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# **Restructuring State and Society: Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia**

**Berhanu Gutema Balcha**

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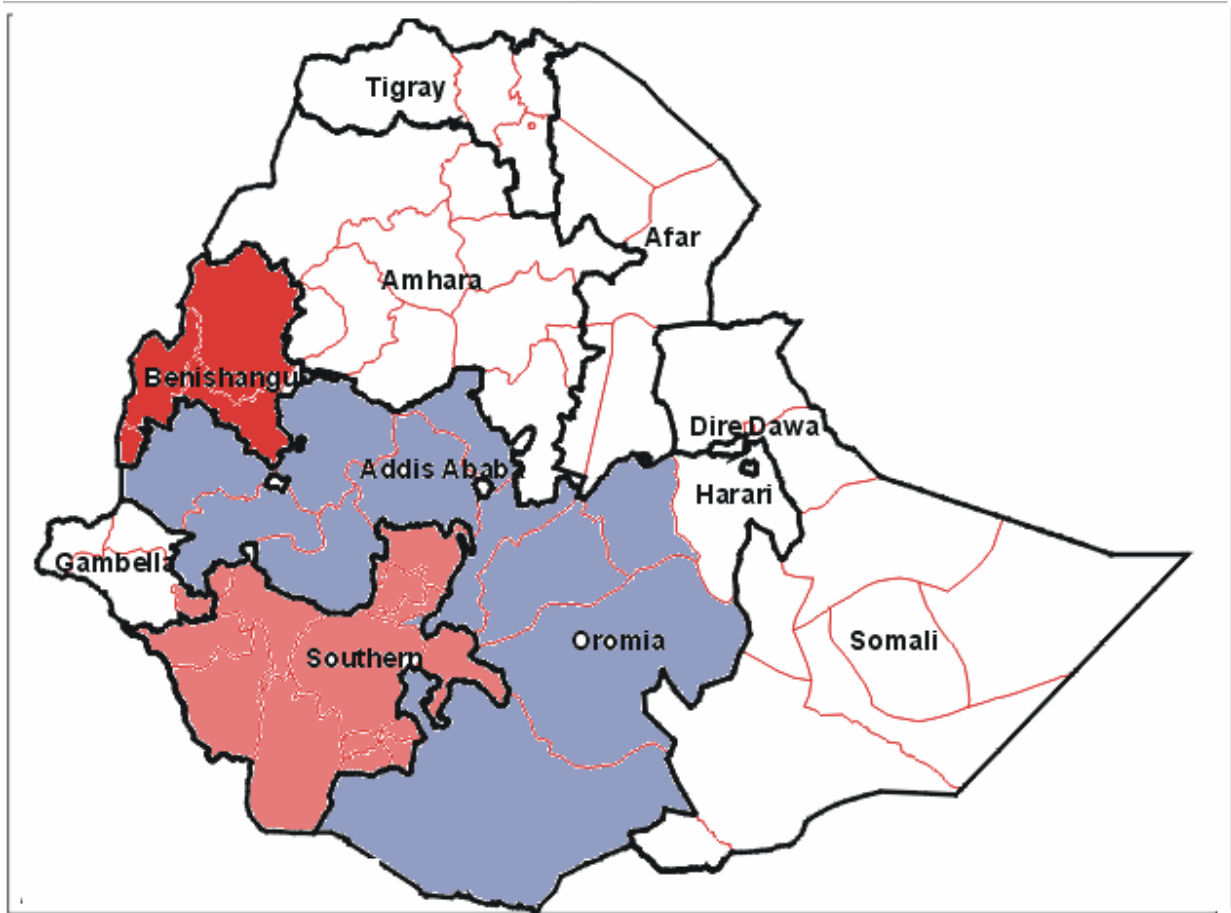
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# Restructuring State and Society: Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia



PhD dissertation  
Berhanu Gutema Balcha

Institute of History, International and Social Studies  
Aalborg University  
September 2006



# Restructuring State and Society: Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation explores and examines the process and structure of ethnic federal arrangement in Ethiopia. Ethiopia contains about 70 million people and approximately about 80 ethnic and linguistic groups. The “ethnic- federal” experiment of devolving public sector powers to ethnic groups goes against the centralized nation-building project of the previous regimes. The previous regimes used a different model; they gave much emphasis to ‘Ethiopian nationalism’ as a unifying concept and promoted centralization rather than regional or ethnic autonomy.

However, in 1991, the new ruling group in power, who had started their movement for the liberation of their ethnic region from the central Ethiopian administration, has advocated ethnic- federalism by stressing that it could empower and equalize the diverse ethnic communities and reduce conflict. As a result, the overall centralized structure of the previous regime has been replaced by a “federal” system’ consists of nine ethnically and regionally delimited states with various ethnic self-administrative constituencies that could exercise their own political power and legal personalities. Thus, ethnicity and federalism have become the major factors in organizing the political and territorial space in the country.

Since the introduction of the ethnic federal project in 1991, there have been wide-ranging claims especially by many Ethiopian intellectuals that the ethnic federal structure would collapse in a short time and the country could immerse into ethnic conflict. Despite these claims, however, the ethnic federal arrangement has survived for more than a decade. This short period of survival may not be enough to assure the continuation or sustainability of the system; nevertheless it triggers an interest to understand how it has able to survive and also to engage in finding the possible explanations regarding the pattern and trend of the restructuring process. Thus, this study made a close exploration and examination of the process in order to determine whether ethnic federal formula in Ethiopia is an appropriate model to empower and equalize the diverse and disparate ethnic groups in the context of united and workable Ethiopia state.



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Berhanu Gutema Balcha  
Aalborg University, 2006

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## Acronyms and Glossary

AAPO	All Amhara People's Organization
ALF	Afar Liberation Front
ANDM	Amhara Nation Democratic Movement
BGBDUP	Benishangul Gumuz People's Democratic United Party
BGRS	Benishangul Gumuz Regional State
BoFED	Bureau of Finance and Economic Development
BoPED	Bureau of Planning and Economic Development
BPLM	Benishangul People's Liberation Movement
CUD	Coalition for Unity and Democracy
Eder	Self-help community association
EHRCO	Ethiopian Human Rights Council
EPDM	Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement
EPLF	Eritrean People's Liberation Front's
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
EPRP	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party
ETA	Ethiopian Teachers' Association
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
HF	House of the Federation
HPR	House of People's Representatives
Kebele	The lowest village or neighborhood level of administration
MoFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
MEDaC	Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation
NEB	National Election Board
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
ONU	Oromo National Congress
OPDO	Oromo People's Democratic Organisation
PDOs	People Democratic Organisations
REST	Relief Society of Tigray
SPDO	Sidama People's Democratic Organisation
SEPDC	Southern Ethiopia Peoples' Democratic Coalition
SEPDF	Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Front
SNNP	Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples
SPDO	Sidama People's Democratic Organization
SPDUO	Siltie Peoples' Democratic United Party
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
TAND	Tigrayan Alliance for National Democracy
TDA	Tigray Development Association
TGE	Transitional Government of Ethiopia
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Front
UEDF	United Ethiopian Democratic Forces
Wereda	District administration
Wegagoda	a common name created by the EPRDF for the four ethnic groups (for Welayita, Gamo, Gofa and Dawero) in the SNNP:

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# **Chapter One: Introduction, the Problem and Methodology**

## ***1.1 Introduction***

Since 1991, the ideology of ethnic autonomy or ethnic entitlement has become a foundation in restructuring the state in Ethiopia. The centralized state structure and political thinking that had survived for more than a century has been replaced by new kinds of political ‘ambitions’ and ‘aspirations’ based on regional and ethnic autonomy. The overthrow of the military government by ethnically-based armed rebellion front of the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) has opened a trajectory for restructuring the State on a different ideology, which is described as ethnic federalism. In this new trajectory, ethnicity and federalism have become a twin vocabulary of the new group in power to organize politics and society in Ethiopia. Except for the few ethnic groups who have already engaged in armed struggle, for the majority it was totally a sudden awakening occasion. The new ruling elites openly and blatantly argued that the Ethiopia state had been built on subjugation and disrespect of the various ethnic groups that constituting the state, therefore they advised for rejecting the ‘Old Ethiopia’ and to replace it with the ‘New Ethiopia’ which would recognize and respect their existence and identity in equality. The ‘Old Ethiopian’ identity was depicted as the mirror image of a particular group cultural and ethnic trait which lack to reflect the genuine Pan-Ethiopian identity. Consequently, according to the emerged new ideology Ethiopia is equated with the anthology of its ethnic groups that have an unconditional right for self-government and including secession.

Ethnicity, which was associated with narrow-nationalism, tribalism or conspirators’ agenda by the previous regimes, has been treated by the new ruling elites as the emancipator and valuable asset to be protected and promoted. As Markakis states that ‘overnight, ethnicity became a legitimate and preferred principle of political organization, and provided the foundation for a reconstructed Ethiopian state’ (Markakis 1998: 139). As a result, the construction of a new political system and administrative structures has been undertaken on the bases of ethnic autonomy and ethnic equality that promised a right for every ethnic group to have its own administrative unit as well as a right to develop and promote its identity and language.

The new group in power proclaims that the nationality question in Ethiopia is closely linked to the question of democracy and thus it is the necessary outcome of democracy to allow nationalities to administer their own affairs. It considers the process as the only alternative for the survival of the country and to keep intact as a multiethnic state by creating ethnic equality and thus discouraging separatist tendencies and conflicts associated with ethnic dissatisfactions.

Ethiopia contains about 70 million people and approximately about 80 ethnic and linguistic groups. The 'ethnic- federal' experiment of devolving public sector powers to ethnic groups goes against the centralized nation-building project of the previous regimes. The previous regimes used a different model; they gave much emphasis to 'Ethiopian nationalism' as a unifying concept and promoted centralization rather than regional or ethnic autonomy. The rule of the emperor was based on absolutism and concentration of power on the king himself through a patrimonial network of power, resource and privilege accumulation and distribution system that benefits the rulers and their few collaborators at local, regional and central levels with very little ethnic references. The major orientation of the imperial state was to use the state power for voracious appropriation of resources mainly from the peasantry in order to reward the few ruling nobilities, viceroy and their clienteles that maintain the survival of the highly centralised state. Although the brutality of appropriation and mode of domination differ from place to place due to the historical process and mode of incorporation into the centralized state structure, the expansion toward the south accompanied with the assertion of cultural superiority of the Orthodox Christian core, the serfdom and slavery of the people of the south and the extraction of resources (Donham 2002: 01, Clapham 2002: 10, Teshale 1995: 176, Bahiru 1994, Messay 1995). As the emperor was a theoretical owner of all land in Ethiopia, many of the southern Ethiopian peasantry were turned in to serfs in their own land when the 'ownership' of their land was transferred to the nobilities and loyal followers of the imperial authority. Though the predatory state had showed inconsequential favouritism based on ethnicity, it promoted 'state nationalism' and 'national integration' of course, with the perception of national identity as the mirror-image of the *Shoan* ruling elite's ethnic and cultural manifestations such as Amharic language, Orthodox Christianity, self-proclaimed moral superiority and military triumph over others. However, it is undeniable that language proficiency plays a significant role to determine better access to education and employment by putting in a disadvantageous situation those groups whose language is not used in employment and education.

The military regime, after 1974, repeatedly stressed that it preferred 'socialist' solution to the nationalities question but promoted militaristic nationalism by means of authoritarian and strongly centralized political system. It initiated, however, few measures like broadcasting radio programmes in Afar, Somali, *Oromiffa* and *Tigrigna* language, establishing national research institution for studying nationalities and drawing a new internal boundary based on ethno-territorial bases. It also made a radical shift in landownership in 1975, particularly in the southern part of Ethiopia by destroying the exploitative and unjust land appropriation of the nobility and others. Although the radical change abolished serfdom by distributing the land to the peasants, land remained the property of the state and thus made the peasantry highly intervened and controlled by the state. Nevertheless, it did not make any attempt to link ethnic rights with politics or governance issues. Rather without any regional or ethnic prejudices, it imposed its greater centralization and brutal governance system, controlled at the core by junior military officers regardless of their ethnic affiliation or orientations. Militaristic state nationalism blended with socialism was promoted by hoping to obliterate regional and ethnic movements, however, excessive centralization backed by ruthless coercion did not abate regional and ethnic movements. Rather, it exacerbated internal turmoil and massive resentment of the population, which provided a good opportunity for the expansion of ethnonational movements that finally overrun the state's centre in 1991 by defeating the military regime.

In 1991, the new ruling group in power, who had started their movement for the liberation of their ethnic region from the central Ethiopian administration, has advocated ethnic- federalism by stressing that it could empower and equalize the diverse ethnic communities and reduce conflict. Thus, ethnic federalism is considered as the only alternative for assuring the survival of the country as a united, peaceful and democratic entity. As a result, the overall centralized structure of the previous regime has been replaced by a 'federal' system' consists of nine ethnically and regionally delimited states with various ethnic self-administrative constituencies that could exercise their own political power and legal personalities. Generally, the political structure is reorganized on the basis of constitutionally legitimised terms of 'nations, nationalities and peoples'.

As a result, ethnicity and federalism have become the major factors in organizing the political and territorial space in the country. However, it remains to be seen how far this social, territorial and political arrangements is really successful in transforming the Ethiopian state into a workable ethnic

federal model. Close exploration and examination of the process will determine whether ethnic federal formula in Ethiopia would be appropriate model to empower and equalize the diverse and disparate ethnic groups.

## **1.2 The Research Problem**

Structuring of society and politics on the basis of ethnicity has been viewed by many scholars as a risky approach for the reason that politicisation of ethnicity could excessively awaken ethnic consciousness and unleash ethnic groupings at the expense of shared identities and interspersed settlements (Horowitz 1985, Mammo 1998; Messay 1999, Clapham 2002). It is held that ethnic entitlements could give much more leverage to blood relationships and ascriptive loyalties in place of rights and duties (Kedourie 1993). It could also promote the rule of kin, instead of the rule of law, because ascribed ethnic solidarity is more important than merit and other achieving qualities in the ideology of ethnic entitlement therefore sharing the same genealogy will be a reassurance for assuming political leadership. Thus, ethnic entitlement can also be used by ethnic leaders to gather justification or legitimisation for autocratic rule in the name of their ethnic community, as the famous aphorism of John Stuart Mill echoed that: 'Free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities' (Mill, 1977: 547). Similarly, Ali A. Mazrui also asserts that the preponderance of affinitive or kinship ties within societies would pose formidable barriers to build tolerant multiethnic societies (Ali. A. Mazrui 1975: 67).

