

CAUSES OF ETHNIC CONFLICT IN ETHIOPIA AND ITS EFFECT ON DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF 'AMHARA' AND 'GUMUZ' COMMUNITIES

Mulunesh Dessie Admassu

Political science, Department of political science, College of Social science, Bahir Dar University, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

Abstract

The paper explores multi-dimensional causes of ethnic conflict, and its effect on development in Ethiopia specifically focusing on the case of Amhara and Gumuz communities. I argue that ethnic conflict occurs when a particular set of factors and conditions converge: a major structural crisis; presence of historical memories of inter-ethnic grievances; institutional factors that promote ethnic intolerance; manipulation of historical memories by political entrepreneurs to evoke emotions such as fear, resentment and hate toward the “other”; and an inter-ethnic competition over resources and rights. Conflict in the area negatively affects development as a number of community members lost their life and resources and become susceptible for internal migration, even though the given area is naturally fertile. The article also explores a way in which major ethnic conflict theories are related to. The goal of the paper is to depart from simplistic explanations of ethnic conflict and provide a basis for a more comprehensive approach to peacebuilding and post-conflict development strategies in ethnically divided societies. The study was conducted through case study design and used qualitative research approach, a key informant interview and document analysis was held.

Keywords: Ethnicity, ethnic conflict, Development, ‘Amhara’, ‘Gumuz’, Ethiopia,

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, ethnic diversity is common in all continents with varying degree. Most African countries took high degree of diversity than others (Adamu, A. Y citing Van Der Beken, 2012, p.7).In Africa, the persistence, exacerbation and intensity of ethnic tension and conflict is mainly caused by ethnicization of state institutions, and ethnic clientelism where different groups fight to place their own representatives in key political and economic positions (Jinadu, 2007).The other main reason for ethnic conflicts in the continent is related to the failure of good governance and political system that accommodates ethnic differences and interests (Irboi, 2005). Ethnicity is typically not the driving force of African conflicts but a lever used by politicians to mobilize supporters in pursuit of power, wealth, and resources (Aapengnuo, 2010, p.1).

Based on scholarly arguments regarding the sources of ethnic conflicts, one may presume that this is a misconception. For instance, according to Cordell and Stefan (2009: 25), though ethnicity may provide mobilization basis for collective action, it is not the ultimate, irreducible source of violent conflict.The majority of ethnic conflicts in various African countries, which were regarded as inter-ethnic conflicts emanated from mere ethnic differences are reported to have other causes. Hizkias (2001: 18), for instance, argues that most of the wars waged in Africa and particularly in the Horn during the past 30 years have described in terms of “inter-ethnic conflicts”, both by the adversaries themselves and by external analysts. In the case of Ethiopia,(Teferi citing Asnake 2002: 16 to 19) has characterized almost all of the conflictual problems of the post 1991 as inter-ethnic problems caused by the ethicized state administrative structures adopted since then.

Ethiopia's modern period (1855 to the present) represented by the reigns of Tewodros II, Yohannis IV, Menelik II, Zawditu, and Haile Selassie I; by the Marxist regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam; and, since mid-1991, by the Transitional Government of Ethiopia under Meles Zenawi; has been characterized by nation-building as well as by warfare. Tewodros II started the process of recreating a cohesive Ethiopian state by incorporating Shewa into his empire and by suppressing revolts in the country's other provinces. Yohannis IV battled to keep Ethiopia free from foreign domination and to retard the growing power of the Shewan king, Menelik. Eventually, Menelik became emperor and used military force to more than double Ethiopia's size. He also defeated an Italian invasion force that sought to colonize the country.

Struggles over succession to the throne characterized the reign of Zawditu struggles won by Haile Selassie, the next ruler. After becoming emperor in 1930, Haile Selassie embarked on a nationwide modernization program. However, the 1935-36 Italo-Ethiopian war halted his efforts and forced him into exile. After returning to Addis Ababa in 1941, Haile Selassie undertook further military and political changes and sought to encourage social and economic development. Although he did initiate a number of fundamental reforms, the emperor was essentially an autocrat, who to a great extent relied on political manipulation and military force to remain in power and to preserve the Ethiopian state. Even after an unsuccessful 1960 coup attempt led by the Imperial Bodyguard, Haile Selassie failed to pursue the political and economic policies necessary to improve the lives of most Ethiopians.

In 1974 a group of disgruntled military personnel overthrew the Ethiopian monarchy. Eventually, Mengistu Haile Mariam, who participated in the coup against Haile Selassie, emerged at the head of a Marxist military dictatorship

According to Historical Setting by John W. Turner (An African analyst with the Department of Defense);

Modern Ethiopia is the product of many millennia of interaction among peoples in and around the Ethiopian highlands region. From the earliest times, these groups combined to produce a culture that at any given time differed markedly from that of surrounding peoples. The evolution of this early “Ethiopian” culture was driven by a variety of ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups (1993).

Anthropologists believe that East Africa's Great Rift Valley is the site of humankind's origins. (The valley traverses Ethiopia from southwest to northeast). In 1974 archaeologists excavating sites in the Awash River valley discovered 3.5-million-year-old fossil skeletons, which they named *Australopithecus afarensis*. These earliest known hominids stood upright, lived in groups, and had adapted to living in open areas rather than in forests.

