence of the Southern Ethiopia Peoples Democratic Front (SEPDF) and the failure of the renewal attempts has been the urge of the regional elites for personal goals. It accuses the elites including the Council members of the Front "who were responsible for the instability of the State by creating their own Island for the benefit of a specific nation" and   have been accused of engaging "in acts of inciting clashes and animosity between peoples so as satisfy to their lust for personal enrichment"[11]. Though further investigation of the role of regional elites is beyond the scope of this paper, it is a significant factor to be attributed to the failure of the system in responding to the demands raised by the heightened promises and rights granted to the Peoples, Nations and Nationalities in the constitution. Some have also accused the ruling elites of deliberately fostering ethnic hatred and division for their own political gains(Hamdesa 1997:353)

In the above two cases, it is also possible to observe that the political structure is unable to respond to the demands that were raised by the various groups. The domination of the EPRDF is a contrasting feature in the federation as it can be seen in the party structure and the policies pursued by the regional governments. So from the side of the central government, the TPLF dominated party, there is also a demand for genuine commitment for   decentralization of power and empoerment of the ethnic groups beyongd the rhetorics. The response in such critical instances, as The Economist quoted in Hamdesa (1997: 363) indicated, decentralization "meant

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[11] Despitethe high degree of optimism placed on the Ethiopian experience, the role of those who claim to represent the minorities and their pursuit of individual goals is one of the main factors that has made it fall short of fulfilling the prmises and even creating instability. As Saih (2001: 199) raises the question of the extent to which the minority representatives or the political elite pursue the interests of those whom they represent or their own as one of the main factors in questioning political legitimacy. Young (1998: 198) also indicates the inherent problems of the lack of legitimacy and skill, thus vulnerability to manippulation.

dispersing opposition and holding of essentials of power-guaranteed ultimately by the Tigrean core of the army". Instead, there should be openness to accommodate instead of exclude the demands of the different groups, and to let the regions and people a fair share of the national cake and better accommodation of the interests of the people.

Most importantly, it is also possible to see that no enduring response is given to any of them. Animosity and inter group discord has remained still for the peacefully coexisting inhabitants. Though the situation seems to be calmed down either by suppression or administrative measures, there still is the potential for conflict hidden in the rancor between the groups in question. This also calls for a main emphasis on conflict resolution and prevention mechanisms suited to the specific instances. Even though suppression seems to have given it a temporary solution, the explosion of such conflicts could be more damaging.

2.4. Observation of Trends and intensity of conflicts

For a proper analysis of the trends and observations, and properly evaluate the post 1991 trends of conflicts in Ethiopia, making a distinction and comparison between the *intensity* and *incidence* of conflicts is an important element. It has been observed that in the post 1991 period inter and intra group conflicts have increased in number. While in the pre-1991 period, there was a high intensity conflict that had consumed the lives of many However identifying the intensity of the conflicts is a significant guiding step for any relevant recommendations to follow.

A comparative perspective of looking at the post 1991 trends of conflicts is important here. Prior to this, a brief definition on the basic understanding of the concepts of intensity is instrumental. Conflicts, on the basis of the level of intensity, can be categorized as low, mid and high.

Most frequently used definitions of the terms low, mid, and high intensity conflicts is: "**Low-Intensity Conflict'** – is defined as "armed conflict for political purposes short of combat between regularly organized forces' . While **mid-intensity conflict**, "is armed conflict between regularly organized military forces" (though it "may also include terrorist incidents, or even concurrent insurgent campaigns"), A **high-intensity conflict** by definition implies "armed combat involving the use of mass-destructive weapons" (Israel 2000).

