Failure And Discontents Of Ethnic Based Federalism In Ethiopia

Dejen Abersetegaye
Department of Civics and Ethical Studies
University of Gondar, Gondar, Ethiopia
Email: dejenaberat@gmail.com

Abstract
Ethiopia is the oldest independent country in Africa and known as a mosaic of Nationalities. In 1991 EPRDF came to power and adopted federal state structure to answer the question of Nationalities that prolonged during the imperial and Derg regimes. This paper attempts to show some failure and discontent of Ethiopian ethnic based federalism by considering four basic criteria. These are; the intensification of ethnic conflicts, the existence of dominant top down politics, absence of federal political culture and the rise of the question of identity. Currently, ethnic based federalism has sharpened ethnic differences among different ethnic groups. Ethnicity and identity are strongly politicized and manipulated for political purpose. There are disparities between regional states to exercise their political and economic powers. The federal government is exercising an increasing control over regions. However, regions lack genuine legitimacy and they are not autonomous to exercise their powers.

Keyword: Ethnic federalism, identity, ethnic conflict, dominant party, top down politics.

Introduction
The main purpose of this article is to show some of typical failure and discontents of Ethiopian’s post-cold war ethnic based federal political system.

Ethiopia is a nation which has been referenced in the book of Genesis through the manuscript of the New Testament is a country with 3,000 years of written history that has never been colonized by foreign power (Andargachew, 1993 and Yoseph, 2017). Following the collapse of military rule, Ethiopia established a federal system creating largely ethnic based territorial units (Alem, 2003:3). The most striking aspect of Ethiopia’s new constitutional design is its complete departure from the past. It has made a transformation from a strong centralized unitary state to federal state that institutionalizes ethnic identity as an organizing principle of the state (Semahagn, 2012:171).

According to John (2010:7), the development of ethnic-based federalism was consistent with the traditional program of Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) which had favored the self-determination of ethnic groups during the war against the Derge and its framers claimed that only through ethnic and regional autonomy would it be possible to maintain the Ethiopian state as a unified political unit. Mahri (2007:4), argued federalism is designed to address the ‘national question’in Amharic ‘Ye Biher Bihereseb Tiyaque’, the fact that, Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) adopted federal political system to answer the question of Nationalities that prolonged during the imperial and Derg regimes. The Transitional Government of Ethiopia recognize federal state structure which consisted from fourteen provincial administrations as a mechanism to address the challenges related to ethnic diversity in the country but was not a full-fledged federal type.

The FDRE constitution, has officially adopted ethnic federal system as a political settlement of the ethnic related conflicts in the past (Semahagn, 2012:7). The draft constitution was ratified by the Constituitional Assembly on December 8, 1994, which came into effect on August 21, 1995. Ethiopia officially adopted a federal form of government. National elections were held in May Since 1995 for regional and federal parliament and the FDRE new parliament was inaugurated on 21 August bringing the Transitional Government of Ethiopia and the Charter to an end), the 1995 Constitution proclaims the establishment of nine regional states and two self-governing, multi-ethnic cities, Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa (Edmond, 1998:7 and Andréas, 2003:142). Ethiopian’s Constitution provides for ethnic-federal government as the principal institutional means for accommodating ethnic groups’ cultural,
linguistic, and political claims (Alemante, 2003:5). According to Theodore (1999:8), instead of trying to subsume ethnic identities, Ethiopia would embrace them. Some thought Ethiopia would serve as a model not just for Africa but for other fragile nation-states beset by ethnic strife. Subsequent events in Rwanda, Zaire, and the former Yugoslavia demonstrated the fragility of the overly optimistic Ethiopian’s approach to encouraging ethnic differences.

The 1995 Constitution politically and ideally recognize ethnic identities based on linguistic criterion. I argue the architects of the constitution were intoxicated by Stalin’s notion of Nationalities. Ideally, EPRDF used ethnic federalism as a political system, to respect, the right of ethnic groups, culture, religion and self-autonomy. The ultimate purpose of adopting federal state structure is to accommodate differences. Unfortunately, for the past successive regimes including the current government Ethiopian Nationalities are not endowed to test the fruit of democracy. Currently, there is thenovel of “identity entrepreneurship” by EPRDF for political purpose. Aalen (2006:19), explicitly elaborated over the past fourteen years lack of democratic rights and genuine self-government that make up the largest challenges in Ethiopia today. The adoption of nine ethnically based regions (states) from which six are supposed to be ethnically homogeneous (Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somali and Harari) while three of them are relatively heterogenous (Benishangul/Gumuz, Gambellaand Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples’ Region (Jan, 2011:375). Article 8 of FDRE constitution says, all sovereign power resides in the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia. This means every Ethiopian first should identify himself/herself with one of the above terminologies before he/she claims the Ethiopian citizenship. In my view, the basic problem is there are confusion of terminologies between ‘Nations (Biher), Nationalities (Behereseb) and Peoples (Hizboch). Who is Nation? Who is Nationality? and who are Peoples? The terminologies are not clear. In this case, the constitution categorizes Ethiopian People in to three hierarchies. First, “Nation” who are not “Nationality and people” secondly, “Nationalities” who are not “People and Nation” and the last category are “Peoples” who are not “Nation and Nationalities”.