Coming forward to the late Stone Age, recent research in historical linguistics and increasingly in archaeology as well has begun to clarify the broad outlines of the pre-historic populations of present-day Ethiopia. These populations spoke languages that belong to the Afro-Asiatic super-language family, a group of related languages that includes Omotic, Cushitic, and Semitic, all of which are found in Ethiopia today. There are Semitic (‘Amhara’ and others), Cushitic (‘Agew’ and Oromo), Omotic (‘Shinasha’), and Nilo-Saharan (‘Gumuz’) language family speaking people in ‘Metekel’ (Bender *et al*, 1976). In period of EPRDF these language groups taken as major criterion to arrange ethnic based federalism as major instrument to foster peace and democracy in the state but not achieved.

DEVELOPMENT, ETHNICITY AND ETHNIC CONFLICT IN ETHIOPIA

Intra-state conflicts that involve ethnic groups have become common since the establishment of the modern state in Ethiopia. However, Emperor Haile Selassie and the military regime neglected the issues and focused on Ethiopian state building. As a result, protracted civil wars continued and became the main reasons for the fall of the military regime in 1991 (Young, 1998). The Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Front (EPRDF) regime has implemented federalism as a means of intra-state conflict management since 1994. The constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (1995) considers nations, nationalities and people as the supreme power sources in the country (Article 8/1). Following the Federal Constitution, the Benishangul-Gumuz regional constitution (2002) also identifies the people in the regional state as indigenous and non-indigenous.

According to Weber, a nation is “a community of sentiment which would adequately manifest itself in a state of its own; hence, a nation is a community which normally tends to produce a state of its own” (Hutchinson and Smith, 2000:9). For Max Weber, the people of a nation might have different ethnic identities or may speak different languages, but if they develop a common national sentiment that transcends all the communities in the territory, these people could be considered as a nation. In addition, Max Weber asserts that the common national sentiment is basically achieved over a period of time by the common activities of the people (Hutchinson and Smith, 2000:8). Weber identifies three major points about the term nation.

First, a nation suggests a group of people who have a common national sentiment which is developed in the process of their common accomplishments through time. Second, the people do not necessarily come from a single race or speak a particular language to be a nation. In other words, if people with different languages and races have a common national sentiment, which is shared by all of them, they can be considered as a nation. Third, the tendency of these people and their nation is also to establish their own state.

Smith defines as; a nation is a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members (Smith, 1991:14). Thus definition of Nation Nationality in Ethiopian constitution lacks clarity and become susceptible for different interpretation followed by ethnic conflict (Merera, 2002).

There can be no peace without economic and social development, just as development is not possible in the absence of peace (Boutros Boutros-Ghali). Development can be seen as human and economic; human development encompasses growth and the equitable distribution of the fruits of growth, assuming both are essential for achieving human progress. For example, uneven distribution of development impacts is often a source of conflict and a challenge for peace. Peace should be conceptualized and perceived not only in the negative sense of minimizing or resolving conflict but also in the positive sense of creating material conditions which provide for the mass of the people a certain minimum condition of security, economic welfare, political efficacy and supernatural well-being (McCandless. E and Karbo.T (ed), 2011) Violent conflicts in the post-Cold War era ravage many societies, leading to death and destruction, the crumbling of weak states, local and international insecurity, and a vicious cycle of underdevelopment, instability, and aggression (Milante and Oxhorn, 2009). Conflicts negatively affect Africa's socio-economic and political development (Mackatiani,et.al, 2014). Peace is one and necessary condition for development where as conflict reverses the relationship.

Corruption, nepotism, exclusion, injustice, and unequal distribution of national resources are indicators of bad governance experienced in most African states. Bad governance leads to poverty and destroy social cohesion leading to violent conflicts. Due to poor governance, there is inequitable social and economic system, leading to exploitation and economic inequalities (Mackatianiet.al, 2014).

Thus in Ethiopia today ethnic conflicts are major challenges followed by public resentment especially since 2016 and resulted with destruction of infrastructures, lose of resources including human life, million forced to internal migration. According to Global report on internal displacement 2019.p. 14, Ethiopia had the highest number of new internal displacements associated with conflict world wide in 2018. The country's crises has been deepening steadily since 2016, but conflict and inter communal violence escalated significantly and spread to new areas last year, triggering almost 2.9 million new displacements, four times the figures for 2017. Conflict and displacement were recorded along three of the Oromia region's boarder with the southern Nation, Nationalities and people's (SNNP) region in the south west, the Benishangul-Gumuz region in the north –west, Somali Region in the east and Amhara National Regional State. Thus development become under quotation even though the government still announced Ethiopia is in fast run of development.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Understanding of the term ethnicity differs in different perspectives which include primordial, instrumentalist and constructivist approaches. The primordialist approach interprets ethnicity as relating to a particular race, nation or tribe and their customs and traditions; it is established at birth when people are born into an ethnic group in which they stay until they die (Horowitz, 1985). Accordingly, emphasis is given to the importance of cultural norms and blood relationships for one's identity and to the relationship between members of the ethnic group (Geertz, 1973; Horowitz, 1985; Lewis, 1994). The primordial's approach helps to explain the role of emotions and the conflict potential of ethnicity. But it overlooks the economical, political and social relationships between members of the ethnic group. It is undermined by the changes that have occurred in many ethnic groups due to colonisation, frequent migration and intermarriage (Harff and Gurr, 2004:96).

In contrast to the primordial approach, the instrumentalist approach focuses on the malleability of the ethnic identity and the role of elites in the politicisation of ethnicity (Esman, 2004). Therefore, it is believed that an ethnic identity can be changed in the pursuit of economic interests and wealth (Hechter, 1996; Banton, 1994). In other words, people can change their identity on the basis of the benefits they could gain by doing so. Some times the elite group (political entrepreneurs), who create identity-based differences and manipulate those differences (political ethnicity), for the purpose of attaining political power that renders ethnic differences. The institutional, political entrepreneurs and competition over resources as part of this approach, explain how the interaction of institutional and political factors leads to ethnification, ethnic intolerance, competition, and eventually – violent conflict. In Ethiopian context, this theory best fits to reality and this artificial creation of identity boundary followed by conflict and UN development.

