

## **ETHNIC-BASED POLITICAL PARTIES: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR NATIONAL UNITY OF ETHIOPIA IN THE POST 1991**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The aim of the paper is to investigate the challenges and prospects of ethnic-based politics on national unity of Ethiopia. To address the objectives of the study, the researcher employed qualitative approach with case study as study design and used primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was collected from the key informant interview and FGDs. Secondary data was collected from different books, reports, journals, published and unpublished proclamations, conference papers, dissertations and FDRE constitution. In this study the researcher has been used purposive sampling and thematic analysis method based on the objectives of the study. With the view of ensuring unity with diversity the finding of the study has revealed that ethnic-based political parties have daunting challenges for national unity. In this regard, they are playing in the politicizing of ethnicities, ethnic autonomy conflicts and intra-regional boundary conflicts and self-determination and secessionists feeling were discussed on the challenges of national unity for the country. Despite the negative impacts there appeared to be helped role in the empowerment of minority groups and advocacy of culture of ethnic groups in Ethiopia. Consequently, to realization of national unity of Ethiopia, the possible tools have been investigated: the constitutional and electoral reform, the intra-regional boundary demarcation, empowerment of multinational and civic oriented political parties, national consensus and reconciliation. The researcher argues that ethnic politics can also be playing divisive factors which can seriously challenging the mutual existence of Ethiopia and make the quest for national unity difficult. Therefore, it recommends that the view that national unity can be achieved when ethnic politics becomes a tool for the accommodation of diverse political programs.*

**KEYWORDS:** ethnicity, politics, ethnic politics, challenge, prospect, national unity

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The end of the cold war has coincided with and in some cases fuelled the politicization of ethnical nationalism, particularly in Eastern Europe and Sab-Saharan Africa (Stephen, 1990). The international political environment had previously been characterized by ideological competition and conflict between the United States on the one hand and the Soviet Union and communist China on the other. Both of these ideological camps stressed the cohesion and viability of multi-ethnic nation-states, and as a matter of policy discouraged the representation of groups based upon a distinctive ethnic identity, a tendency reinforced in social science scholarship, which often focused on what was described as the process of national political integration (Ibid). To the extent that it existed and was relevant, scholars generally agreed that ethnic solidarity was different from nationalism in that it did not require the creation of an ethnically pure nation-state. Today, however, the notion of inviolability of certain internationally recognized entities' is being seriously called into question as ethnic groups assert their right to self-determination up to separation from a multi-ethnic state (Crawford, 1993).

Nation such as Angola, Nigeria, Sudan, and Ethiopia, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, and Sierra Leone are seriously enmeshed in the politics of ethnicity (Aquilina, 2008). In many African nations, the struggle for the control of political power from time to time, brought different ethnic groups into conflict, such that, each ethnic group 'advocates its interests in different ways' in order to secure a place in the political leadership with the intention of having access to the nation economy. Thus, ethnic group could also be seen as interest groups whose members share some common economic and political interests (Robert, 1983). In similar vein,

Eifert, Miguel, and Posner (2010) found that ethnic identities in Africa are strengthened by exposure to political competition. Ethiopia is characterized by great linguistic, cultural and religious diversity and a home for more than 80 ethnic communities with different languages. Except in a few urban areas such as the capital city, most of Ethiopia's ethnic communities predominantly live in their respective distinct geographic areas of habitation (Hashim, 2010). No one ethnic community in Ethiopia is a majority comprising a population of more than 50% of the total population of Ethiopia (Ibid). But there are relatively significant majority ethnic communities such as the Oromo and Amhara ethnic communities. Most of Ethiopia's ethnic communities are divided along mainly two religious cleavage lines: Islam and Orthodox Christianity. By crosscutting Ethiopia's ethnic cleavage lines, religion plays a moderating role in limiting the intensity of the ethnic factor in politics, giving rise to overarching loyalty (Hashim, 2010).

The 1960s and 70s student movement in Ethiopia which had extensive debates on various issues and problems of Ethiopia, had been highly influenced by the contemporary radical thinking of Marxism and Leninism, and the Leninist solution of the nationalities question which theoretically up-holds the principle of self-determination including secession for resolving the national questions (Teshale, 1995; Messay, 2002). Although the student movement was very radical in its tone of criticizing the ruling class for the whole misery and neglect of the nationalities in Ethiopia, except the Eritreans movement, it advocated an idea that a nationalities question in Ethiopia should be considered constructively to allow some sort of regional autonomy or self-government (Marcus, 2002).

This thesis, first and foremost attempts to investigate the challenges and their positive impacts for national unity has investigated. It is the contention of this paper to see Ethiopia's existence as a country following the adoption of ethnic-based political parties. The thesis of this paper is that at the root of the establishments of ethnic parties: challenges and prospects of Ethiopian national unity. In order to tackle this problem, and see the prospects, the researcher has been attempted to find out directions for the concerned bodies that are playing a role in national unity.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Organizing politics around ethnicity endangers ethnic tensions, violence, and more seriously encourages political activists to organize on parochial ethnic issues and thereby fragments national politics (Lyons, 1996). Similarly, Abbink (1997, p.172) states that "Ethiopia by constitutionalizing ethnicity sought to reify and freeze ethnic identity which is by nature fluid and shifting". Alem (2003, p.2) also suggests that "opponents of ethnic federalism fear that it invites ethnic conflict and risks state disintegration". Therefore, according to their arguments, identity-based politics is a formula for civil war and short cut to secession.

The previous Ethiopian regimes, eager to foster a pan-Ethiopianist feeling and break down the opposition

posed by organized ethnic groups, have tried to downplay the issue of ethnicity. But their attempts to minimize the 'nationalities question' have been remarkably ineffective. The current political scene in Ethiopia is likely to be better understood if the history of opposition groups is traced with an eye to detecting both the conflicts which continue to exist between them and especially the underlying issues which have surfaced repeatedly in Ethiopian politics over time (Sandra, 1997).

At present, due to the policy of ethnic restructuring and ethnic entitlement since 1991, there are nearly a hundred ethnic organizations that are legally registered in Ethiopia (NEBE, 2005). The nature and conviction of these ethnic organizations, it is plausible to claim that in many cases that the major inspirational forces for these ethnic organizations are the attainment of social, political and economic objectives rather than primordial or atavistic drives (Berhanu, 2008). Since the EPRDF came to power, opposition political parties have been trying to harness a broader opposition against the government which they consider to be non-patriotic or even a traitor to the nation. Its objective is to weaken the legitimacy of the incumbent government, which the opposition parties accuse of election rigging in May 2005 and violence afterward (Belachew, 2009, P.81). More than 100 opposition political parties have formed in Ethiopia since 1991 (Asnake, 2013), against EPRDF domination of the electoral process; opposition parties operating in isolation have traditionally stood little chance of electoral success. Some groups have been pushed outside of the political process; others have sought to form coalitions as in the 2005 national elections to create collective strength in the political process. However, ideological

differences for example, over support for the ethnic federalist system has made forming and sustaining coalitions problematic (Elliot, 2011). Despite the relatively weak and fragmented state of the opposition, the government has harassed, detained, and prosecuted actual or suspected opposition supporters, including rank and file party members (Ibid).

Almost all ethno-nationalist movements such as the TPLF and the OLF sought to instrumentalize the primordial elements of their ethnic Constituencies for political mobilization. In a similar fashion, the institutionalization of ethnic federalism since the beginning of the 1990s induced the instrumentalization of primordial identity for political mobilization (Vaughan, 2003). This has been the case, particularly in southern Ethiopia. The majority of the more than 54 ethnic groups of this region, even if they were not mobilized on the basis of ethnicity before 1991, after the institutionalization of federalism, they were ethnically organized so that they fit into the new state structure. This process entailed a top-down definition of the 'self' based on its primordial elements and its political mobilization through ethnic movements created by the EPRDF (Ibid). Since 1991, the federal government in Ethiopia has been described as a Tigrayan dominated government and thus various ethnic movements are rising to challenge the alleged domination of the Tigrayan group on the bases of ethnic solidarity (Berhanu, 2008).

Likewise, for instance, Walle (1993) holds the view that ethnic based politics in Ethiopia fosters conflicts and rivalry among many cultural communities and therefore thwarts any prospect for the establishment of lasting peace and political stability. His argument is based on the assumption that Ethiopia has been homogenized and has to a large extent become a unified entity, and hence ethnic federalism not only stands in the way of the advancement of common interests of the populace but would also be a threat to the unity of its people and to the maintenance of its territorial integrity.