According to Jan, (2011:3), Amhara, Oromo or Tigrayans are often referred to as ‘Nations’ (Biher), whereas the rest are referred to as either nationalities (Behereseb) or peoples (Hizboch). The difference in usage seems to be related to the size of the groups. But the Harari is one of the smallest ethnic groups, referred to as a nation and is given the status of a regional state. In the absence of a standard definition, the politics of entitlement in the multi-ethnic regional state draws on a wide array of ideologies of entitlement. Ethiopian Constitution evoke the primordial view of ethnicity because it defines Ethiopians as peoples and nationalities without providing the option for a supra-national identity (Aalen, 2006: 247).

Benedict Anderson describes in his “work Imagined Communities” how a specific culture can be arbitrarily exploited for political purposes. In line with this, David Turton (2006:18) argues, that, the Ethiopian constitution is a result of a bargain, freely entered in to by the Nation, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia. But it nowhere tell us how to distinguish between these entities. Instead, we have to make do with a vague, blanket definition which covers all three. On the other hand, the preamble of Indian multi-cultural federation and US constitution respectively begin with;

“we, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a sovereign socialist secular democratic republic and to secure to all its citizens”.

And “We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution for the United States of America”.

From the above, the preamble of Indian and USA constitution begin the word “people” which aims to give all citizens equal rights under the law regardless of their wealth, race, religion, ideological outlook, sex, and the like. In contrast to this, the preamble of the FDRE constitution begin the term Nations, Nationalities and Peoples. It seems like, divide and rule strategy of TPLF/EPRDF.
Some Unique Features of Ethiopian Ethnic based Federalism

One of the unique features of Ethiopian federalism is constitutional arbiter. The constitution is interpreted by the House of Federation (HoF), which is a non-judiciary institution. In contrast, in other federations, constitutional interpretation mandate is given for the judiciary organ. The HoF federation is elected by regional legislative body or State Council from all regions based on population and its role is safeguarding the interest of all Nations, Nationalities and Peoples. In this case HoF is the defender of the compact of the federal constitution. There is a Council of Constitutional Inquire in the House of federation which seems Quasi-judiciary organ composed of eleven members i.e. president and vice president of federal the federal Supreme Court, six legal experts and other three experts from the office of HoF. The Council of Constitutional Inquire is responsible to the House of federation and its role is to dig up or investigate information on the issues of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples, secession, intergovernmental relation, conflict that arise between regional states if the case is beyond state executives and revenue generation. The other peculiar, feature is the House of federation has little part in law making and absence of judicial review power. The House of Federation is the guardian and interpreter of the FDRE constitution. According to Berhanu Gutema (2009:13), the power to interpret the constitution can certainly fall down into non-independent and partisan arm of a government. …that could undermine its independence and impartiality.

The other distinct feature of the current regime is the most controversial Article 39. SubArticle 1 says, Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession. Article 39, stipulates that every ethno-cultural community has its own regional state and territory. Even if, Art.46 of the constitution declares, the foundations of state formation are settlement patterns, language, identity and consent of the people. Yet, the reality on the ground is language as the only defining feature. In this case every Nation, Nationality and Peoples has an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession. It means both internal self-determination/regional autonomy/ and the right to secede if they wish at any time.

According to Gorge Anderson (2008:86) there is no standard constitutional approach to dealing with the possibility of secession. Many federal constitutions exclude the possibility, but there are exceptions. Developing democratic procedures for secession poses significant issues many federations have constitutional provisions asserting the eternal unity of the country or precluding the possibility of secession. The United States (an ‘indestructible union’), Mexico, Brazil, Nigeria, India, and Spain are examples. (Spain also prohibits autonomous communities from holding referendum on secession.) In other cases, such as Australia, Germany, and Switzerland, the constitution is silent on the issue. Ethiopia’s constitution is unusual in providing a formal right to secession, though this remains controversial and untested. International law sees the right of secession as legitimate only in cases of severe abuse of the human rights of a population and of decolonization. The international community is normally hostile to secession because it can destabilize international relations.

According to Lidija (----:12), one of the consequences of the secession of Eritrea was a new federal design for Ethiopia. Usually known as a paradigm for ethnic federalism, the federation is particular for two equally important constitutive elements: a) right to secession is constitutionally guaranteed, and b) the federal organization builds on ethnic and not territory line. Only afewfederal states have included recognition of these cesion right in their constitutions: the former USSR and Yugoslavia, the Constitution of the Malaysian Federation, St Kitts-Nevis and Ethiopia (Semahagn, 2012:34-35) Article 39 of the Ethiopian Constitution and its primordial definition of ethnic identities may in itself stimulate ethnic entrepreneurship, make previously flexible ethnic categories fixed and rigid and create ethnic tensions.