Moreover, emphasis on ethnic solidarity could justify the primacy of group rights over individual rights. Individuals would be differentiated first and foremost by their kinship identity and thus, their rights will be recognised primarily so far as they belong to a particular ethnic group; their right as individuals would become secondary or even unrecognisable without their ethnic domain. The individual therefore must belong to the group; there is heavy restriction to operate outside the bond of the group. This limits the liberty of individuals to freely choose their membership in any group based on their interests, aspirations or other preferences. As Hobsbawm argues 'ethnicity can mobilize the vast majority of its community- provided its appeal remains sufficiently vague or irrelevant' (Hobsbawm 1990: 170). It assumes that the rights and interests of the people would only be better managed through the leadership of their kin-persons by the mere assumption that members of the kin group would always operate within

evenly shared social, economic and political environments. Such ethnic structuring assumes that individual and his ethnic groups always operate within the same social, economic and political settings.

Moreover, ethnic entitlement could easily give a venue for the rise of ethnic elites into political power by exaggerating the benefit of genealogical solidarity, and construct the sense of 'us' and 'them' dichotomy. The ethnic elite could easily utilise the opportunity for acquiring political power through superficial and unchallenging support in the name of ethnic empowerment and ascriptive rights to political power, but in many cases simply to gain 'new strategic positions of power': places of employment, taxation, funds for development, political position and so on (Cohen 1969). It can also lead for personal enrichment and other benefits by ethnic elites through ethnic gerrymandering or manipulating and using ethnic causes to secure benefits and objectives (Mazrui 1975).

On the other hand, scholars concerned about ethnically fragmented societies suggest that in order to reduce ethnic tensions and conflicts, it is imperative for multiethnic states to engineer accommodative structure in order to achieve peaceful coexistence (O'Leary 2002, Lijphart 1994; 2002). A prominent scholar in the field of ethnicity, politics and power-sharing in multiethnic societies, Arend Lijphart (1994) advises for designing ethnic power sharing arrangements or consociational model in segmented or divided societies. According to Arend Lijphart that successful political accommodation of diverse ethnic groups could be achieved through recognition and devising appropriate institutions for accommodation and power sharing. In his discussion of consociational politics, Lijphart enumerated four necessary institutional arrangements in accommodating diversities. These are power sharing government (grand coalition), mutual veto, proportionality and segmental autonomy (Lijphart 1977). In his discussion Lijphart outlined the necessity to have proportional representation from all significant groups, a protection for minority groups and a territorial autonomy or non-territorial division of power or functional autonomy.

In line with Lijphart's argument other scholars suggest also that stability in culturally fragmented countries increases if these countries adopt a political system characterised by proportionality, grand coalition, federalism and strong veto points (Steiner et al 2003: 82). Ethnic federalism is suggested as a relatively preferable institutional arrangement in the case of geographically concentrated ethnic groups. Federalism can provide an autonomous space for power exercise and a space for expression for

territorially concentrated homogeneous ethnic groups. In such case it could reduce demands for separation and other tensions associated with secession. Although Lijphart's consociational democracy is criticized for its high reliance on the good will of elites, it may be used as a way in for engineering appropriate institutional structures in places where diverse ethnic groups are competing and fighting for controlling the state power.

In contrast, scholars like Donald Horowitz (1985 & 2002) and Basta Fleiner (2000) argue that ethnic federalism as a means to ensure ethnic self-government could further radicalise ethnic problem by turning ethnic demands into political principles rather than providing a remedy or cure. They argue that as ethnic federalism demands inter-ethnic coalition therefore it could be very unstable form of government, because ethnic elites could be possessed by their own sectional self-interest to pull apart the coalition or they could also be constrained by their ethnic community if they concede much for the sake of cooperation. Horowitz therefore argues that federalism should aim to create an integrative dynamics by encouraging ethnically heterogeneous groups or political units to work together within a shared structure that can provide incentives for inter-ethnic co-operation. For Horowitz, non-ethnic federal units could help to forge common interests, other than ethnic identities, among people living within the same federal units in order to compete against the other federal units beyond ethnic interests. Horowitz believes that the remedy for ethnic problem is institutionalisation of 'ethnically blind' structures and policies that could reduce or undermine ethnic divide.

Empirically also ethnic associations and ethnic parties have been discouraged and banned in many countries and in majority cases due to fear of the presumed radical and destructive backlashes of ethnic demands and ethnic rights. Vindictive horrors of ethnic conflicts, genocide and ethnic cleansing in cases like in Rwanda, former Yugoslavia, Nigeria and also relatively less but unrelenting and destructive ethnic strives in places such as in Sudan, India, Malaysian, Sri Lanka and others are signalling the recalcitrance nature of ethnic demands and also indicating the difficult challenges connected to ethnic entitlement and ethnic rights.

However, in Ethiopia, ethnic restructuring and ethnic entitlement has become the foundation for state restructuring since 1991. Recognising and institutionalising ethnic entitlement and ethnic rights in politics has been officially endorsed through ethnic federal restructuring. Subsequently, ethnic-based

parties and association are becoming a favourable political association mainly because of a strong encouragement by the new ruling group. The new Constitution even went to the extent of granting the rights of self-determination including secession for every ethnic group constituting the Ethiopian State. This is known as the 'democracy of ethnic groups' and according to this notion that the Ethiopian State is a summation of several ethnic identities, and therefore if Ethiopia is to be held together, it is only on the 'free will' of its constituent ethnic groups. Although ethnic solidarity may contribute to personal identity, self-esteem and cultural expression, its insertion into politics as a basis for organisation and competition could be counterproductive in multi-ethnic society such as Ethiopia

In Ethiopia where there are more than 80 ethnolinguistic groups, the promotion of ethnic restructuring through ethnic federalism may end up in the proliferation of non-viable mini-states or, in the worst case, the disintegration of the whole federal framework by encouraging competition for power and hostilities among the diverse ethnic groups. Structuring internal boundaries along ethnic lines in ethnically mixed areas could alienate many people and could result in exclusion and ethnic cleansing and abuse of individual rights. The ethnic federal arrangement could also put limit on the liberty of individual citizens and minority ethnic groups by institutionalising despotism of ethnic leaders from majority ethnic groups. So the mix of ethnicity with federalism could become an antithesis of liberty. Violating the rights of individuals and ethnic minority groups could unleash hatred and hostility that could culminate into reciprocal and revengeful violence and ethnic fighting. As a consequence, ethnic federalism could be a wobbly model to promote peace and stability in the country, which has already experienced a long period of internal turmoil and conflict. Based on this background, therefore, it is essential to ask how the ethnic federal model could protect the country from such unpromising and disastrous future.

Moreover, the majority of the populations in Ethiopia have no adequate access to education, health and other social services. The expansion of administrative and bureaucratic structures in each ethnic constituency as a result of ethnic federalism could divert the already scarce resources to administrative and bureaucratic purposes at the expense of other more pressing social needs. Subsequently, it could downgrade other important issues like tackling poverty and improving the well being of the people. Would the majority of the poor care much whether their kin or others are ruling them in the situation where their main concern, that is, tackling poverty, is relegated to a minor issue?



The introduction of new regional/ethnic languages as an official language in each ethnic area could create formidable challenges for creating a common single social, economic and political space for the constituting numerous and disparate ethnic communities. It could also hinder a proper utilisation of the available human resource that has been accumulated for a century but has not trained to communicate with these new regional/ethnic languages. In worst scenario, this could make this trained human resource irrelevant and out of use in the ethnic areas. Preference could also be given to the professed 'natives' or 'indigenous' inhabitants of the ethnic areas regardless of qualifications or experiences, which could result in inefficiency and mismanagement. Hence, is it becoming a counter movement of modernisation?

Ethnic restructuring could also create obstacles in developing a common citizenship and identity. It would erode shared identities that have been developed through the long history of interaction among the Ethiopian people. In diverse society like Ethiopia, ethnic entitlement could result in a tendency to overstate the importance and virtue of one's identity and playing down the others'. These would finally produce ethnic hatred and conflict and in the long run, it could break-up the Ethiopian State into fragmented and nonviable mini-states.

Since the introduction of the ethnic federal project in 1991, there have been wide-ranging claims especially by many Ethiopian intellectuals that the ethnic federal structure would collapse in a short time and the country could immerse into ethnic conflict. Despite these claims, however, the ethnic federal arrangement has survived for more than a decade. This short period of survival may not be enough to assure the continuation or sustainability of the system; nevertheless it triggers an interest to understand how it has able to survive and also to engage in finding the possible explanations regarding the pattern and trend of the restructuring process. It becomes therefore essential to examine whether the ethnic federal system has allowed the various ethnic groups the right for self-government or it has adopted a different strategy. Has the system managed to create a stable and workable polity? What are its concrete implications for the Ethiopian society at large? The dissertation therefore by investigating the above and other relevant issues, it wants to answer the main questions of the research, which are:

**How effective has ethnic federalism been in Ethiopia in fulfilling the demands of various ethnic groups for self-administration at the local level, and promoting equal representation and participation at the national level within the context of a workable Ethiopian state?**

**How successful is ethnic federalism in Ethiopia in promoting self-rule and shared rule simultaneously?**

### ***1.3. Methodology***

This study utilized an empirical exploratory research method that helped in collecting a considerable amount of empirical information and data in order to answer the research questions of the dissertation. Moody argues that while primarily used in academic research, empirical research method could also be useful in answering practical question (Moody 2005). In situations where the prior knowledge is not adequate, the best strategy may be to employ the empirical research approach (Armstrong 1970: 27). The method is often preferred and used in entering completely unexplored fields, and it could become less purely empirical as the acquired mastery of the field increases. Indeed, a higher degree of intuitive ability may be required to successfully utilize this particular method.

Thus, the empirical research method can be an effective tool to investigate how ethnic federalism is actually working in Ethiopia. Ethnic federalism, which started in 1991, is comparatively a new phenomenon in Ethiopian politics. To date adequate academic work has not been done regarding its actual operation, particularly at the regional states level. A methodology has to be chosen as a focusing device in discovering empirical regularities and possible explanations of the actual operation of the federal system. An attempt will be made to find possible explanations to some of the emerging trends in the process of the investigation as the buildup of the empirical understanding grows. Furthermore, the most important approach in investigation of any federal system would be acquiring of an empirical knowledge at the operational level of the system. Pragmatically, how it function and what challenges and opportunities it has faced empirically in order to understand the process and structure of the arrangement.

The selection of theories is based on their contribution in explaining and interpreting the reality as well as their ability in establishing a framework for observing and conceptualising the empirical research. As Stoker explains without theory ‘no effective observation can take place’ (Stoker 1995: 17). Theories can help to restructure empirical observations and also to pick out ‘certain factors as the most important or relevant,’ if one is interested in exploring or providing an explanation of an event. Although accumulation of empirical information is valuable, a proper theoretical foundation is helpful to restructure empirical findings or observations. Moreover, as Elazar claims that the practical application of federal arrangements must always rest on some set of theoretical principles (Elazar 1987).

In this regard theories of ‘federalism’ and ‘ethnicity’ have been selected in order to set up an analytical tool for exploring the actual working of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia. I assume that the theoretical investigation can reveal the tensions between ethnicity and federalism at the conceptual level. The theories will also help to understand and identify the contending positions and ideas in the debates concerning ethnicity and federalism. In particular, theories of federalism are derived from a number of historical-geographical experiences; therefore it would be inappropriate to treat them as a standard to judge other wide range of settings. The assumption is that the theoretical examination would make possible to establish a body of knowledge about the in/compatibility and tensions between ethnicity and federalism at normative level and this could help to establish an analytical tool or framework to explore ethnic federalism in Ethiopia. The theories of ethnicity is used mainly in its synthesis with federalism and for the purpose of identifying the challenges ethnicity could pose to federalism, rather than to engage into the whole theoretical debate about ethnicity.

The main method used in investigating the empirical information regarding the actual operation of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia is divided into two: examination and analysis of documents, and qualitative interviews of individuals. In order to enhance quality and validity, the study used multiple sources. The examination of various categories of document included academic and research papers, government and regional state documents, press reports in local vernacular and evaluative studies of local government and various sources statistical data. A qualitative interviews were carried out involving the members of the federal parliament and states councils, states’ executives, federal and states civil servants, officials and members of the ruling parties and opposition parties at states and federal levels,

resigned or expelled officials at the states and federal levels, local opinion maker, elders, leaders of self-help associations at regional states level, rural development agents and other relevant sources.

The qualitative interview method is preferred because the actual operation or ethnic federalism in process can be best captured through an analyses of data gathered by such primary interviews. It fits Yin's methodological observation that qualitative methods tend to be more appropriate at the early stages of research and when a subject area is not well understood (Yin, 1994). It is also suitable when applying research in revealing real world settings and dynamics (Moody 2005). Qualitative interviews can give a better opportunity to observe, discover and interpret information through close interaction and relationships with the respondents. Open-ended interviews, which allow the respondents to talk at length about experiences, views and events, could facilitate a better opportunity for the respondent to express opinion and respond freely. It is also helpful for the researcher to closely understand the interviewee's subjective interpretations and meanings they prefer to assign and hold about views, behaviors, actions and events. The researcher's close interaction with the respondents could also give a better opportunity to understand how they build the logic of their arguments and the basic thinking behind their conclusions. In the Ethiopian context, political polling is non-existent and often may not be suitable. This is because very often the interviewees, especially at the local areas are not at ease in giving their political opinion in open and written forms. Therefore face-to-face interview and discussion in non-stressful settings could be better alternatives. The qualitative interview method may appear subjective, as the interpretation and analyses of data rely 'heavily on the researchers knowledge and experience to identify patterns, extract themes and make generalizations' (Ibid). However, the study also utilizes the findings of some quantitative researches, such as studies carried out by the World Bank, national and regional census data and findings from other academic works that could help for further substantiation. The key contribution to knowledge is to find out how ethnic federalism actually works. It goes beyond those who wish to sell the idea it is good and those who reject as bad. It concentrates its source of analyses on those who experience by listening to the voices of those who in the system.

A total of sixty-four qualitative interviewees were conducted: thirty were government officials and members of the ruling party at the regional and local levels; twenty-seven were from the civilian population who have strong local community whose hears are on the ground and who may be close the views of the ordinary people. Particularly the *Eder* leaders and elders are very vital and key sources of

local information because of their proximity to the ordinary people and their relatively better tuning on the political process in their locality. *Eder* is a community association, democratically and voluntarily established by local people to organise a variety of community services for its members. In the majority of cases, *Eder* leaders are highly respected and reliable individuals. Thus, in most cases, information gleaned from *Eder* leaders is considered to be relatively reliable. Similarly, elders, particularly those who command high respect in the community, can be a valuable source of valid and reliable information. On the contrary, in many cases, information from the officials and politicians (including opposition groups) are disputable and controversial, but it is necessary to register their views and claims, in spite of the fact as politicians they are bound to pursue specific interest. As Yin claims that the use of multiple source or triangulation could be helpful to confirm the validity of the process (Yin 1994). The strategy employed in this research may not deliver total validity but it is most likely to provide reflections and understandings by those who loose and gain in the unfoldment of ethnic federalism. Information and claims from the politicians and officials were rechecked through interviews of elders, *Eder* leaders, and non-political and opposition groups and vice versa in order to confirm the accurate description of the process or glean alternative explanations.