Regarding the studies done on more or less, there were research efforts undertaken by scholars focused on

“The Politics of Opposition in Post - 2005 Ethiopia: Challenges and Impacts on Ethiopian Democratic Party (EDP) and Blue Party” (Simeneh, 2017). However, Simeneh has investigated where and how opposition parties faced challenges, how do they cope with their activities with challenging conditions and its long term effects. Wondwosen (2008) has studied on, “Ethnicity and Political Parties in Africa: The State of Ethnic-Based Parties in Ethiopia”: he has been seen how ethnicity affects political parties in Africa in general and in Ethiopia in particular. He also attempted to investigate ethnic-based parties in Ethiopia in three successive administrations: the Imperial government, the Socialist Military government and the EPRDF-led Federal government. But he did not cover the implications of the ethnic-based parties on national unity of Ethiopia. Temesgen (2019) has been studied in “The Politics of Ethnic Identity and Conflicts under Ethnic Federal System in Ethiopia”. He examined identity politics and conflict under the ethnic federal system in Ethiopia. The study showed that ethnic federal system and ethnic rights to self-determination up to secession has neither led to ethnic political autonomy nor ended secessionist conflicts in Ethiopia. But Temesgen did not see the relevance of the ethnic-based politics on national unity. Although these studies have some relations with this paper, all of them have not addressed the situation in the implications of ethnic-based political parties to national unity. Therefore, this issue is either unstudied or scanty addressed.

The intended object of the study is not reflecting such bold claims. It rather aimed at examining the ethnic-based political parties on the national unity of Ethiopia. In doing so, a case study approach has been applied to add to the existing knowledge gap specifically on the role of ethnic-based political parties on national unity. Therefore, the researcher needs to investigate the constitutional gaps in the accommodation of contradictory ethnic-based political views that emerged in Ethiopia. Since the absence of research findings which attempt to address purely the ethnic-based parties’: Challenges and Prospects for Ethiopian National Unity is the main gap to be addressed in this study.

### **Objectives of the Study**

#### **General Objective**

The overall objective of this study is to investigate the challenges and prospects’ of ethnic-based political parties and it’s implication for national unity of Ethiopia.

#### **Specific Objectives**

Being derived from the general objective, this study has the following specific objectives:

1. To identify the challenges of ethnic-based political parties in Ethiopian national unity
2. To examine the positive impacts of ethnic-based political parties for Ethiopian national unity.
3. To analyze what available mechanisms are there to bring national unity in Ethiopia.

#### **Research Questions**

In light of the research objectives, the researcher has been asked four interconnected research questions:

1. What are the challenges of ethnic-based political parties playing on national unity of Ethiopia?
2. What are the positive implications of ethnic-based political parties in Ethiopian national unity?
3. What efficient and effective mechanisms the political parties taken to bring national

unity in Ethiopia?

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlined the methodology used in the present research. It starts with the research approach followed by research design, Sampling Techniques, data collection instruments, methods of data analysis, data sources, ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the research.

### Research Approach

In general, in any research there are two types of research approaches: qualitative and quantitative. However, in this study, the researcher has employed qualitative research approach. According to Straus and Corbin (1998) qualitative methodology is a typical research approach which enables to come up with data that cannot easily produced by statistical procedures or other means of quantification. It is also the means for exploring and understanding the meanings of individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative research by its nature is multidimensional which involves interpretation of a subject matter to the given context. Qualitative approach paves the way for researchers to study the phenomenon in its natural settings and lets them interpret things in accordance with the meaning of the society (Creswell, 1998).

Moreover, qualitative research is prefer to collect data about human life realities, experiences, behavior, emotion and feeling, organizational function, social movement, cultural phenomena and their interaction with nature (Straus and Corbin, 1998). But, quantitative approach focuses on generating statistical and measurable facts. To this end, this method enabled the researcher to study the challenges and prospects of the ethnic-based political parties to national unity of Ethiopia. Since the research problem by its nature needs an assessment of the experience and awareness of the research participants about the challenges and prospects of the ethnic-based political parties, qualitative research method is appropriate. This method was also appropriate to the focus area in order to acquire reliable and accurate information, to have a better understanding on the issue of investigation and gain well-structured information.

### Research Design

The study used case study research design. Case study design is essential in order to get bigger insight and generalize theories via with combining the existing theoretical knowledge with new empirical insights (Yin, 1994). So to examine the research objectives case study design is pertinent to seek new insights of the issue relating to the challenges and prospects of ethnic- based political parties for national unity of Ethiopia. The subject to be studied can be a program, an event, a person, a group or institution bounded in a particular time and space (Vissak, 2010). Case study design involves in-depth examination of an individual, a group or institution with the intent to get a true and complete description if the case that the researcher has selected to study (Marczyk, Dematteo and Festinger, 2005). Furthermore, a case study is an exploration of a bounded system or a case or multiple cases over time through a detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context (Creswell, 2007). This study is investigated the implications of ethnic-based political parties for national unity of Ethiopia. The intent of the researcher is investigating the challenges, of the ethnic-based parties in national unity of Ethiopia and employing case study would be the appropriate design. Besides since the study is conducted within a particular political party (ethnic-based), case study would be appropriate to deeply investigate the overall challenges and prospects of ethnic-based parties for national unity of Ethiopia.

**Sampling Techniques**

The researcher has employed a purposive sampling technique. The rationale behind the choice of purposive sampling is because it is essential for situations where one needs to reach a targeted sample in a short period of time (Kultar, 2007). The other reason is to gather in-depth information from the participants. The primary consideration to select informant is who can provide best information to meet study objectives (Kumar, 2011). So the researcher believed that purposively selected participant has a good source of data since they have firsthand knowledge on the subject of the study. Key informants for in-depth interview have from officials of NAMA, Arena Tigray for Democracy and Sovereignty (Arena), OFC and EPRDF parties. Key informant interviews with open ended was widely employed to access detailed information from the key informants involved in the study. Because these political parties are playing a vital role in the current Ethiopian political structure and most of them are from the most prominent ethnic groups of Ethiopia. One representative from each party participated in the study. In addition to political parties few knowledgeable (political academicians'') individuals participated in this research; the basic assumption of selecting those individuals; they have a day to day follow up on the existing political situation of Ethiopia. Therefore; the researcher has developed a trust on these knowledgeable people to develop his data. And also the researcher selected key informants based on who has closer connection to and adequate knowledge of the issue. To do the above, the researcher used purposive sampling. Since the issue needs deeper investigation and rich information, the concerned individuals are necessary. This is due to the fact that applying random sampling strategy may result in the selection of individuals who have no knowledge of the issue (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

As far as the sample size is concerned Kumar (2011), suggested that for qualitative research, the most significant is the point of saturation where no interview is different in the answers to the questions provided or a point where there is no different information between the research participants. In addition to this based on the recommendation of Creswell (2007), the researcher for this qualitative research approach with case research design interviewees to the data saturation points. Therefore, interview conducted until the point of data saturation met.

**Tools of Data Collection**

Based on the research problem and objectives, both primary and secondary data sources were used in the study. As Birhan (2011, p.60) stated that "Multiple data collection strategy is more advantageous than single data collection strategy in a research work". The secondary sources were gathered from the relevant literature, books, journal articles, published and unpublished materials, conference papers, and the manifesto of political parties. The primary sources of the study were interviews and focus group discussions conducted with academicians, political party leaders, legal experts and university students.

**In-depth Interview**

In-depth-interviews were held with purposively selected political party officials and academicians from different universities of Ethiopia selected based on purposive sampling strategy. Accordingly a total of 11 in-depth interviewees were personally conducted; four in- depth interviews with party officials and seven in-depth interviews with academicians. During the interviews, relevant notes were also taken. Based in interviewee's consent interviews were electronically recorded for future reference. All interviews were held in comfortable places that can make the interviewees feel free and think they are in the natural course of interaction. As Mytton (1999, p.128) stated, in most cases, the term "in-depth interview" is used as substitute for "individual interviews". The word "in-depth" is added to deliberately imply that the researcher gets the benefit of using this approach, which is a means of creating a better understanding on the issue under

investigation.

### **Document Analysis**

In addition to fieldwork, the researcher has analyzed different documents, archives, and the manifesto of political parties, reports and audiovisual films on the debates of political parties, the electoral laws and the constitution. Hence, both published and unpublished documents like books, journal articles, working papers, MA theses, PhD dissertations, different proclamations, newspapers and magazine has used by evaluating their reliability to accomplish the purpose of this study.