The FDRE Constitution clearly expressed in Art. 39(4), the right of Nations, Nationalities and peoples to secession shall come into effect:
I. When a demand for secession has been approved by a two-thirds majority of the members of the legislative council of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples concerned;
II. When the federal government has organized a referendum which must take place within three years from the time it received the concerned council’s decision for secession;
III. When the demand for secession is supported by majority vote in the referendum;
IV. When the Federal Government transferred its power to the council of the Nations, Nationalities and People who has voted to secede; and
V. When the division of assets is effected in a manner prescribed by law.

To the proponents of Article 39, some of the world's most intractable problems outbreak when ethnic divisions are politicized by attempts at national integration. Communal loyalties, tinged with sectorial xenophobia, are in tension with membership in the state as a whole (Theodor, 1999:119). A federal arrangement that formally recognizes ethno linguistic diversity to help manage divisions can also pave the way for eventual disintegration (Erk et al., 2009:2).

Yugoslavia and the USSR had constitutional arrangements that recognized the right to self-determination and secession. Yugoslavia’s 1946 communist constitution gave each republic a right to self-determination and secession. By 1974, Yugoslavia consisted of five “nations.” But Marshal Tito organized the federal system in such a way that there was no precise correspondence between ethnic territories and the various republics. Once the federation collapsed in 1992, ethnic cleansing was unleashed to forcibly make ethnic units coincide with political territories. The Soviet regime had created conditions that were conducive to the transformation of ethnic nationalism into state nationalism (Alem, 2003:7).

In the case of Ethiopia, the degree of getting 2/3 majority vote in the state council particularly regional state characterized by the existence of diversity is very difficult. In multi-cultural regional States like SNNPR, the right to secession is difficult to exercise and may not be easily realized. On the other hand, the degree of getting 2/3 majority vote in the state council particularly in homogenous regional State is very simple and the right of secession may be very easy and less complex (Tsegaye, 2004).

### Ethnic Based Federalism and the Intensification of Ethnic Conflict

According to International Crisis Group Report (2009), for the last two decades, due to ethnicization of the whole political discourse has resulted ethnic conflicts in different parts of the country. Several thousand people were killed in inter-ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia between 1991 and 2005. For Aalen (2011) and Abbink (1997 and 2010), ethnicity strongly politicized and majority of conflicts now doubled. Fights about identity are being waged in order to establish the borders of districts and zones in SNNP. Ethnic conflict over the control of resources like grazing land, water and struggle for autonomy against the central government domination were normal. Most violent conflicts (for example between pastoral Garri and Gabbra, Somali and Afar, the Oromo and Somali, the pastoral Nuer and Anywaa, the Bertha and Gumuz, the ‘highland settlers’ and Anywaa) are allegedly to assert constitutional right (Mehari, 2004:56).

Conflicts at the local level often arise from the historical animosity between the so called indigenous population and “highlanders” i.e. those coming from the north to the ‘periphery’. Examples of such conflicts can be found in various regions including SNNPR, Gambella or Benishangul/Gumuz (Asnake, 2008).

The major problems of the Ethiopian ethnic federalism have been outlined by Turton (2006:5) who says that “it was decided that each major subnational group should be dominant in one, and only one, regional state. Local conflicts are more prevalent at local/regional level than at national level. It means that the banners of ethnic federalism by EPRDF has localized and intensify ethnic conflicts.

A puzzle after the advent of a new government in 1991 under the aegis of the rural insurgent movement Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) that ended the long civil war, promising a solution to the ‘national question’ in Ethiopia and adiffusion of ethnic and regional tensions (Abbink, 2006:2). For Clapham (2004:53), “redefinition of Ethiopia along ethnic lines has created conflicts of its own, especially over the demarcation of the territories of the different federal units.”

In the current Ethiopia, Ethnic federalism is an artificial and fuelling for intensification of intra-regional, inter-ethnic and inter-regional inter-ethnic conflicts. The adoption of ethnic federalism in
Ethiopia has created unjust relationships between different Nationalities over the last twenty seven years. As stated by Alemante (2012:2), the first great and real danger of Ethiopian state along ethnic lines is balkanization of the country. Ethnic Federalism is in itself ill-suited to Ethiopia's circumstances. Semahagn (2012:173) also supported Alemante’s idea in the following manner. The institutionalization of ethnicity, social relations have become more and more ethnic oriented, the bias and prejudice of people to ‘other’ ethnic groups is increasing and clear tensions are emerging for controlling of political power and economic resources among the elites of different ethnic groups.

Federalism has come to be seen as a way to accommodate territorially based ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences in divided societies, while maintaining the territorial integrity of existing states. A federal arrangement that formally recognizes ethno linguistic diversity to help manage divisions can also pave the way for eventual disintegration (Jan, 2009:3). Horowitz (1985: 602) noted that the “skillful division of authority between regions or states and a center has the potential to reduce conflict. EPRDF's ethnic federalism emphasizing rights of Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples is absolutely opposed to the ideology of nationalism and a "Greater Ethiopia. In the FDRE, ethnic groups are identified, territorially fixed and "kililawinet" and are handed over to ethnic parties. Unions and professional associations also are forced to organize on an ethnic basis. This is in contrast to democratic countries where the free play of class, gender, ethnic, and other interests all are subordinated to the respect of the universal and inclusive attributes of citizenship (Theodore, 1999:165).