From the total of sixty-four qualitative interviews, fourteen interviewees were conducted in Benishangul Gumuz, twenty-three in the SNNP and twenty-seven in Oromia regional states. The greater number of interviews was conducted in the Oromia region, which has the largest population in the country. The next greater number of interviews was conducted in the SNNP, which has the largest number of ethnic groups in the country. In the Benishangul, which has five small ethnic groups (of which the three are very small) and relatively smaller population, relatively a smaller numbers of interviews were conducted. Although the number of interviewees may look smaller in numbers, a qualitative interview, which mainly utilises unstructured questionnaires, brings a great deal of vital information through face-to-face discussion. In some cases, an interview from a single individual took more than five pages. In addition, most of the interviewees were selected purposefully because of their roles, status and knowledge in connection to the process of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia. Therefore the quality of the interviews is fairly adequate in providing vital information

As it was promised to the interviewees to protect their privacy and in order to avoid risks they may face regarding possible retribution because of the interview, the names of all of the interviewees are not

revealed in the dissertation. The interviewees are identified in their roles and status in a way that would not compromise their safety. The same documentation procedure was applied to the officials and members of the ruling party. As revealed in the dissertation, many officials and ruling party members had expressed contrary views and disagreements to the official policies and positions of their party and the ruling party in many issues due to various reasons, but they prefer to remain anonymous. Thus, to protect the anonymity of the interviewees and yet to satisfy the requirement of documentation of the research, the interviewees or informants are identified by common names and numbers. For instance, the documentation sample: '(A member of the regional executive from Gumuz, Interviewee 4, 2002: 5)', refers to the political roles of the interviewee, the interviewee number, the year of the interview conducted and the page number in my field note respectively. The numbers assigned to the interviewees are classified as follows: from number 1 to 19 to the Benishangul Gumuz regional state, from 21 to 49 to the SNNP regional state and from 51 to 79 to the Oromia regional states.

At the outset, the investigation of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia starts with exploring the factors behind ethnic federalism in Ethiopia as well as the initial phase of the implementation process. A coalition formation and negotiation process at the initial phase or the transitional period can provide useful information regarding the intention and role of the actors involved and the opportunities provided for the concerned people at large. Drafting of the new constitution, redrawing of internal boundaries along ethnic lines, the formation and coalition of ethnic political parties and other major activities have been carried out in the transitional period. Generally speaking, the basic foundations of the ethnic federal arrangement were laid during the transitional period. The launching period becomes critically relevant for the analysis.

By extending the study at the actual operational level, the assessment will be divided into two main empirical parts. The first empirical part will make a detailed assessment of the procedures of delimiting regional states, the provisions of the constitution, and the distribution of political and fiscal power between the federal and state governments. In this part the attempt will be to explore three key issues. One, it will examine the political economic and social essence of the regional states. Two, by examining the constitution, it will attempt to identify the extent of how the federal-states relationship is governed by the basic federal principle of 'self-rule' and 'shared rule'. It is vital to identify the role and power of the states in policy-making and implementation process at the federal and state level. The extent of the

states representation, not only through their physical presence, but also their active involvement at the federal level would reflect to some extent the tendency of the federal framework. The modalities of their representation could also inform about the trend and pattern of the federal system. Three, it will investigate the distribution of fiscal resource and power between the federal and regional states. Distribution and control of resources are of crucial importance in federal-state interaction. The power to control resources could also provide an opportunity to exercise power in other domains of the federal and regional states relations, and this could also in turn shape the function of the overall federal structure.

The second empirical part focuses on the selected three regional states, which are believed to be appropriate to make holistic and in-depth investigation in order to bring sufficient knowledge regarding the operation of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia. The focal areas of the investigation are the internal operations and structures of the regional states, the governance process in relation to the people, the rights of various groups and minorities within the respective states.

The three selected regional states are the Oromia Regional State, the South Nation, Nationalities and Peoples regional state (SNNP) and the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state. These regional states are selected because of the different features and structures they exhibit within their respective states. This would help in bringing a variety of experiences and factors that could help to explain the operation of ethnic federalism at regional states level that could present the overall national picture in, somewhat, adequate manner.

To illustrate some of the main characteristics of the selected three regional states: First, the Oromia regional state has the largest population in the country (accounting for about one-third of the country's population) and also it contains significant (about 15 per cent) non-Oromo population dispersed throughout the regionally states, especially residing in many of the urban areas in the region. It has introduced a new regional language (Oromiffa) in administration and education. It has the major concentration of the country's industrial establishments and other infrastructures. Some of the Oromo political elites and many of the intellectuals have been suspecting of harbouring and promoting separatist or secessionist agenda.

Second, the SNNP (Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples) regional state accounts for about 20 percent of the population and 75 percent of the ethnic groups in the country. As the name itself indicates the regional state has about 60 diverse ethnic groups, and most of these ethnic groups are very small and lack qualified and educated manpower to run their own self-administration structures. It is a very vast region but without an effective transportation and communication infrastructure to connect the different parts of the regional state. The region has faced huge challenges due to compacting these numerous and disparate ethnic groups in a single political framework. This has aggravated ethnic competition and violent conflicts.

Third, the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state is comprised of five small ethnic groups which are relatively marginalized and undeveloped. It has a very critical shortage of trained and educated manpower in all aspects of modern services and bureaucracies due to the fact that it was very rare to find a trained or educated individual from the five indigenous groups. The five ethnic groups did hardly get any experience in statecraft and administration. Consequently, the regional state is highly dependent upon support from the federal government.

In addition to the different aspects that will be emphasised in each regional state based on their varied characteristics, the study also examines the interactions between the rulers and people. It attempts to show how the ordinary people living in these regional states are perceiving the ethnic federal arrangement; what they found positive or negative in it; what they would like to see changed and their overall anticipation regarding the federal process and structures. How they relate to the federal and state administrations? What are their expectations from each level of government that impact on their lives? In this connection, the study is also interested in discovering how ethnic federalism does affect politics, the behaviour of individuals and politicians, and societal relationships at the regional states' level. It tries to discover the overall trend whether the community has been threatened by the very essence of ethnic federalism.

Particular consideration will also be given to understand specific effects of ethnic federalism on language and education. New regional/ethnic languages are in use in many areas thereby replacing the previous official language; therefore it is very essential to examine impacts of using regional and local languages. As regard to education, local languages have been introduced in many schools as a teaching



medium in order to educate children in their mother tongue, but most of these languages were not used before in education. It is therefore essential to understand to what extent the teaching practices have been affected by the introduction of the new languages. More importantly, the introduction of the local language alone without simultaneous use of other regional or 'national' language could create communication gaps in the long run, so it is necessary to find out whether there is any other mechanism that has been laid out to mitigate this problem? The empirical analysis will highlight whether the ethnic federal arrangement in Ethiopia is successful in providing the rights of self-government to the various ethnic groups that constitute the Ethiopian State.

With regard to epistemological issues, this research adheres to an interpretative theory that recognizes humans as social actors who are in a constant engagement in making their own social reality. Thus, the study recognizes that both the researcher and the interviewees are subjective actors who have their own belief, opinion and conviction and therefore the outcome of the research can be influenced by such subjective traits. As a result, utilization of interpretative theory with accessing and checking multiple sources (or triangulation) may become helpful in reducing subjectivity. In connection to qualitative interview, for example, if the 'local officials' express that the source of troubles in their locality are 'non-native', this 'discovery' does not necessarily lead to accept their claim as genuine without checking other sources through triangulation. However, the information can provide clues concerning the relationship between the 'non-natives' and the officials in the local area. As a researcher also, before starting the field research I held a conviction and belief that ethnic federalism would be a better political framework for Ethiopia to survive as a workable multi-ethnic nation. I also believed that the ethnic organizations and their leaders are committed in maximizing the benefits and interests of their respective ethnic communities. But in the process of the research and after the empirical analysis, I have come through with knowledge to the contrary. Thus, the study remained open and flexible in permitting knowledge production based on the empirical information's new insight.

Methodological direction in this research is not selected based on comparing the values of methods, but the choice was made on a judgment based on their closer relevance to the research subject. It is not the conviction of this research to exaggerate the virtue of one method and understate others. Rather, it is believed that, in many instances, the findings of the research are the most important indicator whether the method used is beneficial or not. In this regard, the utilization of qualitative interviews research

method with an interpretative framework has been very helpful in getting closer to perceptions and convictions of the people in approaching and understanding the process of state restructuring in Ethiopia. The empirical analysis approach has also helped the study to dig out vital information that helps to give reflection about the actual operation of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia

#### ***1.4 Challenges and limitations in collecting and analysing the empirical information***

To start with published documents, in many cases the documents are highly influenced by the intentions and subjective interpretations of their authors. Government documents are very biased in exaggerating the positive achievements whereas disregarding or rejecting other bad or negative consequences. Non-government's and other reports are also biased to the intentions and interpretations of their authors; those who are convinced (for various other reasons) that ethnic federalism is undesirable (or desirable), they attempt to link or associate every negative (or positive) effects as a consequence of the federal system. Though, it is not accurate to take this type of evidence at face value, it is also very difficult to identify the intentions, which is, of course, a very difficult task for any research that wants to discover facts as they are in the ground.

The interview process itself was affected by the above and other factors as well. Political discussions, especially in the regional and local areas, are viewed as very risky dealings; people fear that revealing some important information can compromise their security and livelihood. Sometimes, therefore, private interviews on political matters take the form of intelligence or spy work to understand the facts in the ground. Collection of confidential information mainly depends on personal trust; therefore, it is very difficult to validate such kinds of information in other interviews without compromising the safety of the respondents; as a result some valuable information could be discarded. In some cases individuals give official statement that are contrary to what they claim in non-official conversations, and thus it becomes difficult to identify which one is the 'truth'; so in such situation personal interpretation and subjectivity was used but still with a danger of contaminating the information.

An ethnic solidarity also influences the data collection process; in areas where the presumed threats from other ethnic groups are felt imminent, those who ethnically identify themselves with the regional

and/or local administrations tend to portray the system as valuable to them. Whereas, in other areas, in the absence of such presumed threats, they tend to criticise vigorously the regional or local administration even if they belong within the same ethnic group. In other cases, those individuals who are member of a minority ethnic group or member of other ethnic groups that are not ethnically belonging to the regional/local administrations tend to vehemently criticise and reject the federal process and structures. Though their information may have different intentions, it still could indicate the magnitude and depth of mistrust and exclusion that have been created due to the ethnic restructuring arrangement. Thus, all these factors have to be taken into account in gathering, interpreting and analysing the empirical information.

### ***1.5 The structure of the dissertation***

The dissertation is divided into nine chapters. The first chapter is consisted of three sections: an introduction, the main focus of the dissertation and the methodology. The introduction section begins by introducing the emerging state arrangement in Ethiopia since 1991 that has made an ideological change from the previous state structuring philosophies. It presents a brief description of the founding ideas and modalities of the two previous state arrangements in order to show the ideological shift in the current arrangement. The discussion will be extended to the main focus of the dissertation that tries to highlight the challenges that ethnicity could pose in the process of state structuring. It tries also to indicate, at least at theoretical level, a danger the country could face in elevating ethnic entitlement and ethnic autonomy as a core ideology of state restructuring. The major questions of the dissertation are also introduced in this section. The methodology section introduces the research method, the theoretical considerations and the empirical cases. It also offers explanations for selecting the research method, the theories and the empirical cases. Lastly, the first chapter concludes by presenting the challenges and limitations of the empirical information.

The second chapter presents a theoretical consideration of the dissertation. The theoretical presentation is divided into three main sections. The first section provides an account on the meaning and characterisation of federalism. It attempts to underline the various classification of the essence of federalism and also makes an attempt in identifying an operational definition of federalism. The second section of the theoretical chapter highlights the basic essence of federalism that is identified as a non-fixation political arrangement that needs to be constantly adjusted and negotiated. The third section of

the theoretical chapter focuses on the challenges of federalism in multiethnic societies. This discussion is highly relevant and crucial to the main focus of the dissertation. It begins by defining the term ethnicity as well as presenting the main competing theoretical debates and critiques on ethnicity. It concludes that though ethnicity is an elusive and intractable phenomenon, it continues to create formidable challenges in state construction, particularly in deeply divided societies. By extending the theoretical arguments, a connection is made between ethnicity and the state in the theoretical analysis concerning ethnic federalism. The theoretical debate on ethnic federalism is focused between those competing positions that advocate and reject ethnic federalism. Finally, the theoretical chapter concludes by understanding that ethnicity is an elusive and fluid but increasingly expanding social phenomenon, thus it demands for engineering an acceptable political frameworks that could mitigate the inherent destructive inclinations of ethnic competitions.

The third chapter investigates the reasons behind for the emergence of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia. The chapter underlines three crucial factors for the emergence of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia. Firstly, an examination is made concerning the origin and objectives of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) for waging an armed struggle by demanding regional autonomy or secession. Secondly, an examination is made concerning the process and rationale behind the establishment of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). The investigation on the establishment of the EPRDF indicates how the TPLF has been able to extend its authority from its ethnic constituency to other areas in Ethiopia. It also exhibits the nature of an ethnic coalition formation strategy. Thirdly, an investigation is made regarding the transitional period. In this investigation, the June 1991 conference, the charter and the transitional government are the major focus. The investigation emphasises the modalities and validity of the June 1991 conference, the essence of the charter and the operation and legitimacy of the transitional government. Overall, this chapter attempts to determine whether the ethnic federal arrangement in Ethiopia is evolving from a genuine aspiration as well as participation of the disparate ethnic groups that constitute the Ethiopian state.

The fourth chapter provides an empirical description and analysis of the process and structure of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia. It focuses on investigating the process of structuring and characteristics of the ethnic territories, the constitutional distribution of political and financial power between the federal government and the regional states. The chapter also tries to determine what kind of ethnic federal

model is evolving in Ethiopia by investigating whether the relationship between the federal government and the states are based on the core principles of the federal relations. Overall, the chapter reveals the asymmetrical character of the regional states, the flaws and superficiality of the constitution and the vertical and horizontal imbalances in financial relations.

Chapter five, six and seven are empirical chapters that explore the operation of ethnic federalism in the regional state. The chapters provide an account of ethnic configurations, administrative structures, constitutional and political processes, and financial capacities in the three regional states. The chapters bring empirical evidences that show the challenges in delimiting the states on ethnolinguistic criteria alone. The empirical exploration in the three states determines whether the arrangement is successful in nurturing a shared-rule and self-rule arrangement among the existing ethnic assortments. It also provides a clue whether the Ethiopia's ethnic federal model suits the configuration of ethnic cleavages and rivalries on the ground.

Chapter eight determines the advantages and disadvantages of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia by analysing the emerging trends in the three regional states. It also aims to determine whether the Ethiopia's ethnic federal model is successful in promoting ethnic autonomy and ethnic equality as it professed. Is it successful in nurturing: ethnic cooperation or ethnic conflict; ethnic empowerment or ethnic dissatisfaction. Is it the empowerment of the ethnic communities or the ascendancy of the ethnic elites? Is the federal arrangement going in a direction of forging a workable polity? Is it a sustainable political arrangement for the people of Ethiopia? Generally, the chapter attempts to determine the essence of the federal model that is evolving in Ethiopia.