This has happened in many countries such as in Nigeria, Rwanda and Burundi during the 1990s which ultimately led the countries to instability (Deng, 2009:362) beyond this, an ethnic identity could be considered as any social identity, such as membership of a trade union. But it reduces the ethnic identity to cost-benefit oriented economic choices; thus, it fails to account for the deeper social structures that allow manipulation of the grievances of the ethnic group by their elite leaders (Vayrynen, 1999:128).

Constructivist theory regards ethnicity as constructed from dense webs of social interactions and hence a group attitude about its custom, decent or even physical structure forms an important aspect of ethnicity. In this view, ethnicity has little independent standing outside the political processes in which collective ends are sought. Primordial's argued that inherently ethnicity is the generic cause of ethnic conflicts (Vaughan, 2003). Instrumentalists on the other side treat ethnicity and ethnic conflict as a resource to materialize ones economic or political goods (Tronvol, 2003: 49).

In the Ethiopian situation, ethnicity was associated with narrow-nationalism, tribalism or conspirators agenda by the previous regimes, where as the new ruling elites as the emancipator and valuable asset to be protected and promoted. Ethnicity in this research context relates to group members who share a persisting sense of common interest and identity that is based on some combination of shared historical experience and values, such as cultural traits, beliefs, language, way of life and a common in residential territory (Harff and Gurr, 2004:3). Ethnic group (community) can also be defined as a named human population

with a myth of common ancestry, shared memories and cultural elements, a link with a historic territory or home land, and a measure (sense) of solidarity / feeling of unity with a common interest/ (Brown, 1993:28-9).The above discussion indicates that there is no clear difference between nations, nationalities and people when we consider different identity groups in a country. This leads to fail nation building project in the state.

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted based on the qualitative approach. Both primary and secondary data sources are utilized. Key informants interview, document analysis and archival materials were also used. Unstructured interviews were carried out with intention of collecting the required data. Individuals, elders, representatives of religious institutions especially from Orthodox Church and Muslims, government officials and local appointees were interviewed. In addition articles, minutes, reports, research papers were assessed. The researcher also observed the 3rd cultural festivity in Beni shangule Gumuz region, in Gilgel Belus town (April 17-20/2019) celebrated with collaboration of Amhara National Regional state. Focus Group discussion (FGD) with purposively selected individuals from the two communities and from each sex was done with three groups of 6 members each.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Causes of ethnic conflict; conceptual frame work

One of the common challenges of multi-ethnic federal states is that arising from the nationalism of ethno-regional communities. Regionally concentrated ethnic groups push the federal states for more devolution along ethnic lines. Hence, the success of federalism in such countries depends on whether the federal state facilitates the establishment of a dual identity which considers the ethnic, tribal, linguistic and religious divisions of the people (Smith, 1995:3-11). In other words, the issue of self-determination has to be addressed in ways that allow for mutual recognition of socially significant differences without losing sight of the right to be culturally different or of the need to safeguard the basic human and political rights of citizens. Practically these problems led to the disintegration of the former Soviet Union and are challenging the Belgian federation. This has direct relevance for the Ethiopian case study.

The main purpose of Federal arrangement in Ethiopia was to change the structure of the unitary state which caused the formation of armed ethno-national movements and civil wars in the country. The constitution of FDRE has been greatly influenced by, and has, in fact, emerged out of the immediate conditions that preceded it- three decades of protracted civil wars that destroyed countless lives and livelihoods, and cause wide spread destruction on the social fabric of Ethiopian society.

The constitution was designed to remove the causes of future civil wars; to restore peace and sustain it; and to establish a democratic order in which the rights of national communities and of citizens are recognised and protected. The constitution particularly gives attention to the right of self-determination of ethnic groups (Article, 39). Therefore, institutionalising ethnic identity can be considered the main feature of the federal arrangement. Focusing on nationality, the constitution stipulates that sovereign power lies with the nationalities of the country (Article 8/1).

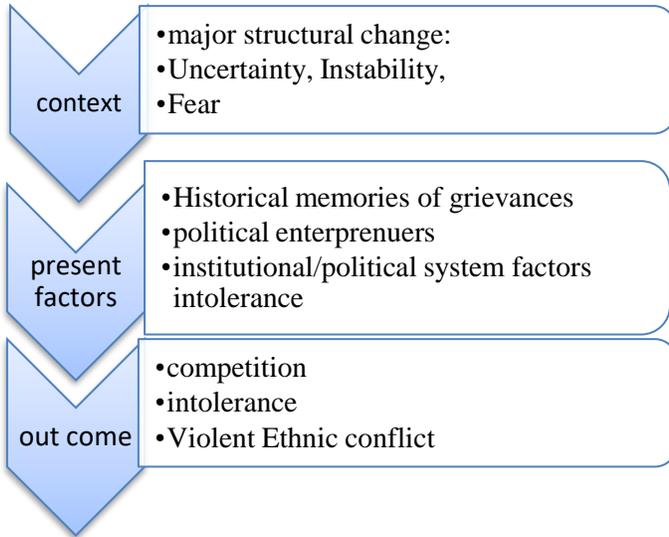
The constitution stipulates that borders of regional administrations can be identified on the basis of ethnic identity. “States shall be delimited on the basis of the settlement patterns, language, identity and consent of the people concerned” (Article 46/2). Therefore, the Ethiopian federal system institutionalises ethnic identity through the regional states and lower level administrations which are established along ethnic lines.