The main critics of multi-ethnic or multi-national federalism usually fail to note that the major federal failures, including the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Nigeria, were, in practice, sham or pseudo-federations. All of the communist and post-colonial federations that broke apart were economically weak (Tesfaye, 2010:8).

The undemocratic nature of the regime is mainly due to the fact that the ideological background of the federal system is the Stalinist model of federalism that was responsible for the disintegration of the former USSR and Yugoslavia. (Semahagn, 2012:173).

One of the negative consequences the 1995 FDRE constitution is its tendency to restrict freedom of movement and discrimination of “non-native” residents. Because of the creation of "kililawinet"the mobility of the people is automatically constrained particularly regions that are known by homogeneity. In this case meritocracy is not criteria to be employed in governmental organizations after 1995 in each regional state. Rather he/she should speak the working language of that particular regional state is the duty to be employed in that region in the current Ethiopia. This is the fact that, each regional state have the right to choose their working language in their sphere of authority.

The Existence of Dominant Top down Politics

Constitutionally, Ethiopia is a federal polity, but its federal units are controlled by the strongly centralized EPRDF that predetermines decisions from the capital to remote rural kebelles (ICG, 2009:19). The establishment of a federal system along ethnic lines can be seen as a part of EPRDF’s strategy to consolidate its dominant party rule (Abbink, 1997).

The federal regions, organized along ethnic lines, purportedly enjoyed increased autonomy, with greater local control over fiscal and political issues. In keeping with EPRDF strategy, ethnicity became the foci of regional government and party activity with basic services and social organization based on tribal affiliations. In truth, however, the Front imposed a monolithic pattern on the political life of the regions. In every regional government, a shadow party organization operated as a disciplined phalanx to carry out the will of the EPRDF leadership (Theodor, 1999:125).

The EPRDF’s ability to influence local decisions stems from its involvement in the establishment of the regional parties. The core regions of Tigray, Amhara, Oromiya and SNNPR are firmly held by the TPLF-dominated coalition. Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), Oromo People’s Democratic Organization (OPDO) and Southern Ethiopian People’s Democratic Front (SEPDF) leaders have built their careers on personal links with Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF)/EPRDF mentors (ICG, 2009:20).

According to Alem (2005:2), Ethiopia’s federal system is ade facto one party state in which ethnic organizations are mere satellites of one ethnic organization of TPLF. The TPLF is the leading
unit in the multiethnic ruling coalition. However, the arrogance and hegemony interest of TPLF officials to dominate key decision making positions in the country mainly positions of foreign affairs, National Security and Intelligence, Immigration etc. create tension, suspicion and resentment of OPDO and ANDM officials against the TPLF.

EPRDF’s strategy is to win political control of the core of Ethiopia’s federal system, regions of Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, and SNNPRS. In terms of the establishment of parties, therefore, it has adopted a different strategy towards the peripheral regions lying outside this core area, facilitating the establishment of organizations which have become allies rather than members of the Front. Thus in the regions of Afar, Somali, Harar, Benishangul-Gumuz and Gambella, the governing parties are affiliated to the EPRDF-umbrella. The respective parties are Afar National Democratic Party (ANDP), Somali People’s Democratic Party (SPDP), Harari National League (HNL), Benishangul/Gumuz Peoples Democratic Unity Front (BGPDUF), and Gambella Peoples Democratic Party (GPDP) (SIDA, 2003:43).

A common interpretation of why the EPRDF introduced ethnic federalism is that it was a way of institutionalizing the principle of “divide and rule” and ensuring the ruling party’s position (Aalen, 2002:16 and Mahari, 2006:12).

In this case, TPLF successfully and systematically managed and controlled states and the federal government through these pseudo satellites parties. One of the big headaches of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia today is, it highly encourages the creation and organization of political parties based on ethnic lines. The federal regions, organized along ethnic lines, purportedly enjoyed increased autonomy, with greater local control over fiscal and political issues. In keeping with EPRDF strategy, ethnicity became the foci of regional government and party activity with basic services and social organization based on tribal affiliations (Theodore, 1999:125). EPRDF’s ethnic project as creating deep division among the various ethnic groups of the country and it is weakening the unity of the country. Due to such lack of legitimacy, both political groupings are waging different struggles including armed insurrections against the Ethiopian regime (Semahagn, 2012:172).

Ethiopia is experimenting Soviet style ethnic federal system since 1991 as a mechanism to address the challenges related to accommodation of ethnic diversity in the country. The success or failure of such experiment shall have its own positive and negative signals to the continent that has been troubled by different socio political setbacks (Ibid).