Finally, chapter nine makes a conclusion by presenting the conceptual and empirical flaws of the ethnic federal model in Ethiopia. It also tries to make a contribution to the scholastic debates on the challenges of state restructuring in the multiethnic societies.

## **Chapter Two Theoretical Consideration on Federalism and Ethnicity**

Methodologically, the selection of the theories is based on their contribution in explaining and interpreting the reality as well as their ability in establishing an analytical framework for observing and conceptualising the empirical findings. In this regard theories of federalism and ethnicity have been selected in order to help in setting up a framework for observation and examination of the actual working of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia. The theoretical investigation could help to clear up the ground for the study by indicating tensions in synchronising ethnicity and federalism at least at the theoretical level. Hence, the analysis of theories will be used as a tool to approach the empirical material of the study and to understand the theoretical debates, but without being a 'grand narrative' to evaluate the empirical case. This dissertation assumes that a prior prescription or commitment to a single institutional form may not be helpful, however, political arrangements in multiethnic societies should take into consideration the configuration of ethnic cleavages and rivalries on the ground. In this connection, thus, federalism is not considered as a fixed formula of territorial division, rather it is an evolutionary political arrangement that could be applied in a manner to give meaning and relevance for particular societies and contexts.

### ***2.1 Understanding Federalism***

Scholars describe the term 'federalism' in various ways, such as political philosophy (King 1982), normative ideal (Elazar 1987b), ideological position (Burgess 2000), programmatic orientation (Smith 1995) and historical phenomenon (Oyovbaire 1985). It is therefore essential to consider the various interpretations and definitions of the concept for the benefit of understanding the debates and to be as clear and explicit as possible when using the concept in this dissertation. A good point of departure is the definition developed by Daniel Elazar, one of the leading experts in field of federalism. According to Elazar 'federalism has to do with the need of people and polities to unite for common purposes yet remain separate to preserve their integrity. Federalism is concerned simultaneously with the diffusion of political power in the name of liberty and its concentration on behalf of unity or energetic government' (Elazar 1987, 33). Here, the basic federal principle is concerned with the combination of 'self-rule' and 'shared rule'. It is the framework that involves the linking of individuals, groups, and polities in lasting but limited union in such a way as to provide for the pursuit of common ends while maintaining the respective integrities of all parties. Accordingly, federalism is considered as a comprehensive system of

political relationships which emphasises the combination of self-rule and shared rule within a matrix of constitutionally dispersed powers. Elazar interpreted federalism, as the contractual combination of self-rule and shared-rule, as a broad genus of political organisation encompassing a range of different species. In his article, *From Statism to Federalism*, Elazar explicitly used the term 'federal' in its largest sense, not simply to describe modern federation like the United States, Canada, or Switzerland but all the various federal arrangements in use in the world today including federations, confederations and other confederal arrangements, associated states, special interest joint authorities with constitutional standing, and others (Elazar, 1995).

In contrast, however, Ronald Watts warns that though defining federalism as a broad generic term encompassing a variety of forms is helpful, the use of 'federalism' as both a normative and a descriptive term opens some potential for logical confusion. Consequently, he argues, following Preston King's distinction that making the three terms- 'federalism', 'federal political systems' and 'federation' -distinct is essential. According to Watts while 'federalism' should be seen as normative concept, 'federal political systems' should be understood as the generic descriptive term for the whole genus encompassing the wide variety of political systems combining 'self-rule' and 'shared-rule'. In addition, he considers 'federation' as one specific form or species of federal political system, nothing as well that there may be hybrids combining some features of the different forms of 'federal political systems' (Watts 2000a, 14).

In his vital contribution to the theoretical discussion, Preston King made a distinction between 'federalism' and 'federation' as normative and descriptive terms respectively. Thus, 'federation' is defined 'as an institutional arrangement, taking the form of a sovereign state, and distinguished from other such states solely by the fact that its central government incorporates regional units in its decision procedure on some constitutionally entrenched basis', whereas, federalism is an ideological and/or philosophical position (King 1982: 75). In accordance to this definition, there may be federalism without federation, but there can no be federation without some matching variety of federalism.

Following King's distinction of 'federalism' and 'federation', Michael Burgess explains that 'federation' as a constitutionally entrenched institution that recognises diversity in a state or as he puts it: 'the institutionalisation of those relationships in a state which have political salience,' (Burgess 2000, 25).

Accordingly this type of political institution takes many forms and his definition is concerned chiefly with those diversities which have the capacity for political mobilisation. However, he makes the point that 'federation is not a universal panacea to the politics of difference, on the contrary, it is one direct response to those diversities which can determine the very legitimacy and stability of the state itself' (Ibid.). Thus for Burgess, 'federation' is a specific organisational form which includes structures, institutions, procedures and techniques. It is a tangible institutional reality. It is 'a case of corporate self rule, which is to say as some form of democratic or constitutional government' (Ibid. p. 26).

There are however, many forms of democratic and constitutional rule, and federation is only one of these' (Ibid.). In this line of thinking the gist of the matter is constitutional autonomy rather than mere division of power between central and local governments. The constituent units in a federation have the constitutionally endowed right of existence together with the right to area of legislative and administrative autonomy. 'Constitutional entrenchment is, therefore, the key to their political, economic and cultural self-preservation. Indeed it is, the guarantee of their very survival as states within a larger state' (Ibid.).

Following his argument of the distinction between 'federalism' and 'federation', Burgess conceptualise 'federalism' as ideological, in the sense that it can take the form of an overtly perspective guide to action, and as philosophical, to the extent that it is a normative judgement upon the ideal organisation of human relations and conduct (Ibid. p. 27). However he adds an operational dimension by considering that federalism can also as loaded upon as empirical fact in its recognition of diversity- broadly conceived in its social, economic, cultural and political contexts-as a living reality, something that exists independent of ideological and philosophical perceptions. This means that in practice, authority should be divided and power should be dispersed among and between different groups in a society. But, according to Burgess, the significance of federalism can be understood and appreciated when the concept is taken to manifest a particular meaning when it comes to its application to specific cultural and historical milieus. Like federation, federalism is rooted in its contexts, and meaning derives from the contextual background. 'We must therefore locate the concept in its own distinct setting: historical, cultural, intellectual, social, economic, philosophical, and ideological. In this way we can begin to appreciate its huge multidimensional complexities' (Ibid). To demonstrate the distinction between 'federalism' and 'federation', the author brings in the case of the European Union. 'The EU of course is



not a federation; it does not fit the established criteria by which we conventionally define such a state' (Ibid. p. 29). As we can grasp from this distinction it is not given that every type of 'federalism' will always lead to 'federation', in the sense that Europe will simply be a national state. Here, we have a classic case of federalism without federation.

On the other hand, Graham Smith questions the notion of considering federalism as an ideology. Rather than considering federalism as an ideology that has developed and exists autonomously from the main tradition of political thought, he writes that 'federalism is best treated as traversing a broad range of what we can more usefully call programmatic orientation (Smith, 1995: 4). In his opinion, the term 'federalism' has been subjected to different meanings and applied to different situational contexts. He states that 'federalism as ideology is best considered as an amalgam of doctrines, beliefs and programmatic considerations reflect in the very paradoxes and tensions inherent in thinking about the politics of modernity' (Ibid). In making a distinction between 'federalism' and 'federation,' Smith considers that federation can be referred as one of the end stages of federalism. However, to distinguish federations from other types of political formations in order to reduce the risk of self-ascription, Smith suggests that an explicit definition of 'federation' is appropriate and he agrees with King who identifies 'federation' as an institutional arrangement on some constitutionally entrenched basis.

Generally speaking, King's definition of federation is considered as appropriate and helpful in the study of federalism (Smith 1995:7; Watts 2000a: 14; Burgess 2000: 25). Consequently it is useful to keep in mind King's conception of federation which contain the following four essential features:

- The base of its representation is preponderantly territorial;
- The territorial representation has at least two tiers (local government and regional government)
- The region units are electorally and perhaps otherwise incorporated into the decision procedure of the national centre;
- The incorporation of the regions into the decision procedure of the centre cannot be easily altered, as by resort to the bare majoritarian procedure which serves normal purposes: regional, territorial representation, in short, must be 'entrenched' (King, 1982: 143).

It follows that federal arrangement necessarily involves not only devolution of power to constituent territorial units, but also constitutionally guaranteed autonomy and representation of these units. In principle, therefore the centre does not have legal right to abrogate or redefine the territories of the units.

In contrast, Riker understands 'federalism as a range of phenomena rather than a single constitutional thing' (Riker 1975: 103). Federal arrangement does not always mean that the boundaries of power are clearly fixed on a permanent basis, but rather a continuous political bargain and process. It is not a static and fixed phenomenon. Riker places federalism on a continuum scale with respect to centralisation and decentralisation. 'Federalism is a political organisation in which the activity of government are divided between regional governments and a central government in such a way that each kind of government has some activity on which it makes final decision' (Ibid. p. 101). Federalism is a contextual phenomenon. The central government may enter the sphere of actions provided for regions but of course, without completely endangering their autonomy. Therefore, federalism depends on circumstances and the balance of conflict, consensus and resource. As John Agnew put it 'federalism is an evolutionary political arrangement rather than a fixed formula for the territorial division of government powers. The balance of power between central and regional units could change over time' (Agnew 1995: 294).

Following Riker and Agnew, Sam Egite Oyovbaire, in his work on the Nigerian federalism, argues that federalism is an historical phenomenon and should be studied outside ideological premises (Oyovbaire, 1985: 19). By supporting Riker's position, he argues that the dominant intellectual viewpoint confuses federalism as a means with federalism as an end in itself. He contends that this kind of approach presupposes an assessment of federal governments to start from a normative position and then to exclude other arguments for other variants of federalism. As a result Oyovbaire argues that rejecting federalism as an end in itself would allow treating federalism as an historical phenomenon. Thus he asserts 'one does not decide on the merit of federalism by an examination federalism in the abstract, but rather on its actual meaning for particular societies' (Ibid. p. 37). In this option, viewing federalism as an historical phenomenon has two advantages. Firstly, 'it makes conceptually possible to study federalism without the constraints of the received paradigm of federalism; secondly, it enables one to study the actual power distribution outside the formal (or alleged) constraints of the regime in power' (Ibid. p. 21).

Nonetheless, the weakness of this historical approach is that it may create confusion by stretching the concept too widely so as to become vague and meaningless, or to serve other purposes of 'false federalism'. However, detaching federalism from ideology does make sense; as it may otherwise become an ideology or an end in itself rather than a means of restructuring society-state relationships. Consequently, it may be possible to study federalism without attaching ideological considerations or values like democracy and other related concepts to the nature of the regime. But, in this sense, there may be a danger to view federalism as a project that depends on negotiation and consensus among groups or elites without considering the interests of the involved peoples. It is very problematic argument, unless we associate some feature to this kind of federal arrangement, which could be classified as 'elites' federal system' or consociational framework (Lijphart 1977; 2002) where the interests of the people are considered to be, to some extent, as same as those of the elites. Nevertheless, a federal system that does not entail accountability and misrepresent popular interest can easily develop into an oligarchic rule, or regional (local) tyranny.

Without basic consensus on some form of federal principles and processes it is likely that the concept could become too flexible and any regime could call its system 'federal' on the basis of the mere existence of the structures alone. AS King states that 'if it is to be used meaningfully, it has to be given some reliable and fairly fixed sense (King 1982: 90). Otherwise 'the variety of meanings associated with federation creates a genuine basis for misunderstanding' (Ibid. p. 71). Hence, the gist of the matter is not determined only by the presence of the structures, but indeed, the reflection of the process as well and in the senses of relationships that exist between and within the federal and the states structures as well as peoples-states relations. The process could reflect, in some justifiable form, to the extent the structures embody the interests of the people. 'It not only embraces individual citizens, with an equal entitlement to vote, but also individual territories or states or provinces, which also enjoy some form of equal influence at the federal centre' (Ibid. p. 91). Subsequently, without such a process, the federal structure could just serve as a means for the concentration of power or the tyranny of local oligarchy in the name of federalism or regional government.

## ***2.2 Federalism as a continuing political bargain***

The above discussion suggests that federal arrangement is to be understood as associated with some kind of constitutionalised or legally binding division of governmental powers and functions on a territorial basis within a single country. More specifically it could be understood as a state structuring established on the principles of 'self-rule and 'shared rule' in order to attempt in creating a union of units while at the same time by preserving their specific integrity. This could be said to designate one of the basic objectives of a federal arrangement that tries to promote both unity and diversity at the same time. It involves both structures and processes that determine the division of power and functions between the centre and the regions, an agreed covenant and the existence of self-rule and shared rule simultaneously. It is a process that each part has an 'equal' or fair distribution of power in decision-making and implementing process.

The preservation of self-rule together with shared-rule is also a very challenging task for any federal arrangement. The proper function of the federal arrangement highly depends on keeping the balance between what appears to be intrinsically conflictual objectives. In order to keep the balance, a federal arrangement relies on political bargaining in a continual process. As Elazar clearly put it every covenant involves consenting, promising and agreeing (Elazar, 1987: 06). Covenantal arrangements do imply contractual relationships which should be founded on negotiation and compromises.

As a result, covenantal relationship in federal arrangement does not intend to function on the principle of 'the winner takes all' formula, rather it is characterised by continuous negotiation and bargaining. It is like a 'give-and-take' arrangement; to attain self-rule, it is a pre-requisite to participate in a shared-rule structure. It is not either one or other, but both must exist for the proper functioning of federal arrangements. This should not be taken to mean that units of the federal system have no power of unilateral decision in their jurisdiction, but rather this capacity should be made in the context of the principle of shared-rule.

Unilateral decisions or actions that violate the principle of shared-rule are contrary to the federal principles that are agreed beforehand. It is not always easy to respect these seemingly contradictory principles of federalism, the elements of self-rule and shared-rule, at the same time. Especially, in cases of different and irreconcilable fundamental interests between ethnic groups it may be difficult to respect

the constitutional agreements rigidly on permanent basis. But considering federalism as a continuing political bargain could lessen this tension. After all, federalism is not a static process.

In theory and practice, the federal principle does not entail the imposition of a decision of the whole on the part; otherwise it would assume a 'tyranny of the majority'. In the federal principle there is as such no lower or higher units of power, but only smaller or larger units, since power is agreed to function in a matrix or non-hierarchical way. The whole is not greater than the parts. However it is not always straightforward to follow the non-hierarchical power function especially when we observe or investigate a variety of federal systems in the real world where there are examples of majoritarian arrangements. In some asymmetrical federal systems there may be variations in the distribution of power among the federal units.