### **Focus Group Discussion**

Since the researcher wants to know the shared experience and awareness of the students regarding the challenges and a prospect of the ethnic political parties, FGD conducted. Regarding the number of participants in a group, Dawson (2007) suggested that six to eight participants should be involved. Based on this, the researcher includes six participants in the group and the participants have been selected based on their willingness, experience, and knowledge about the issue. During the discussion, the researcher was taken the relevant notes. The researcher organized one focus group discussion (FGD). The participants are selected purposefully from the members' of political science and law masters university students. In order to extract the intended empirical data from the discussions, the researcher made an effort to create a very conducive scenario where the participants of the discussions could speak all the information they have without any hesitation. Therefore, the researcher was used FGD to gather diverse information on the challenges and prospects of ethnic-based political parties for Ethiopian national integration.

### **METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS**

In qualitative research methods every moment of data collection is also a time of data analysis and interpretation (Creswell, 2007). Any researcher has the responsibility of analyzing data to meet his/her objectives as well as to make the findings ready for scholarly consumption. Therefore, based on this certainty, in this research, the researcher has been analyzed and interpreted the raw data collected through interviews and focus group discussion to answer the research questions and to achieve the stated objectives. In this analysis, the researcher was used qualitative approach specifically thematic analysis in interpreting the data. Thematic analysis is a form of qualitative approach which involves recording and identifying passages of texts or images that are linked by a common theme or idea allowing the researcher to index the text in categories (Gibbs, 2009).

In this study, the researcher has organized the data separately and generated categories, themes, and patterns to come to rich detail in line with the objective of the study. To achieve this, firstly all the recorded data notes through interviews and FGDs were read repetitively in order to grasp the general idea to develop coding of ideas and to extract significant statement. In the second step develop categories along with the content of the interview which is important to avoid the repetition of ideas. Thirdly, the researcher has developed themes and merges themes of similar ideas to come to the objectives of the study. A separate file folder was used to categorize ideas or significant statements. Finally, the research has been finalized by writing the description of the text and interpretation of meanings.

## DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter aims to link the original research questions and theoretical framework in presenting the research findings and discussing these findings. The results are presented according to the objectives of the study which reflect the research questions that the researcher set out to answer. In addition, this chapter presents the qualitative data is presented based on the themes that emerged during the analysis. This chapter also investigated the challenges and prospects of ethnic-based political parties for national unity of Ethiopia. Further, in this section the researcher has been assessed and seen the possible ways in bringing of national unity of Ethiopia. These results presented generalized findings based on the four and seven interviews from the political parties and academicians' respectively. In addition to this FGD also was conducted and analyzed in this chapter (political science and law university students) one FGD with six members of a group. Undoubtedly, within such a big data set, and using qualitative methods, some divergent dissenting views were noted, but these can only be moderately reported in this research.

Therefore, the chapter consists of three sections. The first section emphasize on investigated the negative challenges of ethnic-based political parties and the third section discussed the positive impacts of ethnic-based political parties in Ethiopian national unity are discussed. Finally, the third section emphasize on the possible ways in bringing national unity of Ethiopia are discussed.

### Negative Implications of Ethnic-Based Political Parties for National Unity of Ethiopia

*“Politics that's based solely on a tribe and ethnicity is politics that's doomed to tear a country apart,” It is a failure, a failure of imagination”.* Barack Obama

In this section the researcher tried to outline the challenges of the political parties in national integration of Ethiopia. Based on the data collected from the participants of key informant interview, FGD and document analysis, there are challenges the ethnic-based political parties which are interrupting and challenge to national unity. And most of the challenges are related to limitations of the central government that he didn't manage and solve and at the national level.

### Politicization of Ethnicity

In Ethiopia after the adoption of ethnic-based federal structure the different political parties tried to politicize their ethnic group to political power; because ethnicity is the most emotional and sensitive element sensitive issue. In the same fashion, some of the political elites argued that because of the way things have been handled in Ethiopia in terms of distribution of resources; people have been pushed to think that unless you have a person in there in ethnic group, you will not be able to get resources back to your people. The political elites continue to use ethnicity as a resource for political exploitation and free enterprise. So people will want to have their ethnic relationship; to be able to get employments and share resources etc. This created mistrust among the federal government and the local ethnic groups. Whether the government is highly democratic enough or not no one can't believe his agenda and operation. They understand and interpreted only in their ethnic perspective than *Ethiopianism*.

Likewise, when the TPLF came to power in 1991, it came with a determination to make identity politics the mainstay of Ethiopian politics. Its Marxist ideology always secondary to its Tigrean identity and with Marxism going in disrepute after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the only thing left was to pursue the ethnic agenda with a pseudo democratic mask. In addition to creating allied ethnic organizations representing



various ethnic groups, it invited primarily ethnic based groups to discuss and determine the future of the country during the conference establishing the transitional government (Berhanu, 2010). Likewise, one of the study respondents of interview from the political elites said that:

*Ethiopia, as a developing country; due to certain reasons, in order to capture the government power easily: The peoples elect particularly in Ethiopia for their ethnic elites because they believe that their ethnic elites will bring ample resources to them. In this case the political parties find the possible way to divert the attentions of the people to take the political power in easily. If the political parties from a given ethnic group their basic intention is they will be advantaged by the political system of Ethiopia. For example in order to be a member of OLF, NaMA or TPLF you have to be from (Oromia, Amhara or Tigray ethnic groups) in this regard national unity of Ethiopia becomes unthinkable.*

The above speech shows that the ethnic based voting Ethiopia is currently the best solution, their basic premise is in which some ethnic group dominates access to situations and governmental property, in this case; the moving of ethnic sentiment among the members of group is usually target oriented on in search of redistribution of power and national resources. In the current condition, it is difficult to bring national unity in Ethiopia, because ethnicity is the most sensitive issue. But we have to understand ethnic politics originates from selfish political elite and has no or little meaning to ordinary people. The value of one sense of nationalism will be lost.

In the same manner the FGD discussants argued, a multicultural States like Ethiopia, in the look for holding power and accepted recognition, regularly engages in “instrumentalizing ethnicity” where certain groups are selected to receive most benefits from state resources. Hence, the peoples elect largely on the expectation of surplus benefits. As they argued that, in this way ethnic identity gets a huge acceptance for peoples, that appointment for their ethnic elite or party will more likely result in benefits for the supporter, more so than voting for a candidate or party from another ethnic group. The peoples of Ethiopia believe that the benefits are more likely to result from representative cohesion with the public, or the logic that only a member of their ethnic group may end up defending the interests of the ethnic group as a entire, and that selection for a member of another ethnic group will certainly not do so. The peoples give concern to their ethnic identity than nationalism.

Therefore, the data which is provided by the above’ shows that almost all categories of respondents indicated a degree of discrimination among the ethnic groups leads to the politicization of ethnicity. As the informants raised that the politicization of ethnicity is a serious challenge to national unity of Ethiopia. The political parties have been coming politicizing ethnicity in order to take the government power easily. Based on this the study concludes that in Ethiopia through generations there had been a sense of reciprocity in terms of ethnic based domination. It is possible to say that, an appointment is not the outcome of a careful assessment of policy positions or the performance of leaders; instead, it is an identity that matters. The heart of identity politics is when voters vote for or against someone because of the candidate’s characteristics is the basic matter in Ethiopian politics. Therefore, this is becoming a serious challenge to the national unity of Ethiopian as a country.

### **Ethnic Autonomy Conflicts**

Ethnic autonomy conflict in Ethiopia is seeming becoming normal: we are observing many autonomy ethnic-based conflicts. As most of the peoples believed that this event is because of the ethnic-based political parties

take enormous share. The Amhara ethnic groups who were settled in Benshagul\_Gumuz, Oromia regions over the years, were forcefully displaced to their homeland region up to now, which is contrary to the democratic principle. The same problem was happened in many regions of Ethiopia, who many people were displaced being they are not belongs to in that particular area. They were denied their constitutional rights of access to regional resources and opportunities in political, social as well as economic affairs, because of narrow political attitude created by TPLF after 1991, what we call it “tribalism” which brought an endless conflict between the ethnic groups of Ethiopia. These peoples did not participate even if the election in that area.