The federal state is all powerful, retaining political control and financial economic resources at the center, but declines responsibility for the emergence, or even production, of local conflicts between ethnic communities on the regional or local levels, of which there have been dozens since the early 1990s (Abbink, 2006:3). Critics of decentralizing power to the “killils” believe that the federal policy has more to do with divide-and-rule tactics and the allocation of national resources, than justice for the regions (Theodore, 1999:125).

Another factor contributing to the strong position of the EPRDF is that the boundary between the party and the state bureaucracy is blurred. This enables the ruling party to utilize the state administration for its own purpose, from the federal all the way down to the local level (Aalen, 2006:9). The defeat of such a vision by ethnic stridency will only embroil all Ethiopians in further destruction and civil war, with all their attendant consequences greater impoverishment, human rights violations, more refugees, and environmental degradation (Alemante, 2012:9).

EPRDF’s centralized party organization, regional and local governments cannot run their own affairs without intervention from central party officials, and hence, the federal division of power is diluted. The centralized party rule has temporarily blocked the larger ethnic uprisings that were prevalent during the previous regimes (Aalen, 2006:19).

Ethiopia is facing the typical features of a weak state, lack of trust in the state leads to the abuse of power, the state adopts authoritarian practices which contradict the objectives manifested in the Constitution and the promise of regional autonomy and simultaneous exercise of central control (Ibid). On the other hand, Kidane (2001:5-6) argues that, Ethiopia’s Government has failed to devolve real power to regions. These indications are; A) excessive financial dependence of regional governments B) EPRDF’s creation of ethnic based satellite parties, which run the regional
governments under the EPRDF’s guidance and parties become vehicles by which EPRDF exercise indirect rule over the whole country. C) TPLF’s continued dominance in EPRDF.

The federal government has exercised increasing control over the autonomous regions, thus excluding locals from political participation. The extensive control may have been necessary for state security; however, it is further eroding the trust in the government and alienating local people from politics (Frank, 2009:11).

Edmond Keller (2002:46) explained that, Ethiopia as a putting together federation. Currently, the federal government has the power to decide which ethnic group has the right to a proper administration. Likewise, Aalen argues a federation cannot be genuine if it is a result of coercion/domination of the center (2006:244).

According to Semahagn (2012:6), due to institutionalization of ethnicity, social relations have become more and more ethnic oriented, the bias and prejudice of people to ‘other’ ethnic groups is increasing and clear tensions are emerging for controlling of political power and economic resources among the elites of different ethnic groups.

Election officials instructing voters for whom to vote, candidates campaigning at polling stations, and candidates being pressured into quitting. There were also credible reports of ballot stuffing, vote count fraud, voter intimidation or bribery, dismissals from work, withholding of salaries, detentions, abductions, and killings (SIDA, 2003:64). The federal and NRS parliamentary elections showed widespread government intimidation, harassment, detentions and even killings of opposition party members and sympathizers (Ibid).

As stated by Kymlicka (2004:11), the failure of unitary systems to accommodate the claims and address the concerns of ethno cultural communities compelled many states to change from a unitary system to a federal system. Recent history illustrates the EPRDF’s overwhelming dominance at the ballot box. The first multiparty regional and district (woreda) elections, held on 21 June 1992, failed to offer an alternative. The OLF, the all Amhara Peoples’ Organization Party and other ethno national parties from the transitional government withdrew at the last minute, because their candidates faced intimidation, violence and fraud (ICG, 2009:11).

Currently, the political party structure in Ethiopia is fully, characterized by the extreme domination of EPRDF through its satellite party channels. Opposition parties have faced with dilemmas and no room for them. For instance, in the 2014/2015 election out of the 547 seats in the House of Peoples Representatives, the EPRDF holds 547. EPRDF won all seats of the parliament. In this case, EPRDF may be the only Party in the world that won hundred percent of the seats of parliament in the history of election ii Aalen Lovise (2006), explicitly elaborated as “election without competition”.

Absence of Federalist Political Culture

Many commentators have observed that federal systems of government are inherently fragile even without adding ethnicity into the mix (Alemante, 2003:7). The problem of Ethnic federalism is an absence of political will to fully implement real federal structures and materialize its policies in daily life (Jan, 2011:3). The worrying aspect of ethnicity is that it is overshadowing our common humanity and sense of citizenship since people’s ethnic consciousness tends to reduce their concern for human rights or public morality (Ghai and Cottrell, 2008). In countries where ethnic identity has been institutionalized, the social bondage that was binding society has been eroded and replaced with a very narrow ethnic identity. Since ethnic politics assumes in differences, it does not give much attention to our common humanity and history (Semahagn, 2012:174).

The EPRDF succeeded to promote ethnic and cultural expression, but it has failed to foster a voluntary Pan Ethiopian identity (Abbink, 2006: 393). According to Aalen (2006:18), Ethiopia today lacks two basic pre-conditions for mitigating ethnic conflicts in federal states: a democratic system of governance and an inclusive and sustainable pan national identity.