Federations have enormous variations in aspects such as in relationships of the constituent entities to the federation, degree of symmetry or asymmetry in relative powers and the number and size of their constituent units. Ronald Watts enumerates the variations of federations as follows: 'in Canada, largely majoritarian in their character and process, or are predominately consociational as in Switzerland and Belgium. The federal and state institutions are parliamentary in form or emphasise the separation of powers, as in the United States and Switzerland (Watts 2000a: 7). India shows 'a federation with a strong centre'. Nigerian federalism is characterised by polarisation along regional lines.

However, each models' of federalism are driving from a number of historical-geographical experiences of the respective societies, therefore it could be irrelevant to impose any of the 'models' of federalism across the board to a wide range of other settings (Agnew 1985). Specifically, Agnew holds that 'imposing 'models' of federalism drawing from the experiences of the four 'classic' cases (US, Switzerland, Canada and Australia) has been largely unsuccessful' (Agnew 1995: 295). More specifically, he questions US federalism for its inability to guarantee representation in State legislatures and the US Congress for under-representation of minority groups such as African-Americans.

Broadly, there are two wide categories of federations. In the first category, federalism is adopted to accommodate and reconcile territorial diversity within fundamentally multilingual and multiethnic societies such as in Switzerland, India, Malaysia, Belgium, Spain and Nigeria. The second category of

federalism is adopted in more or less homogeneous societies without consideration of multilingual or multiethnic characters, such as in the United States, Australia, Austria and Germany (Watts 1999: 117).

In accordance with the above discussions, it becomes evident that there is no fait accompli on the subject of federalism. The most important and crucial task for a successful construction, however, is the ability to create a functional federal arrangement in a given context that could give a room for expression to diverse groups which demand and need such political space. In ethnically divided societies moulding a unified and strong power centre is often perceived as oppressive and challenged internally as a structure of 'hegemonic' control; thus, violence and destructive conflicts could become strategies to capture the centre. Control of the centre is not always motivated by a desire for a 'hegemonic' rule but it could be a strategy for averting a rule by 'others'. Forging an arrangement that could build trust among diverse groups by providing a fair space for self-expression and representation would appear a matter of necessity in the construction of a functioning state structure in multiethnic societies. Federal arrangement, as a continuing political bargain, could be one of the best, but not perfect alternatives, to address problems of representation and self-administration in ethnically divided societies. Federal arrangement, in practice, should be conceived as a non-static and non-fixed political framework that could be negotiated, deliberated and compromised by its constituent entities in continuous time and space. The purpose of such a construction should not be to end or unite different identities; rather it could be an arena to provide for peaceful co-existence, respectful cooperation and compromise between groups in order to forge a cohesive political entity. A federal system may help to provide a reconciliatory framework for opposing demands of integration and separation.

### ***2.3 Federalism in Multiethnic Societies***

As the central focus of this dissertation is on ethnic federalism or federal system based on ethno-linguistic lines, a theoretical discussion on the application of federalism in multiethnic societies will be presented below. The workability and tractability of ethnic federalism is contentious. The cases of dissolved ethno-federal arrangements such as that of the USSR, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia resonated pessimism about the feasibility of federalism based on ethnolinguistic lines. In contrast, some relatively successful ethno-linguistic federal arrangements like those of India and Switzerland have shown the feasibility of ethnic federalism in divided societies. Both, critiques and advocates of ethnic

federalism have their justifications. Advocates hold that ethnic federalism could reduce groups' disparity, promote accommodation and self-rule, encourage ethnic harmony through co-existence and reduce secession or disintegration tendencies (Lijphart 1977 and 2002, Gurr 1993; Kymlicka 2006). In contrast, critiques argue that ethnic federalism could institutionalise ethnic discrimination, obstruct individual citizens rights, strengthen centrifugal forces, introduce zero-sum ethnic competition and generate dangerous reactions like ethnic cleansing, expulsion and disintegration (Nordlinger 1972; Lipset 1963; Fleiner 2000).

As this PhD dissertation explores implementation of ethnic federal arrangement in Ethiopia, it is vital to have an understanding of the theoretical discussions and major contending views on the subject. The theoretical discussions in this chapter regarding ethnic federalism generally focus on the association between ethnicity and federalism. It explores the relationship between federalism and ethnicity while attempting to discover whether federalism and ethnicity are/are not compatible. This theoretical analysis thus aims to generate understanding concerning the factual or assumed tensions, conflicts or concurrence between ethnicity and federalism. This meant to help the study in establishing an analytical framework or investigating tool to understand the ethnic federal arrangement in Ethiopia. Moreover, the theoretical discussion certainly helps to structure the observations of the operation of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia. However, before making an examination of the relationship between ethnicity and federalism, a theoretical examination of ethnicity will be presented.

### **2.3.1 Ethnicity**

#### **2.3.1.1 Defining Ethnicity**

There is no generally agreed definition or theory of ethnicity; scholars define and describe the term in various ways, such as a modern cultural construct, a universal social phenomenon, a personal identity, a peculiar kind of informal political organisation or affective association. To begin with those who identify the symbolic and subjective side of ethnicity, Smith and Hutchinson (1996), for example, define *ethnie* (the French term used to denote an 'ethnic community' or 'ethnic group') as 'a named human population with a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity among at least some of its members'

(Hutchinson and Smith 1996: 7). In this definition, the subjective and ethno-symbolic importance and orientation to the past play a key role as 'the destiny of the community is bound up with ethno-history, with its own understanding of a unique, shared past.

Contrary to this approach, Fukui and Markakis refute the attempt to define ethnic identities on the basis of genealogical or cultural criteria by claiming that a complex pattern of fusion and fission among groups is the reality. They argue therefore that ethnic identities are to be understood as essentially political products of socially defined and historically determined specific situation (Fuku and Markakis 1994:06). Similar to this argument, David Turton argues, 'an ethnic group is not a group because of ethnicity but because its members engage in common action and share common interests' (Turton 1994: 17). However this assertion does not necessarily mean that the assumed genealogical or cultural traits are completely irrelevant. Fuku and Markakis recognize Allen's (1994) concern regarding the mere dismissal of ethnic/tribal labels, on the grounds that they do represent a social reality, despite the genealogical and cultural lacunae in their make-up. In his study of two ethnic groups in the Sudan and Uganda border area, Allen observes how collective fears and hatreds serve in the production and concretisation of 'specific cultural qualities, the elaboration of tradition, the definition of moral spheres and the articulation of social boundaries' (Allen 1994: 114). Likewise, for Thomas Eriksen (1993) ethnicity simply refers to relationships between groups whose members consider themselves distinctive and, these groups may be ranked hierarchically within a society. He therefore describes ethnicity in terms of 'the classification of people and group relationship' that has 'a political, organisational aspects as well as a symbolic one' (Eriksen 1993: 13) Similarly, for Paul Brass 'ethnicity is a sense of ethnic identity that can be used 'to create internal cohesion and differentiate themselves from other groups' (Brass 1991: 19). He posits that 'ethnicity or ethnic identity also involves in addition to subjective self-consciousness, a claim to status and recognition, either as a superior group or as at least equal to other group' (Ibid).

Nevertheless, Horowitz argues that: 'Many of the puzzle presented by ethnicity become much less confusing once we abandon the attempt to discover the vital essence of ethnicity and instead regard ethnic affiliations as being located along a continuum of ways in which people organize and categorize themselves' (Horowitz 1985: 55). According to Horowitz that although ethnic groups believe in extended kinship and putative common descent, ethnic groups can be placed at various points along the



birth-choice continuum, but not a dichotomy between them. 'There are fictive elements here, but the idea, if not always the fact, of common ancestry makes it possible for ethnic group to think in terms of family resemblance' (Ibid. p. 56). Thus, membership to the ethnic group is typically not chosen but given because the putative kinship ties is the basic criterion (Ibid). As a result, for political mobilization, kinship tie due to their inducing power could be used to establish a compelling organization to pursue political goals. 'If group members are potential kinsmen, a threat to any members of the group may be seen in somewhat the same light as a threat to the family' (Ibid. p. 64). However, Horowitz holds that 'the putatively ascriptive character of ethnic identifications makes interethnic compromise so difficult and poses special difficulties for democratic politics in divided societies' (Ibid. pp. 53-4). Besides, he warns that 'ethnic affiliation is not just a convenient vehicle by which elites satisfy their own class aspirations' (Ibid. p. 89).

Despite the fact that the study of ethnicity is confronted with such various terminological and conceptual problems as well as without a shared perspective, much of the literature on the theories of ethnicity is often divided into two broad approaches of primordialists and instrumentalists. These two approaches are discussed below.

### **2.3.1.2 The Primordialism Argument**

The primordialist conceptualisation of ethnic community is founded on the belief of the 'overpowering' and 'ineffable quality' of primordial attachments that arise from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language and following particular social practices (Geertz 1973). Steven Grosby associates the terms 'primordial' as a cognitive reference to the objects of attachments or ties around which various kinds of kinship are formed (Grosby 1994: 168). It was Edward Shils (1975) who coined the term 'primordial' in his argument that family attachment are embedded in a primordial relational quality that attaches ineffable importance to blood. Following on the line of primordialism, Clifford Geertz argued that primordial identities are given and ineffable that can be overpowering or coercive (Geertz 1973: 259). According to this explanation some attachments flow more from natural affinity than from social interaction. Primordialists maintain that the importance human beings attribute to biological connection is neither capricious nor accidental, but is connected to unique and very close nurturing and relationships that make a bond from generation to generation with an experience of deeply rooted, intimate and eternal belonging. The congruities of

blood, speech, custom, and so on, are overpowering and coercive. To that effect Grosby claim that 'this is one of the reasons why human beings have scarified their lives and continue to scarify their lives for their own family and for their own nation' (Grosby 1994: 169). In other words, primordialists believe that pre-modern attachments and historical memories are crucial in shaping and mobilising groups. 'Ethnic groups and nationalities exist because there are traditions of belief and action toward primordial objects such as biological features and especially territorial location' (Ibid. p. 168).

The primordialists argue that though primordial discontent strives more deeply and is less easily satisfied as ethnicity has been manipulated for racism and horrific purposes, modern man has perpetuated similar horrible acts because of philosophical, political, economic, and religious reasons connected to modernity. As Fishman states 'modern man's capacity for committing horrible acts is a by-product of modernity basically unrelated to ethnicity or to the biological assumption of ethnicity in particular' (Fishman 1980: 86). Likewise, Pierre van den Berghe points out that 'brothers do murder each other, but not gratuitously and not as easily as strangers' (van den Berghe 1995: 362). Furthermore, Fishman claims that the manipulation of ethnicity 'to attain political, economic and cultural goal is a modern manifestation and certainly one of the least unique feature of ethnicity'. Thus, according to Fishman, 'ethnicity must be approached seriously, even sympathetically, as a social dimension that has received too little attention and too much abuse during the past two centuries' (Fishman 1980: 84).

Primordialists reject the linear association of ethnicity with conflict or racism, rather they emphasises the need to take advantage of the emotional benefit imbued within ethnicity. In this respect, Fishman believes that ethnicity can serve to exert responsibility to preserve and transmit the great heritage of human existence to generation after generation and its unashamed and vigorous devotion to be related to others as kin 'is one of the most powerful motivation of human kind' (Ibid. p. 85). Especially, at times of uncertainty and change, ethnicity could give direction and identity to preserve our own existence. Fishman argues that ethnicity is continuity within the self and within the link to a common ancestor by experiencing being 'bone of their bone, flesh of their flesh, and blood of their blood' (Ibid. pp. 84-85).

In its extreme version, radical primordialists or sociobiologists, such as Pierre van den Berghe (1981), go to the extent of regarding genetic reproductive capacity as the basis, not only of families and clans, but also of wider ethnic groups. Sociobiologists claim the continuity between kinship and ethnicity and

thus consider ethnic groups as wider kinship-based groupings. Pierre van den Berghe holds that kins are likely to cling together than strangers and the chance of cooperation can depend more on the extent of how closely people are related, while cooperation between strangers depends on the incentives or rewards created for all. As he claims that 'an altruistic transactions can be expected if, and only if, the cost benefit ratio of the transaction is smaller than the coefficient of genetic relatedness between the two actors' (van den Berghe 1981: 20). Thus, he argued that because ethnic groups share more genes with co-ethnics therefore they tend to exhibit more self-sacrifice towards kin than non-kin because of, what he identified as an impulse of 'ethnic nepotism' or 'extended kin selection'. In short, people are likely to show nepotistic leaning toward kinsmen and fellow ethnic as 'all social organisms are biologically programmed to be nepotistic, i.e. to behave favourable (or 'altruistically') to others in proportion to their real or perceived degree of common ancestry' (van den Berghe 1995: 360). The main argument of sociobiologist is that a desire of human beings to identify themselves with kith and kin is inherently natural. Ethnicity is like an extended family and therefore it is explained in terms of a biological paradigm or a genetic aspect. For van den Berghe, ethnicity is both primordial and instrumental, as it 'cannot be invented or imagined out of nothing. It can be manipulated, used, exploited, stressed, fused or subdivided, but it must correlate with a pre-existing population bound by preferential endogamy and a common historical experience' (Ibid. p. 361).

With regard to nation-state construction, the primordialists maintain that the drive for efficient, dynamic modern states could directly interact with the drive for personal identity, which is based on primordial ties. The primordialists therefore claim that in areas where the practice of civil politics is deficient or weak, primordial attachments (such as territorial location) could be used to devolve political power and delimit territorial units. In his attempt to establish a link between ethnic identity and state formation, Greetz (1973) claimed that 'in modernizing societies, where the tradition of civil politics is weak...primordial attachments tend, as Nehru discovered, to be repeatedly, in some cases almost continually, proposed and widely acclaimed as preferred bases for the demarcation of autonomous political unit' (Geertz 1973: 26). Geertz warned that 'primordial discontent strives more deeply and is satisfied less easily', while 'civil discontent finds its natural outlet in the seizing, legally or illegally, of the state's apparatus' (Ibid. p. 261). Thus, he argued that 'economic or class or intellectual disaffection threatens revolution, but disaffection based on race, language or culture threatens partitions, irredentism or merger, a redrawing of the very limits of the state, a new definition of its domain (Ibid.). Similarly,

Hameso Y. Seyoum in his optimism regarding ethnicity in Africa (1997) argues that if properly guided, ethnicity could serve in mobilising resources to achieve favourable goals of the human society like social justice, political change and economic development in Africa. He explains that if ethnicity is part and parcel of African identity, it is appropriate to be positive about oneself. 'What is wrong in unashamed love for ones people and land or even emphasising one's own roots in a community or cultural group without necessarily disparaging other groups (Hameso 1996: 03)? Hameso claims that it is favourable and desirable for people who share common symbol, history, destiny, and future aspirations to have their own self-administration. Based on the basic assumption of their approach, primordialists criticise the social constructionist thesis of ethnic groups for its disregard of tradition and the fundamental features of human existence. John Armstrong (1982), for example, claims that ethnicity and nationhood are identical and ethnic identities are instrumental in the gradual emergence of modern national identity and territorial-national formation after a long historical process.