The Ethnic Groups in the ‘Benishangul-Gumuz’ Regional state were expressed as Indigenous versus Non-indigenous. On the behalf of this constitution, Benishangul-Gumuz Regional state, which hosts different ethnic groups, categorised as indigenous and non-indigenous (according to the regional state’s constitution (Article 2)). The indigenous ethnic groups are the Nilo-Saharan families, including Berta, Gumuz, Mao and Komo, and Shinasha (an Omatic family) (Wedekind and Alga, 2002). The non-indigenous groups include Amhara, Oromo, Agaw, Tigray and others. Then what is the result of this dichotomy is our focus in point.

These latter groups originally inhabited the Ethiopian Highlands and were alien to ‘Benishangul-Gumuz’ until recently. They have been slowly encroaching on the area, some groups as early as the mid-18th century, such as the Oromo (NegasoGidada2001). The ‘Gumuz’ speak several different dialects (Bender 1979), identify themselves with different ethnic names (Ganza, S’es’e, etc.), and are organized as clans which have conducted feuds traditionally—even today inter-clan relations are far from peaceful. Some ‘Gumuz’ in the ‘Kamashi’ area (south of the Blue Nile) have been profoundly affected by the encroachment of the Oromo, and their culture now shows many features adopted from this group. Unlike the Bertha, who are massively Islamic (despite the greater or lesser degree of traditional practices among them), the ‘Gumuz’ are divided in their religious beliefs. Most of them practice traditional religions (Wolde-Selassie 2005, 72-76). Some are Muslim and a few Christian worshippers, although their beliefs are deeply rooted in traditional practices. Muslims cluster around the Sudanese frontier and Christians (Orthodox, Protestants and Catholics) live in the south and east. The adoption of Islam and Orthodox Christianity is the result of contact with neighboring Sudanese and Highland ‘Amharas’.

The making of the boundaries of the ‘Benishangul-Gumuz’ region with its ‘Amhara’ and Oromo neighbors impelled inter-ethnic and inter-regional conflicts. The region shares boundaries in the north and in the northeast with the ‘Amhara’ region, in the south and southeast with the ‘Oromia’ region and in the west with the Republic of the Sudan. From among the five titular ethnic groups that constitute the region, the ‘Gumuz’ inhabit a large territory and have along history of interaction with both the ‘Amhara’ and the Oromo.

The formation of the BGNRS has indeed transformed relationships between the ‘Gumuz’ and their neighbors. One important aspect in these relationships is the process of making inter-regional boundaries, which is fraught with friction and tension. This is particularly important for the emerging relationship between the BGNRS and ‘Oromia’ regions. Regarding ‘Gumuz-Amhara’ relations, the formation of the BGNRS appears to have effectively changed the frontier nature of their relationship. In spite of this, the presence of a large number of ethnic ‘Amhara’ within the BGNRS region and their continuous migration to the latter influence their relationships.



Background to Gumuz Relations with Amhara

The ‘Gumuz’ inhabit a spiral shaped territory extending from the former Wollega province in the south to the northwestern (‘Metema’ and ‘Qwara’) parts of the former Gondar province. Even if their settlement is adjacent, it is feasible to divide the ‘Gumuz’ country into two; **‘Metekel’** in the Blue Nile valley of northwest Ethiopia and **‘Dedessa’** in the former ‘Wollega’ province. The prevailing administrative division of the BGNRS region somehow follows this division. Hence, the parts of the former ‘Metekel Awraja’ inhabited by the ‘Gumuz’ now constitute the new **‘Metekel zone’**, while the ‘Gumuz’ of the ‘Dedessa’ valley organized into the newly created **‘Khamashi’** zone. Our main focus is on the former one.

The ‘Benishangul-Gumuz’ region remains politically fragile due to the lack of a well-developed inter-ethnic relationship among the five constituent ethnic groups of the region. In this respect, the northern part of the region (the ‘Metekel’ zone) has stronger economic relations with the ‘Amhara’ region than the southern part of the region. Similarly, the southern and western parts of the region (‘Kamashi’ and ‘Assosa’) have stronger economic relations with the ‘Oromia’ region. More importantly, many of the ‘Gumuz’ are bi-lingual, speaking Amharic (in ‘Metekel’) and ‘Afaan-Oromo’ (in ‘Kamashi’ and ‘Assosa’) in addition to their own language.

‘Amhara-Gumuz’ relation is highly visible and applicable in the market, where both share high socio-cultural values. Both have also developed their social interaction and economic cooperation by forming *‘Wodajinät’* (literally an ‘Awgni’ term to mean friendship). Through this interaction, both ‘Awi’ and the ‘Gumuz’ established the networks of closest links for the development of their mutual benefit. In order to fulfill their personal needs, they both can maximize their day today interactions by re-arranging visiting times one over another either during feast/pleasure or the time of difficulty. For example, the ‘Gumuz’ were invited by their ‘Amhara’ friends during public holidays and social and religious festivals such as Easter, New Year, *‘Masqal’* Celebrations, Christmas, Weeding, and any other minor festivities if any. Thus, by respecting its honor callings of their ‘Amhara’ friends (also called *‘Wudaj’* in ‘Awgni’ language but *‘Wadaj’* in Amharic), the ‘Gumuz’, together

with their families have come to their 'wudaj' homes having their traditional musical instrument locally called *Duh* in 'Gumuz' language and 'Empelti' in 'Awgni' language. The other system is 'Angua Sahugni' (የጡት አባት ወይም የጡት ልጅ)፣ 'abaliji' / 'abaljie' (የክርስትና አባትና ልጅ ወይም እናት ና ልጅ)፣