Many attempts to categorize conflicts simply identify levels of armed conflict by the number of people killed in a given period. Such a mainly quantitative explanation may not give the full picture of what is happening. Its expression of the intensity level is limited. However, employed by various authors and studies, attempts have also been made in reference to conflicts in Ethiopia. Basically, in dealing with the conflicts, the study by CRED has employed a minimal distinction

between the three levels of conflicts based on the number of deaths, Low intensity conflicts are taken to be those where "the number of victims does not exceed 1000 or conflicts causing the death of 1000 persons where there have not been more than 50 victims per year in the three preceeding years. ". Intermediate conflicts also imply those "where the number of victims exceeds 1000 for the entire conflict and is between 250 and 1000 for the year into consideration, and a high intensity to be "where the number of victims for the year in question has exceeded 1000". (CRED, 1996)

As dealt with in the preceeding chapters,the multiethnic state of Ethiopia has a history of centuries of wars of expansion and conquest with major human and other impacts including impacts on the history and claims of the different groups.

 The high intensity conflict[12], partly came to an end with the coming to power of one of the regional forces to power and the reorganization of the Ethiopian state based on the principle of ethnic federalism and granting of self determination up to and including secession to "nations, peoples and nationalities". This had also solved the longstanding Eritrean question of independence, one cause of the longstanding war. Thus the conflicts that were 'solved' by the current arrangement, mainly refer to the ethnic based struggles that lasted for about three decades and ended in the overthrow of the military regime and the coming to power of the EPRDF and the consequent independence of Eritrea.

However, time has also proved that, an enduring response is not given to the problem with the coming to power of the EPRDF regime. On the one hand, the central-regional forces struggle has continued with armed struggles of other regional forces.(Amnesty International 2001 report on Ethiopia also indicates that the government continued to face long-running armed opposition in the Oromo region from the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), and in the Somali region from the Ogden National Liberation Front (ONLF). These recurrent conflicts have been categorized under high intensity conflicts(See CRED 1996) though detailed figures of the number of deaths are not available.

Besides, the right to self-determination up to secession has also been observed in (re) initiating such claims even amongst other groups. On the other hand the ethnic federalism policy and its implementation has resulted in the aggravation of the existing conflicts between the different groups within and between the regions. Competition for power mostly between elites,

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[12] The protracted wars with secessionist claims that had started in the early 60s and is recorded to have costed 1,500,000 lives, and for the period 1990-91 highest number of refugees of estimated to be 1,046,300 and internally displaced people of 1,000,000, (CRED, 1996)

characterizes such conflicts. These conflicts are also categorized under the low intensity (CRED 1996).

Depending on the various reports of the human and other costs, the conflicts can be categorized as low intensity compared to the previously fought protracted civil wars. On the other hand, the high intensity conflicts, especially the claims of independence seem to have continued even in the post 1991 period . This time even with the right for self- determination up to secession is granted by the constitution with certain conditions. However, the numerous conflicts in the various regions will need a proper response/reconsideration Vis a Vis the implementation of ethnic federalism in the multiethnic Ethiopian setting.

The conflicts are indeed of low intensity but the cumulative human and other costs are great losses for the gloomy country. In some instances, some conflicts trace their causes directly or indirectly to the current policy pursued and the resultant politicization of ethnicity and role of elites, some have been existing and intensified by the policy while the rest their status have not changed even in the current regime.

It is based on these observations that the paper argues the current federal arrangement has redressed old imbalances thereby gave an end to some conflicts, mainly large scale ones, while has faced incidence of inter-group conflicts of relatively low intensified nature. The main drawbacks are in general the lack of genuine implementation and the use of ethnic federalism as a political tool.

So the failure for the expected alternative model of bringing about solution to the longstanding national question of the country, an the continent at large could not be realized after a decade of experimentation. This does not however indicate the failure of ethnic federalism,as a principle and as a model. However, lack of proper consideration of the realities and the main attributes of the society in to consideration has not been given proper weight. Thus little changes have been brought about by ethnic federalism vis a vis the raised expectations and heightened promises. Article 39 of the constitution, providing the rights of self determination up to secession for the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples, has been defended by the ruling party. However, many factors on the ground have not enabled any of the groups to exercise that right. The demarcation of administrative regions, the lack of fit between the terrritories beginning with the administrative divisions and the mutiethnic setting of the country at large,

It is thus not failure of the model of ethnic federalsm, but failure of promises and lack of genuine implementation by the different actors involved.