Due to EPRDF’s grip in every corner of the country and its suppression of opposition, it can be argued that the Ethiopian federation, like the Soviet and Yugoslav federations, is maintained by force
Wildavsky (1998), explicitly elaborates, federalism requires mutuality, not command, multiple rather than single causation, a sharing instead of a monopoly of power.

Political tribalism increases the risks for ethnic conflict. Contrary, the state counteracts political tribalism by supporting interethnic networks. According to Assefa (2006), the Ethiopian federation presents us with an apparent paradox. For David Turton (2006:29), Ethiopia's ethnic federalism at risk of failure 'not because it is too ethnic, but because it is not sufficiently federal. Likewise, Christopher Clapham puts the principal Shadow that hangover Ethiopian federation is that cast by the model on which it was largely based that of the Soviet Union. Nowadays in Ethiopia ethnic federalism has sharpened differences among Ethiopian ethnic groups. Ethnic federalism strongly destroyed the interest of Ethiopian people the sense of unity, oneness and cooperation.

Jan (2011:3) cited from Solomon Negussie (2008), distribution of wealth in Ethiopia is a matter of unequal manipulations as the Tigray region with a tiny population and lack of natural resources gets significant incomes compared to overpopulated Oromia, the richest region of Ethiopia. Marie (2006:11) also supported Solomon's idea. The available data on regional allocation from government controlled sources clearly demonstrates the rough distribution of national resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>Capital expenditures</th>
<th>Federal subsidies</th>
<th>Foreign loan and aid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amhara</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oromia</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNNP</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tigray</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Marie

The regional per capita capital expenditures, federal subsidies and foreign loans/aid that can be inferred from the March 2001 Report of the Ethiopian Central Statistical Authority, are reported in the above Table. "The Tigray region’s per capita share of the federal subsidy is consistently higher than Oromia, Amhara and SNNP regions, which constitute more than 80% of the country's population. The same is true for capital expenditures per capita as well as foreign loan and aid per capita. (...) In fact, the capital expenditure per capita for Tigray is two to three times greater than Oromia." On the other hand.

Economically, EFFORT was established in 1995. Sectors of activity include, but are not limited to: agriculture (Hiwet Mechanization); Trading (Guna Trading House); Cement production (Mesebo Cement Factory, authorized capital 240 million birr as at August 1996); Textiles and Garmenting (Almeda Factory, authorized capital 180 million birr); Livestock and leather (Sheba Tannery, authorized capital 40 million birr); Mining and exploration (Meskerem, Ezana); Transport and public transport (Trans Ethiopia Share Co., TESCO, authorized capital 100 million birr; Selam Bus Co.); Engineering, construction, and consultancy (Mesfin Engineering; Sur Construction, authorized capital 100 million birr; Addis Consultancy, Addis Engineering); and the Finance sectors (Wegagen Bank, Africa Insurance) (SIDA, 2003:55-56).

In the Militaryaspect, there has been speculation regarding the likely reorganization of the military, and its lines of command since 2001 following the replacement as Chief of Staff of the widely liked General Tsadkan Gebre-Tensaeby General Samora, and the imprisonment of the popular military leader and vocal dissident Siye Abraha (Sida, 2003:53).

In my view, there might be people who argue that, currently, this number of Generals from Tigray is not sound because recently, some slightly balancing measures are taken by the government. But still the military is not neutral from party politics. Recently, because of the ongoing protest of
Oromia and Amhara, the military take blind and painful actions against innocent civilians in Oromia and Amhara regions. I have no doubt, the military is loyal for the ruling party. In line with this, Yoseph (2017:4), described that, Ethiopia has no national army. The entire military apparatus is a direct extension of the ruling party and instead of safeguarding the national security interest, the Ethiopian military’s allegiance has been to the Tigray People Liberation Front.

I personally believe that, all Tigrians are not beneficiaries of TPLF/EPRDF rather, those who have family ties with officials are the main rent seekers of the regime. In contrary, majority of the peasants exist under poverty like other farmers in Ethiopia. Absence of independent media in Tigray is worse than the rest of Ethiopia. This is due to the fact that, if the people get access to media and information, TPLF fail to get support from the people of Tigray. One of the highest TPLF official General Samora Yenussaid that, “TPLF means Tigray people and Tigray people means TPLF”. General Samora’s of merging Tigray people with TPLF and advocate TPLF as an end for the existence of Tigray People. The ultimate objective of his speech is to segregate the people of Tigray and create grievance with rest of Ethiopian people to sustain their political power. The reality is that, before TPLF/EPRDF came to power, the people of Tigray existed peacefully for many years in different successive regimes with their fellow Ethiopians. Some activists oppose TPLF in Tigray, for instance the chairperson of Arena Tigray Party Abraha Desta, his colleagues Andom G/Selassie and Asegede G/Selassie etc… are still loudly shouting their voice towards the injustice done by TPLF/EPRDF. In line with this, resentment has recently intensified even in Tigray, where parts of the population feel the TPLF is composed of faraway elites no longer representing their communal interests and interested only in making money and investing it in the capital or abroad (ICG, 2012:6).