Transformation in 'Gumuz-Amhara' relations

The end of imperial regime marked the end of patron-client relationship between 'Amharas' and 'Gumuz'. Following the coming of *Dergue/Derge* to power, the 'Gumuz' were allowed to have agricultural knowledge from their neighboring highlanders, particularly from 'Awi and Amhara' farmers. Among the reforms of the *Dergue*, agricultural cooperation significantly created rooms for mutual benefit between 'Amhara' and 'Gumuz'. Thus, the *Dergue* tried to transfer the knowledge of agricultural system from better experienced 'Awi and Amhara' to less knowledgeable 'Gumuz'. As the result, the 'Gumuz' who had been poor in oxen draw plough, about milking cows and other related agricultural activities were made to be paired with 'Amhara'.

Even though the transfer of knowledge from 'Awi and Amhara' to the Gumuz was not this much interesting, the reform laid the vital base in interacting and integrating the latter with the former, where Amhara supported the Gumuz to change from their early history of hunting and gathering way of life in to farming, includes both sedentary agriculture and shifting cultivation.

Following the 1992 reorganization of regional administration in the country, Mentawuha town became part of 'Guangua woreda' of the 'Amhara' region, whereas the adjacent 'Gumuz' villages were assigned to the 'Mandura woreda' of the B-G region. During the initial transition period, there were conflicts between the two groups around 'Mentawuha'. However, these conflicts ceased after elders of both groups conducted reconciliation. Subsequent to the reconciliation, most of the peasant associations inhabited by 'Amhara' immigrants around 'Mentawuha' joined the 'Amhara' region (Wolde-Selassie 2004: 261).

Thus at present, there are no boundary disputes between the 'Amhara' residents of 'Mentawuha' and the 'Gumuz'. Indeed, officials of both the 'Guanguwa' (Amhara) and the 'Mandura' (B-G) 'woreda' concur that the nearby 'Ca'rr' mountain range serves as a common boundary between the two regions. Hence, relationships between the two communities are steadily improving. Evidence for this is in the peaceful interactions in markets and in the increasingly important sharecropping arrangement between 'Gumuz' land owners and 'Amhara' peasants.

However, they allege that inter-ethnic violence usually occurs between the two groups due to the use of forest resources by the 'Amhara' of 'Mentawuha' and because of disagreements over sharecropping. Regarding arms they concede that despite their best efforts to bring the problem under control, the 'Gumuz' would buy weapons at a very expensive cost and arm themselves for cultural reasons.

As demonstrated by this brief account of 'Mentawuha' town, ethnic regionalization has dramatically transformed the relationship between the 'Gumuz' and the 'Amhara' from a hostile frontier relationship into a complex set of relationships

containing both conflict and cooperation. One of the most important examples of emerging peaceful interactions between the two groups is the migration of 'Amhara' peasants in large numbers to the 'Gumuz' country to engage in sharecropping.

In spite of this, the government in accordance with its ethnic policy only organizes resettlement program within ethnic regions. In other words, the policy exclude cross-ethnic (inter-regional) resettlement of peasants. As a result, the current migration of 'Amhara' peasants to the B-G region has been considered spontaneous and the settlers do not receive support from the government and international aid agencies. They, moreover, do not enjoy tenure security.

According to informants, there are three types of 'Amhara' migrants in the 'Mandura woreda' and its surroundings. First, 'moferzemet' means 'one that migrates with his ploughs.' 'Amhara' peasants engaged in 'moferzemet' do not permanently settle in the B-G region. They enter into sharecropping arrangement for a specific farming season. After collecting harvest, they return to their villages. This is mainly practiced in the border areas of the two regions. Second, 'ye-Ikuleersha', which means, 'sharecropping', involves the establishment of a sharecropping arrangement between 'Amhara' farmers who would come to settle in the region and 'Gumuz' landowners. Third, 'Tigegna', which means 'dependent'— in this arrangement an 'Amhara' migrant farmer, first settles in the region as a dependent of another 'Amhara' peasant who secured farming land through a sharecropping arrangement. After a while, such a migrant farmer with the help of family members and friends secures his own plot of farmland through a sharecropping arrangement or informal land purchase.

The present migration of 'Amhara' peasants into the 'Gumuz' country has led to the emergence of new modes of interactions. First, the sharecropping arrangement that recognizes the right of the 'Gumuz' over their land reflects changes in the relationships between the two groups since 1991 and also mutually advantageous. The 'Gumuz' who have relatively abundant fertile land and little experience in plough agriculture lease their land to the land hungry 'Amhara' farmers who increasingly face shortage of farm land in the degraded and crowded highlands.

There is, however, a degree of uneasiness among 'Gumuz' officials about the continuous migration of highland farmers into their region. They are particularly worried about the long-term political and demographic impacts of migrations. In this respect, the officials of the B-G seek to limit the migrations of 'Amhara' peasants to their region.

However, this remains difficult. 'Gumuz' officials complain that their request for assistance from the 'Amhara' region to send back the migrant farmers to their original place of domicile was not successful. This indicates the significance of highland-lowland migration in the relationships between the two regions. It is difficult for the authorities of the two regions to stem the movement of 'Amhara' peasants who increasingly face land shortages in their home region.