Synthesis, Conclusions and Recommendation

This paper has aimed at analyzing the trends of ethnic conflicts in post 1991 Ethiopia. The main objectives targeted at examining the trends of transformation of conflicts with the possible casual explanations. For this purpose the paper also aimed at identifying the gaps in implementation process and the role of the various actors. These are considered important to find alternative explanation about the relation between the current federal structure and ethnic conflicts. The current arrangement was assumed to have addressed old imbalances while creating new ones.

Based on the analysis, ethnicity, which was aimed at resolving the longstanding problem of national question and has been used as a political tool. Politicized ethnicity, used and manipulated by elites for achieving narrow interests and has been a major triggering factor in the transformation of the nature of conflicts in the post 1991 Ethiopia. Old imbalances were addressed to a limited extent while new imbalances are created with manifest conflicts of low intensified nature. The high intensity conflicts fought for more than three decades were solved through the coming to power of the EPRDF in 1991. However, no guarantee for peace and stability has been obtained as the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia broke out in 1998. This is the major high intensity war recorded in the post 1991 Ethiopia. But a very important new feature is the incidence of numerous low intensity conflicts in majority of the sates. The major challenges are found in the general lack of genuine commitment towards the implementation of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia. These are inherently rooted in the fierce competition for power between the different competing elites, the central government on the one side and the ruling party with the centralized rule, the regional administrators and elites, and the so-called opposition parties.It has been clearly shown with the help of the case studies and observed cases that competition for power has even instigated conflicts.

The paper has highlighted on the competing debates and theories in approaching ethnicity and ethnic conflicts. The debates that surround the cionsideration of federalism as a conflict management devise have also been covered. Taking the Ethiopian case, the instrumentalist understanding of ethnicity and the role of elites has been identified as better tool to explain the Ethiopian case.

The brief analysis of the history of conflicts in Ethiopia has also shown that the main characterization of conflicts in Ethiopia has been center-region struggle mainly having roots in inter and intra elite competitions for power. The response of the central governments in most instances has also been over centralization and suppression.

As observed in the post 1991 situation, the federal model, introduced with a high expectation of granting autonomy to the hither to marginalized ethnic groups with the coming to power of the ex-regional forces has not brought about the expected changes. Especially concerning the situation of conflicts, a high incidence in inter and intra group conflict exists. This has been characterized by inter and intra elite competitions. Thus making all the actors in the conflict engaged in mobilizing the people for fights accountable. The changes introduced and the imposition of policies that have not taken into consideration the reality on the ground has also caused conflicts. The measures addressed in response, instead of giving a lasting solution, have resulted in most cases in widening the gaps and cleavages between ethnic groups. Peaceful cohabitants have been involved in a massacre. Tese elements were addressed in exploring the cases taken for the purpose of this study: the Arsi Arbagugu case and the Wolaita case.

Thus the need arises to search for a pertinent measure to address these basic problems that the existing and the coming generations will either have to bitterly deal with it on top of burdens of poverty they are unable to bear. I would suggest three fold measures to be gradually taken to salvage the situation and the people:

▪ De-territorialization of ethnicity

This involves revising the way boundaries are drawn in the current structure. Boundaries between regions have already reflected the ethnic element in Ethiopia[13] but that has not been the only criteria considered.The large number of ethnic groups and the heterogeneity of identity and settlement patterns has made it difficult to make any clear demarcation between regions and will hardly be viable for the Ethiopian case. Language should not be taken as a sole criteria. Federalism indeed is the best viable alternative to the unitary and centralized rule for the multiethnic Ethiopian state.

▪ De-ethnicization of the complex Ethiopian citizenship

This is an element should follow to pacify the instigated hatred. Currently, as even observed by writers like Jon Abbink(1998:63), Ethiopian citizenship has currently been defined through ethnic identity. For example, children of mixed parentage will in one way or another required to choose which ethnic group to belong to. Despite the difficulty of the matter , it further complicates the day to day affairs of the peacefully coexisting people and even beyond families. This has also extended to voting, marriage and *kebele* (lower tiers of administration) registrations. This indeed in the overextension of ethnicity in to domains that are"completely irrelevant" (Ibid), given the Ethiopian reality.