The researcher also want to share similar view points with (Abbinik, 2006), the post-1991 regime in Ethiopia, despite its promise and claims to bring solutions, has been less successful than expected in managing ethnic tensions in the country, and has basically only “decentralized” the problems by defining the sources of conflict to be on the local and not national level “Ethnic” struggles between communities are quite frequent, and have led to a localization of conflicts away from challenging the central state, and to an “essentialisation” of ethno cultural or linguistic differences, which then can (re)define local group relations (Abbinik, 2006, p.390).

So, according to the political elites currently there are many ethnic autonomy conflicts in different regions of Ethiopia. But these conflicts are now happening because the TPLF propaganda has been categorized as one ethnic group as the oppressor and others as oppressed. The regional governments are now becoming as powerful as a challenge of the central government. However, this needs caution when the central government intervenes on regional matters. He raised that; the central government is not autocrat enough or weak in managing the ethnic autonomy conflicts. In support of this response, the Human Rights Watch report showed that the prevalence of ethnic autonomy conflict in Ethiopia, “Ethnic conflicts particularly led to injury, death, and displacements of citizens in Afar, Gambella, Southern regional state, and Somali Regions” (Human Rights Watch, 2014a, p.20).

However as Horowitz (1985) found that Federalism could also be used to reduce inter-ethnic conflicts by the proliferation of points of power which in turn promotes inter-ethnic electoral cooperation, promoting alignments based on interests other than ethnicity. There is a fear is that “once the ruling party loses control of power, the fate of the federal system will be uncertain or will wither away with it” (Clapham, 2009, p.191). The EPRDF’s power politics has been creating unforeseeable effects that have been difficult for the government to control. The constitutionally promised principles of the right to self-determination and paradoxes associated with its implementation are source of ethnic-based conflicts in the country (Ibid). In contrary, federalism is criticized for frustrating countrywide free mobility of citizens and turning every constitutional conflict into ethnic conflicts (Basta, 2000).

Therefore, based on the data it is possible to agree that there are intera- regional conflicts among many regional states. Conflicts that emerge on a range of issues such as self-Determination, the politics of resource sharing, political power, representation, identity, citizenship, ethnic and regional boundary, and others. Therefore, almost all ethnic groups need autonomy in this regard conflicts are now happening and this will be evitable. In this regard autonomy conflicts become unavoidable.

Furthermore, the root cause of ethnic-based political parties in Ethiopia by feeling on the prevalence of socio-economic and political imbalances among ethnic groups. As informant confirmed that on the other

hand in the federal state structure there are self-rule and shared rule power, but all of them have been pseudo. The ethnic groups were not autonomous in administering their respective peoples. And in the case of shared rule, the minority ethnic groups were not represented at the federal level rather it was a pseudo. This and other related factors created ethnic autonomy conflicts in different regions. The constitution talks about the ethnic group to have its distinct territory. Each ethnic group is acceptable to establish their self-determination at different levels. But, there are numbers of Ethiopians who are living outside of their region. These settler groups, nevertheless, did not have constitutional protection either to be represented settled territory group's self- government as a group nor do not have the right to educate their children in their language.

Likewise, the establishment of the Harari region gave the Harari a titular status. However, the Harari 'city state' is multi-ethnic and the Harari who became the main titular group are a small minority within the region. According to the 1994 census, the ethnic composition of the Harari regional state looks like: Oromo (52.3%), Amhara (32.6%), Harari (7.1%), Gurage (3.2%) and others (4.8 %). From among the several ethnic groups that are found in the region, the Harari and the Oromo were declared as co-owners of the region and thus the region has been under a coalition government of the OPDO/EPRDF and the EPRDF affiliated Harari National League (HNL). This arrangement excludes about 40 per cent of the total regional population from political contestation and representation. Thus, there are tensions in the relationship between the titular ethnic groups (particularly the Harari) who dominate the structures of the new regional state and the non-titular groups. Without some sort of mitigation, this problem may engender violence (Asnake and Hussein, 2007).

After all, the prevalence of multi-ethnic political parties in Ethiopia and discriminatory policies contribute much to the ethnic autonomy conflicts. They are becoming a cause to instability and political uncertainty among the different ethnic groups. The constitution and the federal arrangement shown were shown in the above data highly discriminatory. As almost all respondents argued that there are a lot of ethnic autonomy conflicts in Ethiopia. This is because ethnic political party promotes ethnic agenda to the concerned ethnic ties. As the study shown that misimplementation of the system of self-rule and shared rule leads to ethnic autonomy conflict among ethnic groups.

### **Intra-regional Boundary Conflicts**

According to one of key informant interview participant from the legal experts argued that:

*There are many boundary conflicts in different regions of Ethiopia, like Amhara with Tigray, Oromia, with SNN&Ps, Oromia and Somali region and soon. Because as we know that after the EPRDF took the government power tried to re- demarcate the regions based on language and ethnicity. This aggravates grievances among such boundaries; some ethnic groups are not satisfied by the decisions of the federal government have been unwillingness deconstructing regions. For example in between the Amhara ethnic group with Tigray it was the political and demographic agenda of TPLF to achieve their objective in the realization "Greater Tigray" program. But most people were not known until recently this hidden agenda of TPLF over Amhara peoples. However, after this political program becomes obvious to the people many of the Amhara ethnic groups' stands to ask re-demarcate the boundary between Amhara and Tigray particularly (Wolikaite and Raya) within the former regions to Amhara. This is also true in other regional states of Ethiopia. But this is created by our narrow ethnic-based politics and it should be responsible for this.*

In same manner, the scholars argued that the institutionalization of federalism in Ethiopia led to the making of boundaries with the premise of matching ethnic and politico administrative boundaries. Above all, this process is characterized by a careful ethnicisation of territory. Indeed, there appears to be an ethnic ‘landlord’ for all the territory of the country (Cohen, 2000).

Furthermore, the House of the Federation (HoF) as a political organ compiled with members of the ruling party called the Ethiopian Peoples Republic Democratic Front (EPRDF) become dependent and influenced by the executive. Issues like boundary delimitation questions are sensitive issue which needs an independent decision from the HoF; instead, the mandate is given to the organ not independent and surely influenced by the executives a political organ composed of the ruling party. One of the cases happened at the time of the questions Wolkaite peoples, as the speaker of the house said that we have not received boundary demarcation questions. If the peoples are not interested to stay on their demarcated region why the government resettles what they need? This is highly discriminatory and oppressing the rights of ethnic groups, but this is a result of our ethnic-based politics. However, the constitution of Ethiopia (FDRE, 46) found that “States shall be delimited on the basis of the settlement patterns, language, identity and consent of the peoples concerned” (Art, 46-2).

In this regard the scholars argued that the ethnic and an artificial demarcation of boundaries between or among regions generate violent conflicts among various ethnic groups. For example, there were protracted ethnic conflict between Afar and Somali-Issa region in the north east since 2000 due to resource bases competition, the Borana and Garri in the south in 2001, the Karrayu Oromo and Afar in the center and the Nuer and Anywaa in the southwest in 2002, the Oromo and Somali in the southeast in 2003, the Neur, Anywaa (in Gamella) and highlanders in the southwest in 2004, the Oromos and non-Oromos in south and southeast in 2005 (Abbink, 2006; Assefa,2006). Ethno-regional conflicts based on boundary demarcation were widely spread with for example Oromia and Somali, Oromia with Gambella and currently Amhara region with Tigray due to blurred boarder delimitation between the two and identity issues (Adegehe, 2009; Siraw, 2014).

Indeed, based on the above data, we can agreed that the artificial demarcation of each regional states becoming areas of conflicts. As the study showed that after the establishment of the existing constitution, different intera-regional boundary-based conflicts highly increased even if the constitution explained that the regional states can be demarcated based on their consents as one criterion, but it has not been implemented effectively. The political parties also tried to politicize their ethnic groups as one mobilizing factor to the formation of their ethnic- based political parties. Therefore, we can understand that the existing situations of Ethiopia are under serious intera-boundary federal conflicts.

### **The Self-determination and Secession Feelings**

Ethiopia adopted the ethnic-based federal structure particularly article 39 is about the right to self-determination up to secession. However, this Article taken as the right for ethnic groups, as one of the key informant interview participants from the academicians responded that the constitution of 1995 from its nature emerged to the disintegrate Ethiopia. In which countries of the world the right to secession is allowed legally? No one, we have to understand the motive of this agenda of TPLF in allowing this right in the constitution. Most ethnic groups did not knowthis hidden agenda of TPLF; by default, we are already disintegrated. But our national values and Ethiopianism sentiment protected from destruction. This constitution amended to extend the political power of the TPLF leaders at the national level. Currently, there

are a lot of self- determination questions in different regions especially in the SNN&PR to be an autonomous region.