The continuous migration of 'Amhara' and other highland peasants to the 'Benishangul-Gumuz' affect demographic balance and raises questions regarding representation and citizenship of the non-titular communities. This could eventually create controversy in the relationships between the two regions. With the new government's concession of full autonomy to 'Gumuz', the 'Gumuz' and 'Amhara', and 'Agews' are mistreated in land and other political rights. Grievances from both groups lead to violent personal and group conflicts (key informant, FGD)

Empirical Causes of conflicts

The cause of conflict in Ethiopia has been largely due to territorial boundary, limited natural resources and the search for new economic resources, proliferation of illegal fire arms, inadequate policing and state security arrangements, diminishing the role of the traditional institutions, competition over control and access to natural resources (Tsega,2006). The relationship between the two communities will be concluded a both hostile and peaceful. The two communities in the area have strong relationship in social and cultural ties. The existing situation in the areaneeds to look in many directions – past and present. The data from the field work indicates that conflicts in the area are accumulative results of historical, social and political context. Some the causes are;

Resource competition; as the data gathered through key informants' interview, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) as well as document analysis witness conflicts because of farming land, grazing land and farming land border trespass are a common incident among various ethnic groups of the study areas. In fact, there are also other natural resources such as water and forest (woodland) which is explained by some informants as they cause conflict intermittently. Conflicts due to farming land border commonly occur between two land holders who have an adjacent farming land. Conflicts which are series problems of the two regions were happen in 2019 ('Agew' plus 'Amhara'vs'Gumuz' community) especially in 'Mandura', 'Pawi', 'Mentehua', and 'Gilgel Belus' 'Kebeles' in which hundreds of human life from both groups lost and thousands migrate from BG to ANRS. The main reason is resources but not ethnicity. Poverty and fear of the future provides a fertile ground for ethnic conflict. Ethnic groups and members of community will use the name of ethnicity to achieve their personal economic goals (Tsega, 2006).

ANRS and B_GRS jointly discussed on peace and development issues in Assosa on August 19, 2019 and agree on. Benishangul Gumuz region has been one of the regions that faced a security crisis as some members of the local communities targeted Ethiopians outside of the region, mostly against ethnic Amhara. Hundreds of lives have been lost and thousands were compelled to experience internal displacement. They have also discussed ways of returning internally displaced people to their places but reports did not mention if there is timeframe set to finalize the process which seems to be underway but latently. The consultation between Ashadli (President of BG RS) and Temesgen (President of ANRS) has been underway for two days, and they have finally signed "peace and development agreement"(Amhara Mass Media Agency, BG Mass Media Agency, August 19,2019). According to the agreement, the two regional states will work together on peace and development as conflict between the communities affects development of the two regions and the state at large. Development is the process and strategy through which societies and states seek to achieve more prosperous and equitable standards of living. Thus, as equitable share of resources is the main quest between the two communities, it will be challenge to realize development unless the government took remedy.

Theft- is the other cause of conflict. A 'Gumuz' participant in FGD highlights how 'theft' is causing conflict between the 'Gumuz' and 'non Gumuz'.

The 'non Gumuz' always cheat us selling or exchanging stolen commodities, illegal firearms for our 'pure' money or nice cattle. However, we later confiscated our property by the police for being stolen that we had bought from the 'non Gumuz'. This finally gets us conflict with the 'non Gumuz' (FGD).

Sometimes looting crops and properties, disagreement in the time of harvest sharing, and disputes on land leasing arrangements were seen as cause.

Misconception- Government officials from the Zone and Districts are blaming misconduct of non indigenous ethnic groups and establishment of the neighboring regional states. ‘Gumuz’ insists to say someone from anywhere is coming to our country and becomes richer while we are living in a worst situation than what our ancestors used to live. So, in the case of ‘Gumuz’ in contrast to ‘Amhara’ and other non-titular ethnic groups, they felt as economically deprived. Similarly, the ‘Amhara’ felt as deprived off in their political position.

Non indigenous groups claim federal system. In pre 1991, especially in ‘Metekel’, ‘Amharas’ were politically dominant (Tadesse 1998a; 14, Tsega, 2006:105). Nevertheless, the post 1991 political arrangement reversed the pattern. Now ‘Amhara’ in ‘Metekel’ is subordinate on ‘Gumuz’ which are defined as owners of the region. ‘Agews’ and ‘Amharas,’ who were long favored by the past regimes of Ethiopia, lost their political dominance for ‘Gumuz’. Consequently, the change brought many grievances on the side of ‘Amharas’ and further claims from ‘Gumuz’. These grievances and claims are directly or indirectly linked to the following issues.

Territorial re arrangement- The post 1991 political development brought rearrangement of territories in different parts of Ethiopia. It divides the same ethnic groups while merging distinct ethnic groups into one administrative unit. The territorial re-arrangement is cited as a major and aggravating cause of ethnic conflicts in the period such as ‘Guji’ and ‘Gedeo’, Afar and ‘Issa’, ‘Borana’ and ‘Gari’ (Asnake, 2004: 62-64).

During the past regimes, the territory of ‘Amhara’ and ‘Gumuz’ was under one administrative province, ‘Gojjam’ province. But, the new territorial restructuring, following the downfall of the military regime changed the status quo. The two groups obtained different administrative units in their name. They also felt that they are politically deprived in contrast to their past history. In contrast, ‘Agews’ of ‘Awi’ Zone in ANRS seemed to have been enjoying their constitutional right; right to self-administration. In ‘Awi’ zone, ‘Agew’ is language of instruction for primary school, there is ‘Agewigna’ radio program and they have a special nationality zone.