On the other hand, primordialism has been criticized for presenting a static and naturalistic view of ethnicity that mystifies emotion and reduces cultural and social behaviour to biological drives. Jack Eller and Reed Coughlan, for example, argue that: 'Ethnicity is surely an affect issue, making it distinct from strictly material or instrumental issues, but this by no means makes it primordial but has a clear and analysable socio-genesis' (Eller and Coughlan 1993:200). Furthermore, the 'given-ness' of ethnicity does not entail that people are condemned to their ethnic attachment forever. The destiny of man is progressive (Kedourie 1993: 69). The primordial assumption ignores 'change and dissolution of ethnic groups, not to speak of the more modern processes of fusion of ethnic groups through intermarriage' (Llobera 1999: 04). Many ethnic groups are often characterised by internal diversity that reflecting various political commitments, lineage cleavages, ideologies, class and occupational backgrounds, as well as differentially located communities (Forrest 2004: 25).

In addition, primordialists underemphasize people's passions and strong dedication to rational values, sense of duties, classes and other socially constructed supreme goals. Cooperation and intimacy among people do not take place only between kin, but also can extend to non-kin groups based on belief system, ideological commitments, professional interests and other pragmatically required or developed shared commonalities beyond primordial sentiments. Economic, social, political or environmental conditions have a capacity to generate both conflict and cooperation among humankind. Likewise, the primordial

theories generally claim that racial and ethnic identities are affectively fulfilling, but fail to address those circumstances in which such identities are used as the basis for inequalities and might thus be socially 'bad' in breeding ethnic inequalities. Thus, the value dimension of primordialism is as incomplete and inconsistent as the theoretical analyses on which they hinge (Thompson 1989: 181).

### **2.3.1.3 The Instrumentalist Argument**

Instrumentalists highly differ from the primordialist conception of ethnicity. They grasp ethnicity as 'a social construct that emphasizes the sharing of cultural and linguistic characteristic and, kinship roots for the purpose of group mobilization (Messay, 2001: 268). Instrumentalists treat ethnicity as a socially constructed focal point for mobilization. They argue that ethnicity is constructed by particular elite or group driven by competition for political power, economic benefits, social status or other objectives and motives. It is a social, political, and cultural construct for specific and different interests and status groups and consequently an elastic and highly adjustable instrument to serve particular or multiple objectives.

According to Paul Brass (1991) ethnicity or ethnic identity involves a claim to status and recognition, either as a superior group or as group at least equal to other groups; therefore it seeks the articulation and acquisition of social, economic and political rights for the member of the group or for the group as a whole. He describes ethnicity as 'a sense of ethnic identity, consisting of the subjective, symbolic or emblematic use by a group of people of any aspect of culture, in order to differentiate themselves from other groups (Brass, 1991: 18). He holds that the process and benefit of modernisation could unleash ethnic self-consciousness and ethnically based demands if it proceeds unevenly by favouring some ethnic groups or some regions of a country more than others. Thus, 'ethnic communities are created and transformed by particular elites in modernising and in post-industrial society undergoing dramatic social change...through competition between competing elites for political power, economic benefit and social status within and among ethnic category' (Ibid. p. 25). Particularly, competition and conflict between inter-ethnic elites is considered as the major cause behind ethnic self-consciousness and ethnic-based demands. Basically, for instrumentalists, ethnicity is essentially a political phenomenon, in the sense that it is the association of cultural differences with political cleavages (Cohen 1969). It is the identification of political domination and oppression with identity manifestations in order to mobilise and organise political resistance and action. Ethnic consciousness usually has a political connotation as it easily provides the basis for joint political action in case of threat or opportunity. Accordingly, instrumentalists

hold that rather than common descent, shared political experiences and commonalities of political memories are crucial in forging ethnic consciousness and belief in a common ethnicity. According to Barth, ethnicity is a form of social organization that emphasizes cultural difference between groups whose symbolic and social boundaries have been established due to specific ecological, economic, historical or political situations (Barth 1969). Moreover, Barth argues, that 'ethnic identities function as categories of inclusion/exclusion and of interaction about which both ego and alter must agree if their behaviour is to be meaningful' (Barth 1969:132). Thus, to a great extent ethnic leaders or ethnic entrepreneurs are the major agents in articulating ethnic group's political and other factional demands (Barth 1969).

Similar to the instrumentalist approach, rational choice theorists like Hechter (1994) assume that 'individuals adapt means to their ends in such a way as to approach the most efficient manner of achieving them', therefore ethnic group will engage in collective action only when they estimate that by doing so they will receive net individual benefit (Hechter 1986: 268). The major assumption of the rational choice argument is that individuals always act in a manner to maximize their benefit. Also, in some circumstances, individuals could choose to act in accordance with the interest of their ethnic group though their net individual benefit at face value may seem less than the collective benefit.

In the case of Africa, Leroy Vail (1985) posits that, in many cases, individuals' commitment and membership to a particular ethnic group is not induced because they dislike others, or not because being a member of the group made them feel good, 'but rather because the ethnic apparatus of the rural area- the chiefs, 'traditional' courts, petty bourgeois intellectuals, and the systematised 'traditional' values of the 'tribe' as embodied in the ethnic ideology- all worked to preserve the very substantial interests which these men had in their home areas' (Vail 1985:15). Accordingly, Vail that ethnicity has been attractive both to the elites and ordinary men in Africa, particularly, appealed to the elites because it can ensure them a leadership role in the rising political mobilisation. And for the ordinary African men, ethnicity could help them bring a measure of control to the difficult situations in which they have found themselves in their day-to-day life. Moreover, Vail explains that appeal to ethnicity in Africa is also made 'to conserve a way of life that was in the process of being rapidly undermined by the growth of capitalist relations' and then, it may be interpreted as 'a form of popular resistance to the forces that were reshaping African lives' (Ibid.).

In many of ethnic groups in the Horn of Africa, historical memories and ideology based on real historical event or myths such as population movements, conflicts, alliances and other similar events also played an important role in the creation and maintenance of ethnic identities (Fukui 1994: 33), (Lamphear 1994: 63), (Matsuda 1994: 61). In his study of the formation and transformation of ethnic boundaries in the Omo valley of southern-Ethiopia, Katsuyoshi Fukui argues that: 'It is obvious that an ethnic group is not a separate and impervious unit, but one that is in a constant state of flux in relation to its neighbours, merging with one, separating from another, over the course of time' (Fukui 1994: 44). Similarly, David Turton (1986) in his study of ethnic groups in southern Ethiopia finds that in a number of cases, ethnic identities at the periphery have been formed through relationship with other groups. He also discerns a phenomenon whereby a minority group accepted subordination and stigmatisation by the majority group in return for receiving protection against other groups (Turton 1986: 158). Ties formed between groups therefore can also reinforce ethnic identities of the partners (Matsuda 1994: 60).

Furthermore, inclusion of many ethnic groups in the same territory does not necessarily bring ethnic conflict or ethnic hostilities. In his study of ethnicity in the Sudan and Uganda border, Tim Allen (1999: 121) explores how generational durable peaceful relations between two ethnic groups in Uganda's villages was turned into ethnic cleansing because of actions and behaviours of ethnocratic leaders at the state's centre<sup>1</sup>. Similarly, Wendy James in her study of ethnic groups in the Sudan-Ethiopia border area, observed how threats of persecution on basis of ethnic identification had contributed to a growing sense of collective ethnic identity or ethnic 'visibility' for survival among the people who found themselves caught involuntarily in a conflict (James 1994: 162). She argues that 'visibility' as a distinct ethnic group can be both advantageous and disadvantageous, according to whether one is seeking protection and aid, or avoiding attack and victimization (Ibid. p. 163).

In a study of ethnic conflict in the Horn of Africa, Markakis also concludes that 'ethnicity is an imperative embedded in the foundations of the political order and functions as a controlling factor in the political process, long before an ethnic movement appears to challenge that order' (Markakis 1994:

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<sup>1</sup> Durable peaceful relations for generations between the Acholi and Madi ethnic groups in Uganda was turned into mass murder and expulsion because of Idi Amin's brutality in 1971 in the execution of hundreds of Acholi soldiers that had served the preceding Milton Obote regime and also due to Milton Obote's revengeful policies when he returned to power in 1980, with the support of Tanzania, the hostile relation between Acholi and Madi was further exacerbated.

236). Markakis argues that ethnicity has become catalysts for political conflict in the Horn of Africa due to two objective factors: competition for resources in condition of great scarcity and the role the state plays in controlling the allocation of these resources (Ibid. p. 217).

In such a situation, ethnicity has become the preferred and most efficient basis for political mobilization against the 'ethnocratic state', whose capacity in the distribution of resources is paramount. In his analysis of ethnicity in Africa, Messay (2001) also argues that 'the African ruling elite have fashioned 'a patrimonial system of authority' intent on excluding competitors and rewarding followers. Ethnicity and ethnonationalism is born of protest against this exclusion, for the purpose of controlling the political resources of the state' (Messay 2001: 272). Conflict is not waged for its own sake, but for desired objectives (Fukui 1994: 44). The postcolonial African states 'introduced a new prize for rival ethnic communities over which to fight and a frightening new force with which to contend' (Smith 2000: 22). Hence, in some cases, the rise of ethnic identity is attributable to specific types of interactions between the leadership of centralizing states and the elites from the local ethnic groups, especially but not exclusively on the peripheries of those states (Brass 1991: 29). 'Conflicts either between competing landholders and alien conquerors, between competing religious elites or between religious leaders and local aristocracy that the first stage of ethnic transformation often begin' (Ibid).

In these respects, Markakis, in his 'situational perspective' approach based in the context of the Horn of Africa, concludes that: 'an ethnic group as a political actor is a product of the situation, not of history, and what mobilises its members to take collective action is concern for future prospects, not an atavistic attachments to the past' (Markakis 1994: 236). Ethnic groups' sense of sharing the same material and social prospects are more important than ethnic identity because identity is defined in the process of interaction- co-operation, competition, confrontation, even war- among groups (Ibid). In a similar vein, though Forrest (2004: 02) argues that collaborative political behaviour in precolonial times- among villages, localities, groups, leaders, and polities- provides historical and cultural subtexts for the assertion of regional autonomy, he states that these precolonial traditions cannot explain the rise or expansion of autonomy-seeking ethnic or regional movements. Rather, he emphasises the overarching instrumental, situational, ascriptive and economic factors that were present in colonial and post-colonial periods. He asserts that 'when ascriptive and instrumental political behaviour coincides with the



evolution of constructivist and materialist factors, the conditions for subnationalist movement mobilization are favourable' (Ibid.).

Consequently, Messay argues 'that contrary to atavistic remnant, ethnicity is a strong social force that must be properly considered and managed in order to obliterate its destructive roles in politics' (Messay 2001: 283). Without careful approach and proper treatment, ethnic plurality therefore would lead to conflict production, as the elite becomes the key actors in the creation of ethnic ideology and ethnic politics for acquisition of political power. Political power is the focal point of ethnic claims because it constitutes one of the important 'rituals by which status is determined'. In this climate of elite competition 'a fear of ethnic domination and suppression is a motivating force for the acquisition of power as an end and it is also sought for confirmation of ethnic status' (Horowitz 1985: 187). Public offices or honorific state responsibilities could be used to instrumentalise discrimination or favouritism in distribution of statuses and resources. Particularly, in multiethnic African societies an exclusive access to state's resources and power by a particular group could create a process of 'social closure' that can alienate others groups from playing any significant role in politics and economics. An ethnocratic state that monopolises politics and economics in favour of a specific ethnic group is the major breeding ground for producing ethnonationalist movements. As Max Weber states that ethnic group 'can has a political meaning, it easily provides the basis for joint political action on the part of the group members or *Volksgenossen* who consider one another as blood relatives' (Roth and Wittich 1968: 394).

Aware of the potential difficulties involved in nation-building, the instrumentalists belief to consider ethnic identity as a core criterion in state construction may be very awkward since there is always incompatibility between state territories and ethnolinguistic homogeneity. On the other hand, the awful option of using brutal force to bring about the desired homogeneous space with a single language and uniform conception of history has become difficult and also considered to be ineffective in many places.

In sum, the core argument of instrumentalism is that ethnicity is flexible and changeable; circumstances can shape or change the symbolic and social boundaries that define the ethnic group. Ethnicity is therefore dynamic and changes according to new circumstances; group shifts their content and boundary according to circumstances. Individuals or groups do not belong to a particular ethnic group on a permanent basis. Through the process of fission and fusion, and other considerations like sense of

security or material interests, people change their ethnic affiliation or can belong to more than one ethnic group at the same time.

The critique of instrumentalists points out firstly, the instrumentalist's underestimation of the subjective and affective side of human society by reducing them to instruments of mere material or other interests by undervaluing 'the roles of both the sacred and ethnicity in kindling mass fervour and self-sacrifice' (Smith 2000: 25). In Africa, ethnic groups often retained a significant portion of their precolonial linguistic and cultural identity (Forrest 2004: 29). Secondly, the instrumentalism claim of excessive mutability of ethnic group is challenged by experiences of some nations in which identities are more fixed for longer period of time or have shown strong ethnic component like in France, Greece and Switzerland. Anthony Smith argues that: '...the civic-territorial and ethnocultural ideals of the nation are closely interwoven...in logic there may be a good case for such distinction, but in practice it is difficult to find any examples of a 'pure' cultural nationalism, freed from its ethnic moorings. It is certainly not to be found in Europe' (Smith 2000: 18-19). Thirdly, instrumentalist's approach is also criticised for its exaggerated belief in the power of elite manipulation of the masses and neglecting of the wider cultural environment in which elite competition and rational maximization take place (Hutchinson and Smith 1996: 09). Forrest explains that in Africa, 'certain aspects of social and cultural lineage enable contemporary peoples to identify with specific precolonial collectivities... even if identities did not always congeal as ethnic group in precolonial Africa, there may not have been as clean a break in social continuity as hard-line constructivists presume' (Forrest 2005: 28). Instrumentalist and primordialist influences are in many cases closely interlinked. Ethnic groups behaviour are influenced by a 'double action' between elites' goal and individuals' conceptualisation of identity. It involves a dynamic interaction (Ibid. p. 10). Fourthly, the instrumentalists approach is criticized for reducing qualitatively different beliefs into some putatively uniform 'real' cause, for example, 'interest', 'power' 'emotion' due to reductionism thereby denying the relative independence of the achievements of the mind and the plurality of orientation of human action (Grosby 1994:167).