According to Gorge Anderson (2007), for federalsuccess, there should be first, shared identity and respect for difference second, rule of law and third, federal techniques (fiscal federalism, ethnic and lagunagelaws, décentralisation; consocialtionalism) are very important.

As I have mentioned, federalism is a covenant and bargain between the federal government and the constituent units in the distribution of genuine political, cultural and economic powers. The ultimate objective of adopting federalism is to accommodate different values, promote diversity and to narrow disparities. However, for the success of federal political system in a given state there should not be marked inequality in political, economic and cultural aspects between the regional governments of a federal state and all should enjoy equal status in respect of their powers (symmetric federalism) though not in respects of their territorial and demographic compositions.

The factor of disparity may create remnants and has its destructive effects on the political behavior of governments. EPRDF should distribute legitimate power for regions based on the principle of equity and fairness. Accordingly, unequal distribution of political power and resource, this will lead the country into tension and conflict one over the other and finally may lead the country in to unconditional political unrest.

The rise of the question of Identity

Ethnic nationalism emerged right after the EPRDF took power in 1991. Some violent interethnic conflicts in Ethiopia have been taking place between the Surma and the Dizi, the Shaka and the Bench Maji, Borana and Guji, Anuak and Nuer, between Somali on the one hand, and the Afar and Oromo on the other (Belachew, 2009:11). To preserve its power, EPRDF abandoned any meaningful implementation of federalism and, behind the façade of devolution, adopted a highly centralized system that has exacerbated identity-based conflicts (ICG, 2012:6). Recognition of group (collective) right can be understood as a corollary of the liberal principle that all human beings should be treated with equal respect and concern (Taylor, 1997: 235-245). Territorial recognition of minorities through the adoption (or strengthening) of federalism may intuitively seem to be the best way to manage ethno-linguistic conflicts but, in the long run, such recognition perpetuates and strengthens the differences between groups and provides minority nationalists with the institutional tools for eventual secession (Jan, 2009:2-3).
Belachew (2009:11) explained that, EPRDF has created a serious rivalry between the Amhara and the Tigrayans, and has increased the discontent of the Amhara and Oromo. The more public discontent, the more Tigrayanisation of Ethiopian politics; the more Tigrayanization, the more other ethnic groups become discontent.

TPLF forcefully annexed Wolkait, Tegede, Telemt and Humera from the Amhara district of Gondar to Tigray to build “the Great Republic of Tigray” TPLF leaders envisioned in 1976 (Achamyeleh, 2017, 31). Amhara Complained that their historical lands such as Wolkite, Tegede, Humera, Tselemete, Raya-Azebo, and Metekel were forcefully annexed by other states in pretext of ethnic based federalism (Tirfe,2017).

Identity politics in the modern world, the demands of territorially concentrated national minorities for national recognition and self-government are amongst the most difficult for democracies to accept and accommodate. Since Russia contains dozens of such minority nationalisms, it provides a particularly instructive example of how these demands should, and should not, be accommodated(Kymlicka, 2000:377).

According to Assefa(2012:4),democracy and federalism are also strongly linked. Indeed, it is difficult to envisage genuine federalism’s success without democracy. The EPRDF succeeded to promote ethnic and cultural expression, but it has failed to simultaneously foster a voluntary pan-Ethiopian identity. It has thus neglected the claim for unity made by many Ethiopians (Abbink, 2006: 393).The majority of conflicts now dubbed ‘ethnic’ in Ethiopia are about boundaries between territorialized ethnic groups. Fights about identity are being waged in order to establish the borders of districts and zones, and the ‘identity’ professed by local people is the deciding element (Aalen, 2002:1).

One of the negative consequences of holding together (ethno-linguistic) federalism is its tendency to restrict freedom of movement and discrimination of nonnative residents. The ethnic boundaries created by the federal constitution of Ethiopia have legitimized the resistance to spontaneous inter-ethnic migration. Such resistance (for example from Anywaas to the Nuers, and from Ari to the Mursi migration) sometimes has lead to confrontation and violent conflicts (Mehari, 2008:24) However, despite this system of ethnic federalism under which the country is divided into ethnically defined regions and Zones, in almost all cases, displacement was triggered by conflict between different ethnic groups over access to political power or scarce resources such as water and pastoral or agricultural land(Global IDP Data Base,2009:9).

As the experiences of the former Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia demonstrate, rival citizenships cannot coexist at least not for a long time in the same political space (Alemante, 2003:39).

Moreover, as Weiner and Katzenstein (1981) correctly pointed out in the Indian case, ethno-linguistic federalist political arrangement favors the members of the native ethno-cultural communities (son of the soil) than the settlers who consider themselves as ‘migrant citizens’. Article 32 of the federal constitution of Ethiopia explicitly stipulates that freedom of movement and residence within the federation is a fundamental human right. Nonetheless, it is also necessary to notice that freedom of movement and residence is not only about freedom to move and reside but it is also the freedom to remain in the place of one’s choice. It includes the freedom ‘not to move’. Freedom of movement and residence is a protection against forced displacement and unlawful eviction (UNHRC 1994: par. 7; Beyani 2000: 57).