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[13] See Annex I to compare the maps of pre and post 1991 administrative structures

- De-politicization of ethnicity

This concerns the de-ethnicization of political parties mainly. The main issue for ruling parties in Ethiopia has not been the ethnic group they belong to but the lack of legitimacy among the groups they govern. This could be due to the policy they pursue for or against a certain ethnic group that led to the lack of legitimacy. The de-ethnicization of political parties will help limit the flourishing elites aspiring for the control of state power and thus resources but have been mobilizing people for their own ends and fueling up the hatred and ethnic cleavages, feeding up the conflict situation in the country.

The implementation should be gradual because reversing the already created environment will certainly demand evolving between the groups that compose Ethiopia. However, the issue of outlining a clear alternative model should be supported by and due consideration of the Ethiopian reality. This research highlights the problems but a proper study of the past and present trends of conflicts will also help in designing a responsive conflict management mechanism.

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Annex

Table 2: Summary table of some reported conflicts in the various regions of the country

Region	Conflicting groups	Year	Causes	Impacts	Current Status
SNNPR (North Omo Zone)	Inter-group tensions and conflicts between the Wolaita, Gamo, Gofa, and Dawro groups.	1999	A top-down policy of cultural homogenization and consequent demands of the Wolaita ethnic group for creation of a separate zone (Aklilu, 2000:2-3).	10 people were killed), hundreds injured and about a thousand detained (Daniel Kinde:17)	Wolaita became a separate Zone
SNNPR, Awassa	Sidamas versus the regional government	May 2002	Against the attempt of making Awassa a chartered city, under the control of the central government	According to government sources, 15 died, and 25 wounded as a result of 'unlawful' demonstrations	
SNNPR	Guji and Wolayta	1991-92	(Abbink,1998:72)		
	Shekatcho and Northerners	1994	"		
	Anyuwak and government	1993	"		
	Hadiya and Gurage	1995	"		
	Surma and Dizi and Government	1990-97	"		
	Surma and Nyangatom	1988-97	"		
(Ziway area)	Gurage and Oromo	1996	"		

	Guji and Sidama	1995	"		Ended up with interventn of the federal forces
Oromiya (Arsi)	Amhara and Arsi Oromo (Arbagugu awraja)	1991	Inter-elite competition for power and resources (Paulos, 1999)	320,000 Amharas displaced and hundreds killed, villages burned alive, 150 christians killed (Daniel 2001)	
Oromiya (Arsi)	Non- Oromos		(Daniel 2001)	60 killed, 60 wounded, 6205 heads of cattle looted, 64 houses destroyed, crops on 247 hectares set on fire, 3000 peo from Gurage ethnic background were displaced, hundreds killed	
Oromiya, (E Wollega)	Oromo- Amahara conflict	2001	The regime accused of instigating it (Daniel 2001)	Death of many and displacement of 12, 000 Amh. Speaking Ethiopians.	
Amhara (Gojam province)	Amharas versus Benishalgul		Gen causes, acc to Human Rights	60,000 Amharic.	

	ethnic gp)		Watch, (Daniel 2001) are found on the new ideology of self-determination that has encouraged an upsurge in ethnic nationalism expressed in local disputes over land, water, and grazing rights.	Speaking people displaced from Dba Tena and Mandura Guangua woredas following an attack by the Beni-Shangul ethnic group (Human Rights Report 1993 in Daniel 1997)	Displacement of the Amh speaking peop. Daniel 2001,17-18
Harar Jijiga	Geri and Jaarso clans			125,000 peo displaced	
	Yabere and Issaq			45,000affected	
Oromo and Somali	1991 and 1995		Numerous people died		
Benishangul Gumuz	The two major ethnic groups, Benishangul and Gumuz and several orther small minorities		Fight for the control of regional government		
Gambella	Major ethnic groups, Anuak and Nuer and several other minorities		Fight for regional hegemony		
Harari	Potential conflict as the minority indigenous ge'usu people are ruling while				

	the majorities are the Oromo				
Somailia	Ogaden		Independence		
Afar			Independence		
Oromiya			Independence		