According to the FDRE constitution (FDRE, 1995) states that “Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to self-determination including the right to secession” (Art, 39-1). However, Recognition of the right of secession is one of the factors that make the Ethiopian federation unique from almost all other federations. Yet, Ethiopia is not the first country in the world to recognize constitutionally the right of secession. The constitutions of the former Soviet Union and Burma used to contain provisions on secession (Duchacek, 1970). But none of these countries allowed administrative autonomy let alone a constitutionally mediated secession (Ibid). One key informant participant from the academicians’ clearly stated that:

*When the Tigray elites came to power, they tried to politicize the questions of nationalities for their power. That is a fake federal structure. They took important government positions due to the privileged position of Tigray peoples because of their high literacy rate skills. Moreover, the investment areas were allotted to Tigrayians after partition especially after the coming of EPRDF. Then most private investment areas of Ethiopia are occupied by Tigriyans. While the Oromo peoples were highly disadvantaged by the central government, because of these problems they organized in line with their ethnic line, (most of the political parties want to form independent Oromia). Dividing Ethiopia on linguistic, religious, or regional differences will not only lead to social disharmony but will also lead the peoples the desire for secession in the future.*

Moreover, a particular idea of asymmetry that enshrines a vision of multinationalism and with it the protection of certain cultural group rights at the heart of a federation and meets the assumed need of national minorities for ‘recognition’ of their national status. The type of asymmetry sought by the multinationals is the hardest to achieve because of concerns about equality, as well as the prevention of secession (Louise, 2006). However, on the other side, for many of them who critic ethnic federalism, it is a short-cut to secession and ultimate state collapse (Tsegaye, 2006; Merera, 2007).

As it was presented in the above, the study showed that ethnic-based political parties have many challenges for the unity of Ethiopia. The current conflicts, discrimination, and mass displacement of the peoples from one area to their homeland is comes as indicated because of the political parties organized themselves in line with their ethnic line, and our nation unity becoming difficult. This ethnic-based domination can lead to disintegration and bringing the feeling of secessionism and Ethiopia’s national becomes under risk. As Lovise Aalen (2006, p.244), found that, “without the idea of common citizenship, self-determination for ethnic groups is likely turned into claims of secession and finally lead to disintegration of federal states”.

### **Positive Implications of Ethnic-Based Political Parties for National Unity of Ethiopia**

Under this section, the researcher has investigated the possible prospects’ of ethnic- based political parties for the national unity of Ethiopia. The study has been assessed some of the prospects of ethnic-based political parties for the national integration of Ethiopia. The parameters could be ethnic representation of power and social services and to the advocacy of language and culture of the minority groups, ethnic political parties play a role.

### **Ethnic Representation of Power and Social Services**

According to key informant interview from the academicians revealed that:

*The total control of political power by the few largest ethnic groups in Ethiopia, the members of minority ethnic groups lacked access to political representation. This has serious has been until now serious in Ethiopia for political participation of Ethiopia. Few ethnic groups were controlled the political power and social resources over a long time. Many ethnic groups were excluded from the center by the name of they are unqualified to hold and lead the federal government. However, this was highly discriminatory; they have the right to lead their respective people. Because some ethnic groups even controls the production and distribution of material and social resources of the minority groups. And the cause of the current ethnic-based conflict is the unequal participation of ethnic groups in all aspects. However, I believe that the ethnic-based political parties play a role in the empowerment of their ethnic group for political participation at the national level.*

Similar to the above quote, according to Berhanu (2008), ethnicity is becoming a reality in mobilizing large numbers of communities under its ethos and desires. Various political thinking and arrangements that have been proposed and tried in order to obliterate diversity have not been successful so far, rather some of the extreme measures such as forced centralization, assimilation, expulsion or ethnic cleansing have brought about unending and colossal violence and humanitarian crises. It has remained very difficult either to recognize or refuse ethnic entitlement in state restructuring. Recognizing the legitimacy of ethnic demands for autonomy could institute discrimination and strengthen the distinctiveness and cohesiveness of ethnic identity, which is a fluid and elusive phenomenon and encourages the proliferation of further ethnic claims. In this regard, the proponents of ethnic federalism is the optimal institutional means, i.e., effective, possible and ethnically permissible means of transition to democratic rule in Ethiopia since it allows not only free expression by ethno-linguistic communities of their collective identities and their peculiar forms of living but also ensures their representation and participation of in the process of governance, hence, it is the best workable constitutive means to democracy in Ethiopia( Endreas, 1997).

At the same token, the prospects of ethnic political parties for Ethiopian national unity; the federal system enabled all NNPE to govern themselves and so that they need their own political party. They have their language, culture and values that we couldn't avoid or dismiss it. As a consequence, we have regional parties but being civic oriented party, by no means, could avoid ethnic nationalism. In the past, there were no severe ethnic conflicts in this country. Although there were a few conflicts, they were not as such serious. It is mandatory to investigate this reality; the absence of severe ethnic conflicts in the past 27 years. How the EPRDF managed to overcome ethnic conflict problems those days should be considered. Today we are found under conflict. As Lidija, (2000, P.12) found that, "Multi-ethnic societies can survive only if all respective groups within the polity feel themselves as winners".

Generally, the fair distribution of political representation which is mentioned above are similar with that of Berhanu (2008) identified, denying the rights could also strengthen the distinctiveness and cohesiveness of ethnic identities by providing a breeding ground for elevating resentments against the centre; such a denial could be used to consolidate and crystallize a group's identity in order to mobilize resistance against the centre. Therefore, if the autonomous ethnic political parties emerged with in their respective ethnic group they can compute and ask the fair distribution of national resources of the country, in this case, they can contribute their effort to the national integration of the country.

### **Advocacy of Provision of Linguistic and Cultural Equality**

The researcher has interviewed from the academicians on the prospects of ethnic- based political parties. His

response was as follows:

*Ethiopia is the home of multiethnic groups of more than 80 nationalities, having their language, religion, culture, and ways of life. But our multicultural nature is created by God not by our regimes, not by Melese Zenawi, Menilik II, or other regimes. Simply Ethiopia is a museum of diversified ethnicities. Therefore, they are coming organizing themselves along their ethnic line and the ethnic political parties contribute their effort to the development of culture and language of minority ethnic groups. The most of the time cultural promotion is possible through ethnic mobilization.*

The above quote shows as the development of culture and language each ethnic group is easy through ethnic mobilization as (Sarah, S. 2005, P.23) found that “Cultures and cultural identities emerge, change, and are maintained through social interactions and political struggle. If a state is inhabited by people of diverse cultural origin and background, separatism and ethnic conflicts become a way of political life”.

In the same fashion, many of the data confirmed that Ethiopia is a multi-linguistic and multi-cultural country. In this sense, the country can appropriately be described as a mosaic of different cultures and ethno-linguistic groups, although this was not legally and politically recognized until recently. However, this has to be respected and empower to exercise their linguistic and cultural rights in all aspects. Concomitantly, one of the most important aspects of “Ethiopian history is the varying cultural paths, we can see that the Amhara and Tigrean people are very culturally similar but due to language differences have a long history of political rivalry within the empire” (Gurr, 1993, p.277).

Some scholars believed that the ethnic-based federal approach allows self-determining ethno- territorial polities, the component states are immanently entitled to use and promote their respective languages, cultures and histories. The role of the federal state in this regard is limited to the delineation and implementation of 'country-wide standards and basic policy criteria for public health, education ... for the protection and preservation of cultural and historical legacies. For instance, the federal states cannot transgress the exclusive power of the component states in determining their own working languages (Hashim, 2010).

Furthermore, when you are considering one language as the sole working language of Ethiopia, this is excluding the peoples who cannot speak and write. As the informant said, that, the government discriminates against the equality of language. For example, when we see the current working language of the federal government is Amharic, but this is not adequate for multicultural countries like Ethiopia. Although the Oromo nation has been one of the largest ethnos nations in Ethiopia, the attention given to study their language particularly from the historical aspect is remains minimal. The prevalence of the Policy of marginalization was also exercised to build a country of one language. The promotion of language equality is possible only by ethnic political parties other than civic-oriented political parties. In support of this view, the FDRE constitution (FDRE, 1995) talks about “Amharic shall be the working language of the Federal Government” (Art, 5 -2).