#### **2.3.1.4 Summary and relevance to Ethiopia**

Despite the various approaches and interpretations, as presented above, ethnicity remains a theoretical challenge and an empirical nuisance. It is often associated with conflict, instability and carnage. The cause can vary from case to case. Though there is no necessary connection between ethnicity and

conflict as Horowitz argues, the basis for confrontation may emerge due to the inclusion of two or more ethnic communities within a single or adjacent territory of a state characterised by discriminatory and uneven status and resource allocations. 'An ethnic contrast that has produced an extraordinary amount of conflict in many African, Asian, and Caribbean states is the juxtaposition of 'backward' and 'advanced' groups' (Horowitz 1985: 148). A system of oppression and subjugation of ethnic groups, elitist manipulations for autonomy or separation, reassertion of a once-predominant role, uneven regional development and other visible or putative inequalities could trigger ethnic hostilities and conflicts. Particularly, when the economic inequalities and the lop-sided distribution of political rewards in multiethnic states are attached to specific ethnic groups due to the process of state formation and expansion, the likelihood of separatist ethnic movements and conflicts could be high. As Ted Gurr (1994) in his cross-national study of communal based conflicts, shows that in many instances ethnic tensions and conflicts are more likely when certain groups perceive discrimination or exploitation in the context of state formation. Gurr notes that ethnic conflicts are usually centre on three general issues: 'the desire for 'exit' or independence from the state, the demand for greater autonomy within the state or the recognition and protection of minority interests within a plural society (Gurr 1994: 111). He also adds that 'ethnic identity and interest per se do not risk unforeseen ethnic wars; rather, the danger is hegemonic elites who use the state to promote their own people's interest at the expense of others (Gurr 2000: 64). Thus, he warns that 'the push of state corruption and minority repression probably will be a more important source of future ethnic wars than the 'pull' of opportunity' (Ibid).

Similarly, Joshua Forrest (2004), in his investigation of the process of political mobilisation of subnational movements in Africa, argues that growing tendencies toward regional assertions and autonomy seeking are increasingly challenging the African states (Forrest 2004: 20). He enumerates four overarching processes that were manifest in the colonial period and the post-independence era as important causative factors that could help to explain the expansion of autonomy or secession seeking subnational movements in contemporary Africa. These are the history of state intervention in regional affairs ('situationalism and constructivism'), long-term economic inequalities ('material'), individual's conscious or ascriptive adherence to ethnic or regional identity pattern ('ascriptive identity'), and manipulation by regional political leaders or elites ('instrumentalist leadership') (Ibid, pp. 9-14). He, furthermore, suggests that the growth of autonomy-seeking ethnoregional movements and the pattern of mobilization in the present-day Africa necessitates a negotiated political framework based on

indigenously legitimate forms of power that can provide sufficient autonomy at the regional or local level (Ibid. p. 250). Another scholar also maintains that 'if indeed ethnicity and ethnic organisations provide security to groups in an uncertain environment, then attempts to replace or outlaw them may have the effect of increasing insecurity' (Horowitz 1985: 567-8). As Connor (1994: 83) points out that ethnonational group members are 'obsessed with a vision of freedom from domination by non-members' and therefore they inclined to persistently struggle for self-rule or autonomy (Ibid.). 'A fear of ethnic domination and suppression is a motivating force for the acquisition of power as an end and it is also sought for confirmation of ethnic status' (Horowitz 1985: 187).

Understanding such circumstances, it is essential to embark on a sensitively designed political engineering in order to device appropriate power-sharing frameworks that could mitigate destructive conflicts in deeply divided societies. Rather optimistically, Horowitz asserts that even if ethnic problems are intractable, they are not altogether without hope; 'even in the most severely divided societies, ties of blood do not lead to ineluctably to rivers of blood' (Ibid. p. 682). Power-sharing political frameworks that could encourage inter-ethnic cooperation by ensuring recognition of some prominent group's rights could be one option to minimise group's resentments and mitigate destructive conflicts. As Gurr suggests that 'with a little bit of luck and a great deal of international engagement, ethnic conflict's heyday will belong to the last century' (Gurr 2000: 64). Horowitz also stresses on the importance of timing in engineering a political process and structure, because 'accommodation long delayed may be accommodation ultimately denied' (Horowitz 1985: 617). Although prior prescription or commitment to a single institutional form may not be helpful, federalism is often considered to be an appropriate arrangement in the provision of accommodative and flexible political frameworks notwithstanding ethnic cleavages and competitions.

In the Ethiopian context, in many cases, the emergence of ethnic consciousness and ethnic mobilization may not due to inherent atavistic or primordial sentiments, but due to social, political and economic reasons. However primordial factors such as putative common descent, ancestral linkage, language and the like have become a foundation for nurturing of solidarity and political mobilization. It is not to claim that ethnic classification and solidarity is a widespread phenomenon among the population. It is more common among the elites than the ordinary people (Messay 2002). Three major intellectual perspectives exist in Ethiopia's political debate in connection to Ethnicity. The first perspective believes that the

Ethiopian society has reached a stage of common identity by nurturing a common Ethiopian citizenship by obliterating primordial attachments and loyalties (Daniel 1992; Alem 1993). The second perspective believes that Ethiopia is a home for numerous distinct ethnic groups that need to get some form of political representation and self-administration (Merera 2003; Fasil 1997). The third perspective argues that the Ethiopian state was established through a series of conquests and colonization of various nations and societies such as Oromo and Somali, which were beyond its jurisdiction (Hassen 1999; Assefa 1993; Dolal 1992).

At the political level, there have been ethnic organizations in the name of various ethnic groups such as Afar, Oromo, Somali, Sidama, and Tigrayan since the 1970s. At present due to the policy of ethnic restructuring and ethnic entitlement since 1991 there are nearly hundred ethnic organizations that are legally registered in Ethiopia (National Election Board of Ethiopia 2005). Although a detail study is not carried out on 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 objective rather than primordial or atavistic drives. In almost all cases, the claims for ethnic mobilization and solidarity have been made in the context of redressing 'injustices of the past', reclaiming of dignified existence and self-administration, developing of culture and usage of languages which were ignored and barred in the past. These claims are more of a demand for social status, political power and economic benefits (instrumental) rather than preserving or nurturing relationships that make a bond from generation to generation or recognising the overpowering and coercive congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on (primordial). However, putative generational bond or primordial attachment has been exploited to advance these social, political and economic objectives and this has inclined to create a 'permanent' cleavage that could widen and has opened a venue for further exclusion, discrimination and carrying out other horrible acts.

Markais (1994) claims that the rise of ethnic mobilisation and movement in the Horn of Africa (including Ethiopia) has been aiming in controlling or weakening the state that has a great role in the allocation of resources, political power and social status. Especially, when the central state is identified or accused with ethnic category or ethnic favouritism, the chance for ethnic mobilisation would be high. In this connection, the central rule in Ethiopia has always been accused of favouring particular ethnic groups. Prior to 1991, some ethnic and regional liberation movements from Eritrea, Tigray, Oromo and

Somali described the central rule as an 'Amhara rule', and this gave an advantage for the movements to mobilise significant supporters and fighters in ethnic lines. A call for a 'primordial' solidarity has become a crucial factor in consolidating a struggle and fight to achieve non-primordial political, economic and social objectives.

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 principle of ethnic solidarity. Thus, it can be plausible to assert that the rise of ethnic solidarity in Ethiopia is not because of primordial tendencies but rather because of the social and historical factors of suppression, alienation, differentiation and exclusion. It is misleading to describe the rise of ethnic resentments and demands in Ethiopia in terms of 'primordialism' as it may discolour the essence of the problem. It is not because people wanted to preserve or glorify their 'primordial' identity, but because they wanted to protect their social, political and economic rights in the face of alienation, subordination and domination of the southward expansion of the central rule. As Messay eloquently put it that 'exportable products such as coffee and gold were already being produced [in the south]. Land was plentiful and most appropriate for cash crop products of whatever kind. There emerged a form of ethnic mentality imbued with a sense of superiority. This ideological evolution had one single goal: to justify land appropriation and install the rights of private property. (Messay 1999: 53). Moreover, 'the ethnic difference made land extortion easier both ideologically and politically' (Ibid.).

Thus, ethnic classification and categorisation in Ethiopia is a social-historical construct, which has been born out of a resistance against the injustice of a central rule that identified itself (and also identified by others) in terms of a '*Shewan* tribalism'. However, in the process the 'force of blood' has brought emotionalism and rigidity among the ethnic movements and strengthened primordial sentiments in order to build politically significant social movement by exaggerating claims and distinctiveness. This dissertation will examine in detail the emerging trends in Ethiopia since 1991, in subsequent chapters, as it is part of the major focus of the study.

### **2.3.2 Ethnic Federalism**

The above discussion reveals that ethnicity is a very elusive and fluid phenomenon both at empirical and theoretical levels; under such circumstances the task of constructing a political framework like

federalism using such elusive and fluid conceptualisation would certainly be difficult. The discussion below will attempt to bring some of the major theoretical arguments with regard to the issues of compatibility/incompatibility between ethnicity and federalism. It will also try to examine the possible tensions between federalism and ethnicity.

Though it remains difficult and complex to establish a federal arrangement based on ethnicity, many scholars in the field argue that one of the characteristics of federalism is its aspiration and purpose to generate and maintain both unity and diversity simultaneously (Elazar 1987: 67; Watts 1999: 06; Agranoff 1998: 11). Although Elazar argued that federal systems operate best in society with sufficient homogeneity of fundamental interests, he thought of Switzerland as the first modern federation built on indigenous ethnic and linguistic differences that were considered permanent and worth accommodating. Elazar recognized that political integration – federal or otherwise – is likely to be more difficult in places in which strongly rooted primordial groups continue to dominate political and social life (Elazar 1987: 191). Nevertheless, in his view, federalism might be the best political framework in the existence of essentially permanent religious, ethnic, cultural, or social groups around which political life must be organized. Besides, he added ‘territorial divisions of power can also be used to protect minorities and minority communities by allowing them greater autonomy within their own political jurisdictions’ (Ibid. p. 73). He recommended, particularly, in most of the Third World countries in which ethnic, religious or linguistic diversities are deep, federal arrangement which might be the only helpful device that could help to create inter-ethnic cooperation and co-existence by erecting ‘good fences’ that could maintain a certain degree of territorial separation.

Accordingly, with the aim of accommodating ethnic diversity, Elazar specified two forms of federal frameworks (Ibid. p. 236). The first form is the structure of a polity cutting across ethnic cleavages and thereby diluting them through the creation of a cross cutting civic community and, the second form is structuring a comprehensive polity to give each people a primary means of expression through one or more of its constituent polities. Elazar, however, held the idea that federalism should transcend the recognition of differences eventually by structuring relationships that permit the groups bearing those differences to function together within the same political system. As a result, Elazar supposed that under certain circumstances, federalism offers the possibility of creating a civic community that transcends the

divisions among ethnic collectivities and thereby makes possible the establishment of civil society and workable political order (Ibid. p. 232).

Generally, Elazar recognized that federal arrangements could be structured on the bases of territorially segmented ethnic, linguistic or religious groupings, but he also acknowledged the trouble associated with institutionalising primordial entities in political organization because federalism requires negotiation and compromise, while ethnonationalist demands could be uncompromising and thus make federalism more difficult, if not impossible. As a result he maintained that 'ethnic nationalism is probably the strongest force against federalism' because ethnic ideology could undermine power sharing arrangements and consequently, ethnic federations could degenerate into civil war. Taking this aspect into consideration, he preferred to promote political order based on non-primordial or civic ties whenever the condition permits, but without disqualifying ethno-linguistic federal arrangement where the purpose is to promote both self-rule and shared-rule which are far better than more violent and genocide-like solution such as 'ethnic cleansing' with impunity or perhaps the imposition of very severe authoritarian rule.

Similarly, Lijphart (1977; 1994; 2002) also advocates some kind of political engineering that can provide territorial or political space for ethnic communities in which they could exercise some form of autonomy within the context of the larger political framework as well as participation in the political decision-making process within the larger political framework. In his consociational theory Lijphart stresses that 'group autonomy' and 'power-sharing' (or 'sharing of executive power') as two essential elements in establishing a common political framework in deeply divided societies (Lijphart 1994). In this respect, 'group autonomy' and 'power-sharing' could be identical with 'self-rule' and 'shared-rule' respectively which are the essential elements in federal arrangements. Accordingly, 'power-sharing' means the participation of the representatives of all significant groups in political decision-making, especially at the executive level and, group autonomy means that these groups have authority to run their own internal affairs, especially in the areas of education and culture' (Lijphart 2002: 39). He also believes that groups would find satisfaction in the ability to manage their own affairs, and that would contribute to stable democracy (Lijphart 1977).



If ethnic groups are geographically concentrated, Lijphart argued federalism could offer an excellent opportunity for group autonomy. Thus, by accepting the inevitability of drawing federal arrangements based on ethnic boundaries in case of geographically concentrated ethnic groups, he recommended that federal framework with relatively many and small constituent units could make the federal dividing lines coincide as much as possible with the ethnic boundaries (Lijphart 2002: 51). Nevertheless, Lijphart stresses that the task of safeguarding group autonomy and minority rights in federal systems should also contain the following four additional institutional characteristics: ‘The degree of bicameralism—with two houses that have equal power and are differently constituted as the strongest form—the degree of strong and active judicial review, the degree of constitutional rigidity [that are difficult to amend, but not unamendable], and the degree of independence of the central bank’ (Ibid. p. 52).

If ethnic groups are geographically dispersed and synchronized, Lijphart (1977) recommends ‘consociational democracy’ which include four essential attributes: grand coalition, segmented autonomy, proportionality and minority veto. Grand coalition entails power sharing of all significant groups in political power, particularly in executive power. Segmented autonomy entails a delegation of decision-making power to every significant group. Proportionality entails that political representation, civil service appointments, and allocation of public funds, etc. should consider proportion of each significant groups. Lastly, minority veto entails the power given for minority groups to veto any decision that can put their vital interest at stake due to majorities’ outvotes. Empirically, Lijphart enumerates a variety of more or less functional power-sharing models in deeply divided societies. Some of the models were such as executive power sharing in a form of grand coalition cabinet of ethnic parties like in Malaysia and South Africa; equal representation of ethnolinguistic or other groups in government like in the Belgian cabinets; and proportional shares of ministerial positions to the different linguistic groups, states and regions like in India (Lijphart 2002: 46).

Generally, Lijphart emphasises for the importance of erecting consociational or constitutional frameworks including ethnic federalism in deeply divided polities in which essentially permanent religious, ethnic, cultural, or social groups could be represented or structured. He holds that deep ethnic and other societal divisions have become a most serious source of violent conflict and continue to present a grave problem to the establishment and maintenance of democracy in divided societies partly

because of the failure of constitutional designers to deal constructively with the problem. As a result, he maintains that power-sharing, autonomy, and other aspects of the consociational model can be an effective means to obliterate destructive conflicts in deeply divided societies. In parallel with Lijphart's assertion, Gurr argues that 'those truly looking to reduce ethnic bloodshed should embrace autonomy [within the existing state system], not fear it' (Gurr 2000: 56). A regional autonomy could be an optimal approach that assures a functional place of communal groups through positive sum coexistence. Thus he argues, that 'serious ethnic disputes should be best settled by negotiation and mutual accommodation', and 'democracy also implies resolving civil conflicts by peaceful means' (Ibid. p. 58).