One of the demerits of Ethnic based federalism is, it constrains freedom of movement and discrimination of non-native residents as a result of ethnic boundaries are created by the FDRE constitution legitimized the resistance to spontaneous interethnic migration.

According to Kalin (2003:9), Ethnic based sub-national governments exacerbate minority problems whenever they are unable to integrate or even tolerate persons on their territory who are of a different Ethno linguistic origin.In fact, in ethno linguistic federalism like that of India opening more opportunity for the indigenous inhabitants of regional states is taken as sign of success of ethno linguistic federalism (Weiner and Katzenstein 1981: 121-135).
For Mahari (2008:42), the three major bottlenecks of Ethiopian Federal System are violations of human rights of minority groups and internal migrants are encountered as result of lack of understanding or political will of regional state officials to strictly implement the federal constitution.

Indeed, as Ethiopia's experience indicates, when the state deliberately uses ethnicity as a source of political identity, citizens who might not have been aware of their ethnicity will regroup under its banners purporting to be a distinct people. The formal division of a country into so many ethnic substates is thus bound to create strong incentives for members of each ethnic community to live in what they will perceive as their own sub-state (Alemane, 2003:37). The largest and most populous multicultural federation worldwide, India at best testifies that diversity in embracing the values to compose the state human rights policy is first of all historically and culturally driven (Lidija:12). Since 1995, enormous space has been given to ethnicity and ethnic principles appearing to be the most decisive when it comes to the decision-making process or political competition. A vast number of political parties still arise from ethnically defined movements (Jan, 2011:1). The 'holding together' aspect of the federation and the emphasis on right to self-rule of nationalities in Ethiopia has brought new challenges. Since there has been considerable population movement in many parts of Ethiopia. In redrawing the regional states, the issue of where the physical border between nationalities should be drawn has aroused immense concern (Assefa, 2012:18-19). Political, communal and ethnic tensions are rampant as Ethiopia struggles to develop a post-imperial society that has to deal with diversity, deep-seated political conflict, and entrenched inequality inherited from the past (Abbnik, 2006:2).

Fights about identity are being waged in order to establish the borders of districts and zones, and the identity professed by local people is the deciding element. The government often claims that groups clashed spontaneously as in the tragic Guji-Gedeo conflict of 1998-99 but this obfuscates the generative dynamics of conflict behavior in rural settings (Abbnik, 2006:10).

After ethnic/ethno-linguistic identity was accorded an organizing role in the determination of boundaries and policies, the new political dispensation (Clapham, 2002) was quickly used as a means to make claims to resources on the national (state) level and the local level (especially land and government funding).

Conclusions

Ethiopia has 3,000 years history and known the mosaic of Nationalities. Following the demise of Derge in 1991 EPRDF came to power and adopted federal state structure to address the question of Nationalities or “Ye BiherBiheresebTiyaque”. One of the unique features of Ethiopian ethno-linguistic federalism is constitutional arbiter. The Constitution is interpreted by non-judiciary institution of the upper House. In contrast in other federations constitutional interpretation mandate is given for the judiciary organ. Members of the HoF federation are elected by regional legislative body or State Council. In this case, the HoF is the defender of the compact of the federal constitution. The other peculiar features is the House of federation has little part in law making and absence of judicial review power. Currently in Ethiopia, Ethnic federalism is an artificial and fuelling for intensification of intra-regional, inter-ethnic and inter-regional inter-ethnic conflicts. The adoption of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia has created unjust relationships between different Nationalities over the last twenty seven years. The political party structure in Ethiopia is characterized by the extreme domination of EPRDF through its satellite party channels. Ethnic based federalism destroyed the sense of unity, oneness and cooperation.

The other feature of Ethiopian federalism is, the constitution officially allowed secession as unconditional right for Nations, Nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia.

For the success of federal political system, there should not be marked inequality in political, economic and cultural aspects between regions (states) of a federal state and States should enjoy equal status in respect of their powers. The factor of disparity may create destructive effects on the political behavior of governments. Power should be genuinely distribute for regions based on the principle of equity and fairness. The existence of unequal distribution of power, will lead into tension, conflict and eventually lead the country in to unconditional political unrest and turmoil.
Reference


Aregawi Berhe.----------. ethnic federalism in ethiopia: genuine federalism or divide and rule?

Asnake Kefale. (2008). Federalism and Autonomy Conflicts in the Benishangul-Gumuz Region,


Lidija R. BastaFleiner. _____ Nation building and diversity (analytical summary of work sessions 1 and 13)


Marijke Frank. 2009. Effects of Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia. Holding Together or Splitting Apart?


TesfaBihonegn (2014): Federalization with a Constitutional Guarantee to Secession: Controversies, Paradoxes and Imponderables in Ethiopia, Regional & Federal Studies, DOI.

The constitution of India.

The constitution of the United States of America.