Accordingly, ‘Amharas’ of ‘Metekel’ demand for self-government, to exercise their language, culture and traditions as enshrined in Art 39 of FDRE constitution. According to ‘Amhara’ informants the space in ‘Metekel’ is excluding them from the aforementioned constitutional rights. The ‘Gumuz’ are denying their right to exercise their cultural rights. The dissatisfaction leads ‘Agews’ to frequently ask for either political empowerment or territorial integration with ‘Awi’ zone. In response, informants reported that local ‘Gumuz’ authorities are intimidating leaders for such move. On the other hand, for ‘Gumuz’, quests of ‘Agew’ are considered as ambitions to control productive resources or a move to bring back the past pattern of relation between them – ‘Agew’ dominance

Political dichotomization and exclusion: The new political arrangement has got polarized responses from ethnic groups of the area. Past marginalized ethnic groups such as ‘Gumuz’ warmly welcomed it with additional claims (for further exclusion of non-titular ethnic groups) (Asnake, 2013). On the other hand, non indigenous ethnic groups like ‘Amhara’ are deeply dissatisfied; they felt as they are considered secondary citizens. Moreover, political categorization of ethnic groups into

owners and non-owners leads to political exclusion. The constitution of the regional state has also exclusively guaranteed unconditional right of self-determination up to secession for indigenous ethnic groups of the regional state ('Benishangul-Gumuz' Regional State (BGRS), 2002: 39).

At regional level, members of state council are people of the region as a whole, with special right extended to Mao and 'Komo' (BGRS, 2002: 48). Unlike to non-indigenous ethnic groups, indigenous ethnic groups have the right to establish their own nationality councils (BGRS, Proclamation no. 73/2000). However, in contrast to their population size, non-indigenous ethnic groups are marginalized from fair political participation. This is because the electoral law of the FDRE stated that the people who are not eligible to local language of electoral district where they are competing cannot become candidates (Asnake, 2013).

Thus, non-indigenous groups, particularly recent immigrants are not eligible to local languages. Thus, the law makes non-indigenous ethnic groups handicap to exercise their constitutional right the right to elect and to be elected. They could vote but not run office. Non-indigenous ethnic groups, in 'Metekel' claim as they deserve the right to be indigenous people of the region. This can be taken as real question because citizen with the state were discriminated by unwanted dichotomy as indigenous and none, if it is the case and if they are from abroad non citizens in Ethiopia have a right to apply citizen ship after living four years in Ethiopia but citizen within lack this chance.

Even though 'Gumuz' community have ownership right there is economic inequality, other groups are better than them. Informants see the problem indifferent ways; like they are historically deprived (Key informant). As Wolf (2006: 69) argues, intentional narration of problematic inter group history is one source of ethnic hostility, resource/land degradation and lack of self administration in land as

Proliferation of illegal fire arms- For the proliferation of fire arms in the study area there are basically two reasons. The first one was as the area was highly productive majority of community members have enough resource to buy fire arms by taking it as expression of royal family plus rich family which was highly experienced after 1991. Senses of competitions of wealth in relation to having these fire arms become common in the area. Arms entered and used illegally. One informant from members of indigenous conflict resolution committee explained the problem as:

Now a day's armament seen as a traditional stick, each family was interested to have at least per number of male family member. Instead of using resources for economic competition, which leads to better life in the future, they gave priority for buying armament (key informant).

Misuse of Social Medias; as interview and group discussion results clearly show the way we use social Medias is not in constructive manner but instead destructive ways dominate the community. Political activists, unemployed youngsters, even private Medias are not in support on unity but they force and aggravate hostility. They transfer information by multiplying ten times negative acts and minimizing fifty times positive acts (Key informant). These results loose of resources including human life. Thus Misuse of social media is a newly emerging challenge especially from 2016 (FGD).

EFFECTS OF CONFLICT ON DEVELOPMENT

Population displacement especially forced internal migration, recruitment or looting of family assets and psychological damage are main results of conflict between the two communities and followed by loss of assets (FGD). Development is central to the prospects for reducing conflict. Poor economic performance or inequitable development may result in a near-permanent economic crisis, greatly exacerbating internal tensions and greatly diminishing their capacity to respond to those tensions. Especially when this is coupled with a perception that certain groups are not receiving a fair share of diminishing resources, the potential for conflict is evident. The eradication of poverty requires development in which access to the benefits of economic progress is as widely available as possible and not concentrated excessively in certain localities, sectors or groups of the population. This is reality in the study area. In BG_RS, those who are termed as non indigenous have no right to access land and political representation which followed by conflict and internal migration even cannot collect their agricultural products, migrate without having their assets including cattle. A radical reduction in travelling, and hence in the transport of goods and provision of services has been challenges in the area which undoubtedly led to a general slow-down in economic activity not only at local levels but also at the national level.

THE WAY FORWARD

In this imperfect world no society lives in a complete harmony with itself and others. Peace rather requires a continuing engagement in the prevention and resolution of disputes giving rise to the contemporary craft of conflict prevention and resolution. Even before the introduction of the 'modern' ways of dispute management mechanism (such as the court), different societies have been using their own institutions of conflict management mechanisms (Pankhurst, 2008). The promotion of peaceful settlement of disputes as well as peace and reconciliation is a prerequisite and an indispensable condition for the development of one nation's economy, social harmony and national integrity (Giday, 2000).