Accordingly, the study concludes that the above speech has illustrated that like any other Ethiopian ethnic groups are highly diversified in different cultures. They have their unique manifestation that differs from the other. Therefore, multiculturalism can be considered as one means of the organization many ethno-regional political parties in Ethiopia insignificantly. Therefore, we can understand that, language inequality and lack of proper proportional representation at the centre as one mobilizing factor for political elites towards

ethnicity. As Assefa (2006, p.46) argues that “saying simply that the language requirement is discriminatory and unconstitutional will be missing the fundamental virtue of not only the Ethiopian Constitution, which is based on the free will of nationalities, but also the values of federalism, unity in diversity”.

### **The Possible Tools of bringing National Unity in Ethiopia**

In this section, the study investigated some of the tools contribute to the national unity of Ethiopia based on the parameters including; empowerment of multinational and civic political parties, national consensus and reconciliation, constitutional amendment, electoral reform have discussed under this section.

### **Conduct Genuine Dialogue on the Federal and Constitutional Reform**

Even if there are polarized debates among the political elites on the reforming of the existing constitution; however, most of the study indicated the constitutional reform be possible for discussion. The amendment procedure of the constitution highly complicated and politicized by the leading government, if one region state council is not voluntary to amend the constitution, it is impracticable to revise it. The nature of the constitution himself is discriminates against the majority decisions to modification. Unless all regional state council agreed it is invalid to revise it. But, all stakeholders should come up with an open dialogue to reform the existing constitution, the motive of the amendment procedure of the constitution become rigid it was to make the power of the TPLF official external. This is a highly undemocratic procedure, which makes it very rigid to amend. However, the current generation should agree to bring a consensus based constitution in Ethiopia. Concomitant to this on amendment of the constitution; “When all State Councils, by a majority vote, approve the proposed amendment” (Art, 105-1a).

As many scholars also criticized, in the process of drafting, debating, and ratifying the new constitution, the EPRDF/TGE lacked the most basic agreement necessary the agreement to disagree. In order to make the constitutional decision genuine, the decision must be reached after mature deliberation of all parties who should participate in the decision. By confusing opposition with rebellion, the TGE prevented key players from participating in deliberations. If the Ethiopian people were to act collectively, there must be an exchange of views on the issues involved in the constitutional decision. If that opportunity is not available, there can be no agreement on fundamentals. Nothing valid or lasting was decided (Theodore, 1996).

In the same manner, the house of the federation is the only gifted organ to interpret the constitution. Unless we intend to make every constitutional decision political including those decisions on constitutional complaint granting it the power to interpret the constitution to decide constitutional disputes does not servant purpose for the public. We cannot introduce either ordinary or constitutional courts from engaging this power, simply on the ground of lack of accountability. The house of the federation may be motivated by party politics and ethnic affiliation. Although an organ entitled to the constitution has to be independent of any political influence. If we take courts, on the other hand, they are impartial and independent. Besides what is advisable is an organ that is accessible all the time and not a par time organ shall assume this power. Therefore, the constitution has to be amended to the effect of establishing another institution endowed with the power of constitutional evaluation. Concomitant to this, as the constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE, 1995) found that “Members of the House of the Federation shall be elected by the State Councils” (Art, 61-3).

Others also rose on the importance of the need to bring constitutional reform to establish a democratic political structure; the constitution is explained about the prevalence of unjust relationships among ethnic



groups. However, we do not have adequate information about the experience of unjust and unequal relationships among ethnic groups in the Ethiopian history. The FDRE constitution is highly pseudo and not consensus based rather it is taken from the first Woyane political manifesto the 1967. As clearly indicated in the preamble of the constitution of the FDRE that says “Fully cognizant that our common destiny can best be served by rectifying historically unjust relationships and by further promoting our shared interests” (FDRE, 1995).

One thing that makes them similar is that they perceived the Amhara as their historical enemy. The 1976 TPLF manifesto, for instance, asserted in Amharic as “የትግራይ ህዝብ ብሄራዊ ትግል ፀረ- የአማራ-ብሄራዊ ጭቆና፣ፀረ-ኢምፔሪያሊዝም እንዲሁም ፀረ ንዑስ ከበርቱያዊ ጠጋኝ ተሞልቶ ነው... ዓላማው ነፃ የሆነ የትግራይ ዲሞክራሲያዊ ሪፐብሊክ ማቋቋም ይሆናል” (ህወያኔ, 1968). It can be interpreted in English as the Tigray people national struggle includes anti-Amhara national oppression, anti-imperialism as well as anti-petty bourgeois its aim is to establish an independent republic of Tigray (interpretation mine).

As a counter balance, it is obvious that to consider the FDRE constitution as the blueprint of the TPLFs political manifesto is highly difficult. Because under the constitution there is no article which considers about Amhara ethnic group is chauvinist over other Ethiopian ethnic groups and the most oppressor. But this has been found and written in the TPLF manifesto. Making the political manifesto and the constitution as equivalent and similar is not good, because, the political manifesto was formulated to achieve a particular objective. During the amendment of the constitution, many political party representatives have been attended. However, the constitution in its preamble states about the prevalence of unbalanced relationships in the previous and we believe this is an important article because we have been experienced unbalanced relationships and inequality in the autocratic regimes’ of Ethiopia.

Furthermore, the constitutional reform among all should be can great deal conditionality’s. There are contradictory debates therefore to divert the attention of this extreme disagreement it may take time. However, before to discuss about to reform the existing constitution, the government should arrange an open- ended dialogue between the representatives’ of all ethnic groups whether the constitution continued or reformed. The political elites should conduct researches’ and prepare seminars on the pitfalls of the constitution that have to be reformed. Generally; the government should construct strong democratic institutions, impartial judiciary and human rights commissions to agreed and bring consensus on the reforming of the constitution and bringing national unity.

Berhanu (2010) found that the solution for the national question is not secession. In fact, toying with the question of secession in diverse multiethnic countries such as Ethiopia is playing with fire. In this position, it is in sync with all countries in Africa that emerged from colonialism, across the ideological spectrum. Rather, the solution is to be found by eliminating the root causes of ethnic oppression and establish polity that is based on equality and class solidarity.

In the same outlook, For instance, the Ethiopian people’s Revolutionary party (EPRP) believed that asserted in Amharic “በጎሣ/በቋንቋ ላይ የተመሠረተው ፌዴራሊዝም የችግሮች ሁሉ መንስዔ በመሆኑ ከጥላቻና

ከመከፋፈል ሂደት መላቀቅ የሚቻለው በሥራ ላይ ያለው ሕገመንግሥት ሲሻሻል ስለሆነ የፖለቲካ ድርጅቶች፣ የሲቪክ ማኅበራት፣ የመገናኛ ብዙሃን በአጠቃላይ የሀገሪቱ ዜጎች ሕገ- መንግሥቱን እንዲያሻሽሉ ሂደቱን ማስጀመር ያስፈልጋል” (ኢሕአፓ, 2019). It

can be interpreted in English as the pillar of all problems in Ethiopia is the current ethnic and language-based federal structure: therefore, in order to tackle the existing Hatred and discrimination the amendment of the constitution is should be viable. The political parties, civic societies, media and peoples in general should take part the amendment processes begin soon (interpretation mine).

Indeed, based on the primary data and the stated document argued that the reform of the FDRE constitution. This needs careful analysis and discussion each concerned body. The political party leaders, the civic societies should agree on whether the constitution reformed or the existing continued. The government has to establish a legal framework particularly to reform the constitution, but this should be based on the consensus of all concerned bodies and on the formation of ethnic political parties. As the data showed that there are polarized arguments on the reform of the constitution, however, most of the respondents believed that the revision the articles of the constitution.

### **Revision of the Electoral System**

Some 33 opposition political parties have demanded the cancelation of 20 articles and the revision of 13 articles from the draft Ethiopian Electoral and Political parties Proclamation which was presented before the house of peoples representatives (HPR). Apart from demanding the cancelation and revision of articles from the draft Proclamation, the leaders of the parties echoed that their concerns and comments were not included in the proclamation (Neamin, 2019).

Likewise, based on the data in the previous 3 decades of Ethiopia many ethnic political parties have been emerging and TPLF disintegrated this country. For example, even if in East Africa countries the formation ethnic-based political party is prohibited by the law. In developed countries, the organization of political parties is possible, where they have a nation-wide program. As he revealed a nation-wide political party, they formed for the sake of collective objectives and goals. Their concern and identity are democracy and development in the country to all the peoples. The political parties should be rational and have a clear nationalist ideology. This type of formation is what we call it civic nationalism (civic-oriented) political party. This applies to all the rest of the world and has huge acceptance except Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Revised Political Parties Registration Proclamation (Pro. No. 573/2008) Formation of a Regional Political Party: A political party shall be formed as a regional political party where: It has at least 750 founding members; More than sixty percent (60%) of the founding members are residents of the same regional state (Ibid).