To do so, identifying and knowing a socially acceptable indigenous conflict management mechanism is vital. It is also imperative to pay attention to the study of indigenous conflict management mechanisms. *Shemgelena* is the one which is the most well known and widely practiced in different parts of the 'Amhara' region [even possible to say in Ethiopia] (Solomon, 1992; Yohannes, 2003; Yoseph, 2006). 'Gungua' and 'Dibate' districts of 'Metekel' region are case in point. *Shemgelena* is the verbal noun form of *Shemagele* (Solomon, 1992) which *per se* implies two things; 1) an old man 2) a peace maker, reconciler and mediator (IELSC, 2001; Amsalu, 1987). Words included in oath under the guidance of the *Shemageles* are highly valued and respected by the community. (Informal ways like *Shimgilina*, *Erq and Giligil* and more formal, institutionalized mechanisms for dispute resolution established by the government include Shari'a Courts, Social Courts, *Dem Adriq* or *Yeselam comite* and Administrative Courts become common).

The other mechanism is *Michu* (literally friendship) is a reciprocal bond of friendship which is invoked for serious problems of conflict and peace. It is a life and property security institution, which establishes free movement of people. It is used among all the inhabitants of the region as a mechanism of conflict resolution and reconciliation according to their traditional practices. Even though absence of enforcement mechanism, the absence of Incentives- become challenge, the establishment

of a Joint Peace Committee and New initiatives from the local government are opportunities. Thus the lesson from this discussion is there must be focus to solve challenges and appreciate opportunities for extra work.

Government should enact inclusive, open and legal laws to administer resources. Natural resources especially land and land related problems should have clear procedures to be solved, constitutional rights of citizens like Freedom of movement (Art 32) within the national territory, the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose residence as well as freedom to leave the country at any time, The right to vote and to be elected (Art. 38), The right to property (Art 40(3))- the right to rural and urban land as well as all natural resources given for the state and people's of Ethiopia, Economic, social and cultural rights (Art 41(1))- Every Ethiopian has the right to engage freely in economic activity actively and to pursue of his choice anywhere within the national territory should be respected.

Continuous awareness creation should be done about constitution, laws, rules and regulations to solve misconceptions about past and present relationships, territorial re arrangement, sense of exclusion, how to own and use fire arms etc. Continuous awareness creation should also be done especially for youth, activists and even for private Medias how misuse of social medial affects Socio-economic and political system of the state and the community.

Strengthening state institutions and enhancing their capacity to provide security and development based on principles of good governance are essential for sound conflict management. Security and good governance sector reform need to be embedded in a predictable legal environment supported by culturally appropriate rule of law programs. Conflict resolution and peace building processes should also be taken as major important measures in solving problems of conflicts in the state to pave way for development. To do this peace building should be an important development concern and addressing the roots and triggers of instability in order to minimize potential for violent conflict with effective coordination with in community.

The other measure to be taken is strengthening democratic governance. Democratic government helps to guarantee political rights, protect economic freedoms and foster an environment where peace and development can flourish. Democratization gives people a stake in society. Its importance cannot be overstated, for unless people feel that they have a true stake in society lasting peace will not be possible and sustainable development will not be achieved. Ensuring that people feel represented in the political life of their societies is essential.

REFERENCE

- Asnake (2002) Federalism: Some Trends of Ethnic Conflicts and their management in Ethiopia. <http://www.1.un1.hamburg.de/ice2003politics.html>
- Asnake K (2013) Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Ethiopia: A Comparative Regional Study. Newyork: Routledge
- Banton, M. (1994) Modeling Ethnic and National Relations, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 17 (1) 1-19
- Benishangul_Gumuz Regional State (BGRS) (2002) the Constitution of Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State. Asossa. <http://www.ethcriminalawnetwork.com/node/148>
- Brown, M.E. (1993) Causes and Implications of Ethnic Conflict", in Brown, M.E. (ed.) *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, Pp: 3-26
- Deng, F.M. (2009) Reconciling Sovereignty with Responsibility: A basis for International Humanitarian Action" in Harbeson, J. W. and Rothchild, D. (eds.) *Africa in World Politics: Reforming Political Order*, Oxford: Westview Press, pp: 345-384
- Esman J. M. (2004) An Introduction to Ethnic conflict, Polity press Ltd. Cambridge, Polity Book
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (1995), FDRE constitution, in federal NegaritGazeta, published in BirhanenaSelam ,Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- Harff, B. and Gurr, R. (2004) *Ethnic Conflict in the World Politics*, Oxford: Westview Press
- Horowitz, Donald L. (1985) *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Los Angeles: The Regents of the University of California
- Lewis, I. (1994) *Blood and Bone: the Call of Kinship in Somali Society*. Lawrenceville NJ: Red Sea Press
- Mackatiani, Caleb, Imbovah, Mercy, Imbova, Navin, 2014 Peace and Development in Africa: Prospects and Challenges; International Affairs and Global Strategy www.iiste.org ISSN 2224-574X (Paper) ISSN 2224-8951 (Online) Vol.21, 2014
- McCandless. E and Karbo.T (ed), 2011 peace, Conflict, And Development In Africa: University of Peace (UPEACE) San Jose; Costa Rica; A Reader
- Tadesse T. (1988b) Process of Ethnic Interaction and Integration in Ethiopian History: The case of the Agaw. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Smith .G1995, ed *Federalism: the Multi-ethnic challenge*. Politics and international relations London: Longman
- Tsega E. (2006) Inter ethnic interaction on Frontier: Mettekel (Ethiopia), 1898-1991 Germany: Otto Harasowitz and Co. KG. wiesebadin
- Tronvoll K (2003). Identities in Conflict: ethnography of war and the politics of identity in Ethiopia 1998-2000 (PhD. dissertation), University of London
- Woldesellassie A (2004). *Gumuz and Highland Resettles: Differing Strategies of Livelihood and Ethnic Relations in Metekel, North Western Ethiopia* (PhD. Dissertation), Gottingen, University of Gottingen