Much like; the Ethiopian electoral law highly open to the formation of many ethnic-based political parties in the country insignificantly. As the respondent said that imagine how much the proclamation is highly ignored for the value of nationalism. When the proclamation allows only such criteria the political elites begin tried to establish their ethnic political parties. It is enough to see our court situation there are more than 73 ethnic-based political parties legally registered by the electoral law almost all ethnic groups have their ethnic-based political parties in Ethiopia. On another hand, the researcher wants to agree these ethnic-based political parties have been came access to receive the incentives which are provided by the election board and to generate income from their members. The Ethiopian electoral law also (Pro. No. 573/2008, 42) found that the government may grant support for political parties that have representation at the Federal and at State houses for conducting their day to day activity. The government may grant support to political parties to be effected for election purposes for federal or statehouses. The support to be granted by the government

according to this Article may be in the form of money, in-kind and in service.

In this regard, the researcher understood the Constitutional and electoral laws that shall encourage dialogue among the diverse political groups, unblock communication channels, keep political and governmental leaders on their responsibility, be more accountable and facilitate the articulation and aggregation of conflicting interests and in these ways create a sense of political unity out of ethnic diversity. They believed that to extend our support to national institutions and national political parties while discouraging the regional ones. According to the study we have to ensure the political participation of every citizen so that no one felt excluded and the common national identity could develop.

Furthermore, if we want to see one united and integrated Ethiopia, the government should abolish the ethnic-based political party formation in the country. And we must set a clear legal framework in prohibiting them from competition. Even, if in the previous our legal system and constitution may open to such party formations, but now it is better to stand to abolish them. All the peoples of Ethiopian should understand the hidden agenda of TPLF when TPLF formed more than 70 ethnic-based political parties it was for the sake of extending his power. The electoral system should be revising. We have to say enough is enough. Now, group of elites came up with the “citizenship political agenda” which is antithesis of ethnic/diversity based politics and showed their determination to promote, finance, and defend this agenda by establishing Ethiopian Citizens Party for Social Justice (ECPSJ) (or የኢትዮጵያ ዜጎች ለማህበራዊ ፍትህ ፓርቲ /ኢዜማ in Amharic), this should be encouraged.

In sum, the electoral law reform to bring national unity in Ethiopia. Even if some respondents believed that it is not a time to realize civic-oriented political parties in the current political polarized Ethiopia; for the formation of ethnic-based political parties in the country is supported by the political party registration law of Ethiopia that clearly predetermined that when the ethnic party is formed there must be more than 60% of the founding members to be the residents of the same regional state. However, as the study showed this can leads to when all stakeholders attend open-ended political debates on the country’s future. On the other hand in an integrative perspective, Reilly (2006) found that is possible to through; one is to establish and enforce rules governing political party formation, registration, and funding. As well as in Thailand, the cross-regional membership requirements, new parties now must also show they have at least 5,000 members within six months of being registered.

### **Intra-boundary Demarcation among Regions of Ethiopia**

Concerning sense of national unity in Ethiopia, to bring consensus-based political party and national integration of Ethiopia state boundary drawing should come up an open-ended dialogue. He feels that there are tendencies and delay from the concerned government bodies to resolve boundary

conflicts. The government should deal and study how these boundary questions become a zone of disagreement. The most serious issue to our current disintegration of the regions of Ethiopia is because of the artificial demarcation which was done by the autocratic regime of TPLF/EPRDF. Therefore before to come on national integration: the illegally lost lands should come back to their previous regions. As a counter balance, the constitution of the federal democratic republic of Ethiopia (FDRE, 1995) found that “All State border disputes shall be settled by agreement of the concerned States. Where the concerned States fail to reach agreement, the House of the Federation shall decide such disputes based on settlement patterns and the wishes of the peoples concerned” (Art, 48-1).

Moreover, these boundary re- demarcation questions have stayed on air in a long period. For example, the boundary-based conflict within Amhara regional state and Tigray regional state should take as a huge responsibility from the federal government. He said that we have seen the disagreements between these two regions. However, the house of federation has its mandate to intervene on border disputes to be resolved based on the consent of the people concerned (KII, 12th, August 2019). Concomitant to this the Ethiopian constitution (FDRE, 1995) defined that, “The House of Federation shall, within a period of two years, render a final decision on a dispute submitted to it pursuant to sub-Article 1 of this Article” (Art.48-2).

In sum, as the data clearly shows above there are a need for intera-regional boundary demarcation. This is becoming a sensitive issue to bring national integration among the ethnic political parties. All most all the data confirmed that boundary conflicts should be solved with an independent government organ. There are tendencies that the HoF is not capable to negotiate the conflicting regions impartially. So the study showed that the boundary demarcation questions need careful analysis from the government.

### **Empowerment of Multinational and Civic Political Parties**

In addition to the above discussion, currently Ethiopia is not only to the museum of ethnic groups but also the home of many ethnic-based political parties, however, these political elites becoming the huge challenge for national integration of a country. In this regard the respondents from political parties, believed that political elites ought to avoid their polarized political debates, the amazing one here even many political elites still stands to restore Ethiopia like the previous 130 and 140 leadership and regime. One of the problems of Oromo political elites is their agenda and ideology is the only possible way to leads to heaven, the sense of Ethiopia has no place in their political speeches. On the other hand from other political elites, they considered themselves the only provider of certificate to Ethiopian citizenship. So in our opinion, these extreme political elites debates should avoid the “dialogue of the deaf”, release themselves from their political prison and work cooperatively in one democratic agenda for Ethiopia and national integration.

In the same manner, the FGD discussants revealed that:

*The political parties of Ethiopia should emphasize common national identity to increase social cohesion, national reconciliation, national Consciousness, and national integrity. The challenge then is to make diverse cultural identities an integral part of the national one. They believed that this is particularly important in a country like Ethiopia which has about more than 100 different political parties.*

The intention of the above quote shows as the Ethiopian political leaders and followers must acquire the values that would enable them to put the interest of the nation first before those of self, social, religious, political and ethnic backgrounds. On the other hand, socio-economic and political restructuring is pivotal to any successful mission of national integration in Ethiopia. There must be credible leadership and good governance. The political parties should discuss efficient law enforcement agents and the judicial system. The problem of poverty and

unemployment must be solved because the “political gamblers” (የፖለቲካ ቁጥረተኞች) may instrumentalize them to their ethnic political agenda. As they argued that, this is possible through the collective agreements of all the political parties’ representatives to the realization of a multinational political party in Ethiopia.

In the same manner, the multinational and civic political parties system will help to promote stability and effective government in Ethiopia and these qualities will foster national integration. With some broad-based

national parties, the diverse ethnic, socioeconomic, formal, and informal groups in the country will become less ethnicized. All these will help to improve the disintegrative extreme positions of the existing many ethnic-based political parties in Ethiopia. With harmony and unity among the diverse groups and political stability, the likelihood of the democratic elected party seizing power might be greatly reduced this ethnic-based mass mobilization within the democracy must have also been greatly reduced with the ethnic-based party system. The political leaders in particular should engage in fair play in politics and make the party system work.

Political parties are indispensable in modern representative democracy (Pippa, 2005). Political parties are necessary to build and combined support among broad coalitions of citizens' organizations and interest groups; to integrate multiple contradictory demands into coherent policy programs; to select and train legislative candidates and political leaders to provide voters with choices among governing teams and policies; and, if elected to office, to organize the process of government and stand collectively accountable for their actions in subsequent contests (Ibid). Nevertheless, one of the study respondents from the academicians said the following:

*To speak in frankly the civic political party is the best for national integration. But now in the last years, the different regimes have been tested and become failed. In our current situation, it is impossible to establish to talk about civic politics. Ethiopian is now found in between the Un-reconcilable political parties' political programs. Ethiopian national integration can sustain by the agreement of these ethnic-based political parties rather by the civic political party. Because many civic political parties has no real foundation based on the agreement of the people throughout the country. To bring and realize civic or nationalist political parties, the prerequisite criteria's should fulfill, like National flag and Anthem, capital city, national consensus on deprivation thesis.*

Generally speaking, the political parties they have their behalf to national unity or disunity of the country. The Ethiopian political parties are currently they have highly polarized political program. This contradictory agenda brings huge debt for Ethiopia and national integration as well as to the exercising of democracy. The researcher also share similar view points with the integrative Approach (Peter, 2004, p.3) found that "Political association enables people to come together and reflect their political views that enhance their shared values and enforce their political rights, and political parties are fundamental in these pursuits".

### **National Consensus and Reconciliation**

Humanity before ethnicity should be the core value of every citizen. No single ethnic group will be free until all are free. .... Reconciliation within a nation, as to him, is one important factor to build strong democratic system. Human kinds are born in a way to depend on each other. 'I see Ethiopia like a vehicle; the care is made up of different parts. Without those engine parts the car cannot perform its function properly. For a car to run properly it needs the proper functioning of those independent parts. All systems have to work in coherence. Likewise, Ethiopia is composed of different peoples. Those one hundred million people are Ethiopia and these peoples have to work in coherence' (Leulseged, 2019).

Concomitantly, the Ethiopian ethnic-based political parties should avoid their fault-finding course because in relatively currently the political space is broadening, many political prisoners released from prison. All the political parties better to come upon national consensus and agree about Ethiopia and national integration. As we have seen the political discourse of the *Zemen Mesafint* (Era of Lords) ruled system is now reestablished modern manner, this brings a huge risk and disintegration for our country. The central

government better to organize his financial institutions accountable and transparent manner the whole peoples of Ethiopia to easily understand what the central government working well and the government has to bring economic, social and political justice all over the country. The crucial solution to the political problems of the country is to come from a renegotiation of the political parties. These negotiations must address and settle these problems embedded in the politics of identity exactly.

However, (Berhanu, 2010) argued that we are all victims of oppression by brutal tyrannies, the various political traditions that emerged out of the struggle against tyranny, the divisions and hatred deliberately fomented by those in power for the purpose of divide and rule, the petty politics that permeated our politics in the past, the unsavory characters that resided over opposition politics...etc. have all taken their toll in creating a rather hostile environment for constructive discourse and cooperative action. In the same fashion, as key informant interview from the political elites responded, Ethiopia experienced a lot in the nation-building process, some of the leaders were autocrat and discriminatory, however, this cannot be considered as the point of disagreement and disintegration rather what we discuss and argued about the country future. The past is already passed, all concerned bodies should participate to reconcile and agreed on the national oppression thesis. The informant revealed that we have to recognize different opinions, religions, cultures, language and soon.

Having this in mind, as we all know the black peoples in the world considered Ethiopia symbol of independence and liberation. They called Ethiopia; "Ethiopia: the land of our fathers, the land where God loved to be". Our context of ethnic politics created huge debt to our country's disintegration. We can see what was happened in the last 27 leadership of TPLF ethnic politics was created the forceful massive displacement of the peoples, hateful speeches even by the political elites from different sections, evictions of peoples from different regions. This told us ethnic politics has no contribution to our national integration as one indivisible country. They were not interested to bring real democracy where the peoples deserve. He believed that therefore, political parties should turn their attention to multinational politics to attain Ethiopia's national integration, because multinational politics by its nature has space for integrating one national sentiment and country. However, in consociational approach elite accommodation and cooperation is favorable to consociational decision-making. "A pre-democratic historical tendency toward moderation and compromise can indeed be an independent factor that can appreciably strengthen the chances of consociational democracy" (Lijphart, 1979, P. 100).

Generally, there is a need the political parties to change the mentality of the political elites to remove prejudice & discrimination among all nationalities of Ethiopia and to promote inter-regional and inter-ethnic harmony. Moreover, the data showed that the federal, other civic- oriented political parties and political elites have to contribute their share for Ethiopian national integration. As the study found that there should need to strengthen federation through real national consensus and reconciliation on Ethiopian political discourse. The solution for the problem is in the hands of Ethiopians only when they start believing in dialogue rather than forced argument. As Habermas, the German critical social theories call deliberate democracy or discursive democracy in which deliberation is fundamental to decision making. It assumes elements of consensus decision-making and majority rule that has to be governed to avoid the existing lethargy. This has to be the principle that should be embodied in today's *Ethiopianism* movement (Teshome, 2017).

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the conclusion of the study based on the findings that draw from the collected and analyzed data and then forward recommendations as the possible actions to taken to bring national unity of Ethiopia.

### Conclusions

This study has pursued to investigate the challenges and prospects of ethnic-based political parties for Ethiopia's national unity. Each of the objectives have already been discussed and concluded briefly in the concerned chapters and sections. In spite of these conclusions, the overall conclusion is made here. The findings are presented in an objective wise manner in the following paragraphs. Subsequently, the study tried to assess the implications of ethnic-based political parties, the challenges and prospects they play in the national unity by employed qualitative research approach.

The main objective of this study was to investigate the challenges and prospects of ethnic-based political parties to the national unity of Ethiopia. The study identified the major challenges that ethnic-based political parties in their struggle against the national unity of Ethiopia. As the study showed, the prevalence of ethnic-based political parties in Ethiopia brings; the politicization of ethnicity, ethnic autonomy conflicts, self-determination, and secessionist feeling and intera-regional boundary conflicts has been viable in Ethiopia. As the collected data confirmed that there are tendencies' that the political parties used the ethnic groups to the political instrument to satisfy their selfish economic and political interest. There are also conflicts among different ethnic groups to self-rule as well as shared to be implemented well, conflicts around the boundaries of regions in Ethiopia, this is because of the existing federal state structure artificially delimited the regions without consideration of the social and economic values of the ethnic groups.

Based on the finding of the study, the ethnic-based political parties have their prospect of the national unity of Ethiopia. As the study has been identified, ethnic-based autonomy contributes to the political empowerment of minority ethnic groups. As the data acknowledged that, the minority ethnic groups in Ethiopia were excluded from political participation. The advocacy of language and cultures able to respected when the ethnic-based political parties participated democratically.

About the last objective, the possible tools of bringing national unity in Ethiopia, some important parameters have been investigated; the empowerment of multinational political parties, national consensus and reconciliation, reform constitutional and electoral laws have discussed under the preceding chapter. As the study confirmed the Ethiopian political experience showed that the undemocratic nation-building process and the autocrat dominant political parties controlled the political space. The ethnic groups were discriminated from democratic participation. However, the pluralistic political culture is one essential component to the national unity of Ethiopia, but this can be possible through constitutional amendment and electoral laws. The possible tools for the national integration of Ethiopia are highly interconnected. The participants of the study believed that if the above mentioned parameters implemented, in effective national unity of Ethiopia could be feasib

### Recommendations

*"A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free". Abraham Lincoln.*

After a significant investigation of how ethnic-based politics have been challenges and prospects of Ethiopian national unity, since the foundation of Ethiopia as a federalist nation, it therefore becomes relevant to make helpful recommendations.

We have to extend our support to national institutions and national political parties while discouraging the regional ones. Unlike history, we have to ensure the political participation of every citizen so that no one felt excluded and the common national identity could develop.

The concerned stakeholders should conduct continues open-ended dialogue like the political elites, civil societies, political party leaders as well as professional association leaders, in the national integration of Ethiopia.

The government of Ethiopia should work for national integration, social cohesion, harmony and ensure legal political competition in the country. In this regard, the government should ensure the supremacy of democracy and rule of law among the ethnic groups.

The government should work to remove all ethnic unhealthy competitions' which challenging the overall integration and consensus of the country. These include political intolerance, ethnic discrimination, and aggravation among ethnic groups.

The government should have to redress the situation in the previous mistakes. In the early different discriminations, narratives have been conducted by different regimes, but our concern should focus and concentrate on the countries future.

The political elites should bring civic (multinational) oriented political program to participants in the political arena of the country; they can do nothing from discriminated political program. They need to rise above purely party interest and look for the best interest of the nation rather than satisfy their narrow political and economic interest. This will help resolve the fake narratives in a much even and convenient manner, confidence and find joint solutions and problems.

There should be more research into the challenges of ethnic-based parties on democracy and pay special attention not only to the role of democracy but also on their impacts on development and stability should be studied.

Generally, the government should be transparent in conducting population census, because the census is vital and foremost significant step toward eradication of ethnic inequalities in the socio- political arena. As most of the respondents and kinds of literature showed that in previously different population census were not transparent and they became the point of disagreement among the federal and ethnic-based political parties on the national consensus.

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