On the other hand, scholars like Donald Horowitz, argue that federal arrangement based on ethnic homogeneity or ethnic homeland is detrimental to the creation of inter-ethnic cooperation. Horowitz recognises the importance of power-sharing and territorial devolution, as he states that territorial compartmentalization with devolution of generous power can have tranquillising effects in countries with territorially separate groups, significant sub-ethnic divisions and serious conflict at the centre (Horowitz 1985: 614). However, he emphasises more the 'incentive approaches' that could create inter-ethnic harmony within a shared political framework 'for societies severely divided by ascriptive groups, whether the lines of division are said to be national, ethnic, racial, or religious' (Horowitz 2002: 19). Horowitz holds the idea that group identities are flexible and therefore political frameworks that discourage crystallization of identities would be the better approach to promote inter-ethnic cooperation in divided societies (Ibid. p. 25). Furthermore, he adds that: 'Even states that start out multipolar, with several ethnic groups, can become bipolar and bifurcated—witness the growth of northern versus southern groups in many African states—thus obviating the need for a coalition across group lines for the group that is slightly larger' (Ibid. p. 20).

Moreover, Horowitz contends that a political framework that crystallizes and legitimises ethnic cleavages would be of limited utility to bring about compromised power-sharing arrangement in states with disparate ethnic groups, because elites of majority groups would not be so easily self-abnegating as to give some of their political power and privileges to the minority groups. He maintains that both ethnic majority rule and ethnic minority rule are very ineffective and destructive type of arrangements in ethnically divided societies. Majority rule permits perpetual domination of the major group or the 'tyranny of the majority ethnic group'. If a minority ethnic group is in power, it is likely for it to resort

to authoritarian, centralized, statist policies, controlling the economy and societies at the exclusion of the majority of the population as has been the case in many parts of Africa (Horowitz 1994:46). In his study on ethnocentrism, Horowitz, claims that 'educated elites in some countries to be less ethnocentric than their followers, in others more, in some others neither less nor more, and in still others more with respect to some groups and less or the same with respect to other groups' (Horowitz 2002: 21). Likewise, he explains that ethnic leaders who have compromised across ethnic lines are paying a high price by being blamed or labelled by counter-elites for betrayal and sell-out of the ethnic interest (Ibid. p. 21).

Horowitz (Ibid. p. 23) makes the point that in severely divided societies, matters such as equal control of the state, the designation of official languages and educational issues, such as languages of instruction, the contents of curricula are very divisive question on which groups are not very willing to concede; they are more worried about 'who gets what' in a kind of zero-sum competition. As a result, approaches or models that could crystallize or encourage ethnic entitlement may not be a viable option to bring inter-ethnic compromise and cooperation, because of the fact that 'divisive issues are not easy to compromise' and symbolic demands such as language seem to be less compromisable than claims that can be quantified (Horowitz 1985: 566). Consequently, he argues that hybrid approaches that reward inter-ethnic accommodation coupled with autonomy would be required to quell exclusive and egoistic ethnic demands. Autonomy coupled with incentives for accommodative structures like carefully crafted connections of the regional population with the centre, such as vote pooling arrangements (e.g. to set a requirement for victory the getting of some votes from other groups than their own) are essential. For Horowitz the most important objective in divided societies should be to design a constitutional and institutional process that ought to demonstrate to the different groups that accommodation is a prerequisite.

Aware of the pitfalls, Horowitz warns that hesitation about allowing recognition and autonomy can also trigger separatism tendencies: 'Late, grudging devolution, coupled with a view at the centre that members of a group residing in the autonomous territory should henceforth look exclusively to the regional unit for their satisfaction, is far more likely to encourage departure from the state' (Horowitz 2002: 23). He considers that 'where groups are territorially concentrated, devolution may have utility, not because it provided 'self-determination,' but because, once power is devolved, it becomes somewhat more difficult to determine who the self is' (Horowitz 1985: 617). Since homogeneity doesn't exist often

because of the likely intra-ethnic cleavages and these may be conducive to promote inter-ethnic cooperations.

Related to federalism, Horowitz (Ibid. pp. 613-4) argues that in severely divided societies, such as in Nigeria, India and Malaysia, federalism has helped to reduce conflicts at the centre because many contested issues become state-level issues within ethnic groups; it has dispersed the flow of conflict in linguistically homogeneous states into sub-ethnic channels; it provides career opportunities for groups not well represented at the centre and it helps to restructure institutions so as to alter ethnic balances and alignment. He also observed that ethnic federalism has mitigated or exacerbated minorities' exclusion: 'a group that is a minority at the centre may be a majority in one or more states and may be in a position to rule these states, at the same time it may also produce other minority groups that feel exclusion and domination at the local areas' (Ibid. p. 617).

Illustratively, Horowitz considers the federal arrangements in Nigerian and Malaysia as two discernible models of federalism that aim to promote interethnic cooperation. The Nigerian federal arrangement is 'using homogeneous and heterogeneous states, at first whittled down the power of the largest Northern group, thereby heightening incentives for interethnic cooperation at the federal level.' The Malaysian arrangement encourages 'interethnic cooperation at the state level in heterogeneous states, so that state politicians who find their way to the centre have already had experienced in dealing with leaders of other groups' (Ibid. pp. 619-20). A federal arrangement that encourages competition among ethnically heterogeneous units against another and institutionalises competition based on state's interests rather than ethnic interests would provide opportunities for interethnic cooperation (Ibid. p. 620). The author also warns that in cases of heterogeneous constituting units, power devolution should not endanger interethnic cooperation that can be built up within the constituting units. Issues need to be defined in terms of state's interests rather than ethnic interests. The gist of Horowitz's position is that: 'Federalism is not for everybody. The federal judgement must be a differentiated and prudent one. Even so, it is safe to say that federalism or at least some devolution has conflict-reducing possibilities for many more countries than have so far contemplated it' (Ibid. p. 619).

In more or less a similar way, Yash Ghai (2002) also makes the point that a federal model or territorial autonomy could be worthwhile in maintaining unity while conceding claims of self-government by

allowing 'ethnic or other groups claiming a distinct identity to exercise direct control over affairs of special concern to them while allowing the larger entity to exercise those powers which cover common interests' (Ghai 2002: 155). He explains that naturally, ethnic federations emphasize diversity and multiplicity of values and may provide representation for marginal groups such as indigenous peoples whose traditional culture is central to their way of life. Thus, he cautions that since over 1500 'nation-states' will not be a feasible possibility, multiethnic states based on mutual recognition of diversity are inescapable (Ibid. p. 142). Though group rights and autonomy may meddle in the private sphere, he mentions that regimes of human right, which are well known by their adherence to individual rights, also campaign for the necessity of group entitlements.

Nevertheless, Ghai acknowledges, that recognition of diversity is not always a virtue. Recognition of autonomy or diversity was used for the purpose of discrimination in the colonial times and used for edifice of oppression and exclusion in apartheid South Africa. Real or alleged past injustices are also used to wage revengeful atrocities against neighbouring or coexisting communities. In addition, ethnic entitlement could obscure social and economic interests and may strengthen the inclination to exaggerate primordial differences and appeal for separation or prejudices that could be to the interests and benefits of the elites. As a result he argues that: 'Whether the political recognition of diversity is fair or beneficial depends on the context, the preferences and aspirations of the various communities, and the forms that political recognition takes' (Ibid. p. 144). Providing entitlement for ethnic groups should also be coupled with policies that could layout incentive mechanisms in promoting cooperative and integrative communities that could be bases for social and political cohesiveness and viability of a political polity by discouraging crystallization or accentuating real or putative cleavages. Generally Ghia maintains that claiming or enjoying autonomy is not necessarily a destructive phenomenon, but political elites at the centre or region could play harmful roles to take the matter to extreme sides.

Moreover, Ghai draws the conclusion that in ethnic federations, the normal tensions of federalism like resource redistribution and regional influence are likely to be aggravated by assuming ethnic dimensions. 'Inter-regional mobility is likely to be contentious and distinction between the private and public spheres may be less sharp than in other types of federations' (Ibid. p. 158). Furthermore, he argues that federal or autonomy arrangements need great administrative capacity, political skills, and abundant resources therefore narrow group or ethnic interests alone may not create a desirable

arrangement. It could produce 'poorly equipped provinces struggling to carry out new responsibilities which they neither understood nor wanted or producing less efficient bureaucracies or with politicians not given to compromises. The result, therefore, could be domination by central bureaucrats and curtailment of autonomy (Ibid. p. 160-1).

On the other side of the argument, there are scholars (Nordlinger 1972; Lipset 1983) who completely reject or exclude ethnic federalism in deeply divided societies by claiming that ethnic entitlement in deeply divided societies is a slippery slope that will lead to secession and partition. They argue that autonomy reinforces rather than reduces ethnic groups' self-aggrandizement and narrow interests. Eric A. Nordlinger (1972), for example, maintains that ethnocentric groups are unlikely to be satisfied with autonomy in a federal system and thus would press for outright secession. He states that: 'The combination of territorially distinctive segments and federalism's grant of partial autonomy sometimes provides additional impetus to demands for greater autonomy', and, when these demands are refused, 'secession and civil war may follow' (Ibid. p. 32). In the same vein, Seymour Martin Lipset (1983) opposed the formation of federal units on the basis of ethnic, religious, or linguistic areas and advocated for a federal arrangement that 'crosscuts the social structure' by emphasising that 'democracy needs cleavage within linguistic or religious groups, not between them' (Lipset 1983: 81). He argues for a federal structure that 'increases the opportunity for multiple sources of cleavages by adding regional interests and values to the others which crosscut the social structure' (Ibid. p. 32). With respect to ideology and a political process in the post-colonial era in Africa, federalism was considered as insertion of an element of 'paralysis into the state machinery, thus the outstanding ideology of the time was a strong unitary state that could overcome 'tribalism' and 'balkanisation'. According to Kwame Nkrumah, 'in order to improve effectively and quickly the serious damage done to Africa as a result of Imperialism and colonialism, the emergent African states need strong, unitary states, capable of exercising a central authority for the mobilization of the national effort and the co-ordination of reconstruction and progress. For this reason, I consider that even the idea of regional federations in Africa is fraught with many dangers. There is the danger of the development of regional loyalties, fighting against each other' (Nkrumah 1963: 214). In the same period, Rothchild (1966) also reflects that as African ideologue and politicians have considered concessions to tribal and ethnic autonomy as divisive manoeuvre, thus Africa 'continues to need a formula which will reconcile the requirements of central leadership with the demands of regional autonomy. At the same time, classical federalism is ideologically suspect, and the

political, economic and social conditions of the continent are such as virtually to preclude the adoption of federal model at this time. (Rothchild 1966: 292). As a result, Rothchild hoped for the emergence of some model of 'neo-federal constitutional system which owe their life and vitality to African rather than European initiatives'. He echoes optimism that 'reconciliation constitutional systems are not dead in Africa; they have yet to find their African expression' (Ibid. p. 293). Although four decades have passed without fulfilling the optimism, Africa is still struggling to search for viable state structures that suit its ethnonational configuration. Consequently, the ethnic-federal model in Ethiopia may be considered as an attempt by the Africans to constitute a reconciliatory constitutional system to address the ethnonational demands, though its applications are apparently producing contrary results.

## **2.4 Summary**

The theoretical discussion concerning federal arrangement in multiethnic societies shows the difficulties associated with structuring federalism on bases of ethnicity and other similar primordial identities. In most cases, ethnicity is viewed as an elusive and complex phenomenon that can create challenges for political organizations. Paradoxically, ethnic solidarity appeals to a primordial attachment of 'kin and kith' in order to achieve political objectives, which are mostly non-primordial. Nevertheless, despite its nebulosity, ethnicity is becoming a reality in mobilizing large numbers of communities under its ethos and desires. The most important question, therefore, is what kind of political frameworks are ready to cope with this elusive and fluid but increasingly expanding social phenomenon. As Walker Connor (1999) articulates that ethnonational movements' are found worldwide, they

'are to be found in Africa (for example, Ethiopia), Asia (Sri Lanka), Eastern Europe (Romania), Western Europe (France), North America (Guatemala), South America (Guyana), and Oceania (New Zealand). The list includes countries that are old (United Kingdom), as well as new (Bangladesh), large (Indonesia), as well as small (Fiji), rich (Canada), as well as poor (Pakistan), authoritarian (Sudan) as well as democratic (Belgium), Marxist-Leninist (China) as well as militantly anti-Marxist (Turkey). The list also includes countries which are Buddhist (Burma), Christian (Spain), Moslem (Iran), Hindu (India) and Judaic (Israel). (Connor 1999: 163-4).

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 centralisation, assimilation, expulsion or ethnic cleansing have brought about unending and colossal violence and humanitarian crises. As a result, there is general agreement- both scholarly and empirically- that there must be a less violent and non-offensive political design that could accommodate rather than aimed to obliterate ethnic diversity. Although, the primordialists' emphasis on the 'givens' and 'permanency' of ethnic identities is highly exaggerated, the instrumentalists assumption of fluidity of ethnic identities is equally overstated. Ethnic identities and ethnic solidarities have become reduced and subtle when societies find other solidarities on the bases of professionalism, class, political opinion and other opportunities. On the other hand, ethnic identities and solidarities become essential and meaningful when people are facing real or imagined threats of persecution or discrimination based on their identities; and it is in such situations ethnic solidarity are consolidated until the menace has subsided. Some identities have remained solid and active for many generations due to unforgettable past experiences and on-going threats and opportunities, while others have diluted early and easily. As a result, the existing societal relations in the political, social and economic arenas and other factor like historical memories are very important in shaping the pattern and magnitude of ethnic relations and ethnic solidarity. Needless to say, encouraging ethnic entitlement simply because of glorification of primordial attachments could be a recipe for institutionalising ethnic hostilities and ethnic competition that could represent serious risks for public cohesion and governability in multiethnic societies.

Similarly, the feasibility or unfeasibility of ethnic entitlement in state restructuring could also depend on the pattern and trend of statehood traditions and the power of centrifugal and centripetal forces in multiethnic societies. However, the behaviour of state elites could have varied implications. As Conversi (2000), for example, discovers from the case of Spain that 'whenever the state reacted tolerantly towards nationalist aspirations, peripheral demand were softened. In Contrast, whenever the state increased its repression against the most salient aspects of regional specificity, the movement grew more radical' (Conversi 2000: 124). Thus, in states in which centrifugal ethnic or regional demands and secession sentiments are strong, impositions of unitary or centralized political structures are not a guarantee for obliterating such demands for autonomy or secession. Rather, granting autonomy arrangements in a framework of federalism could be used as a political bargain to dissuade entrenched and resolute separatist groups that are vigorously demanding for autonomy.



It can be argued that recognizing the legitimacy of ethnic demands for autonomy could strengthen the distinctiveness and cohesiveness of ethnic identity, which is a fluid and elusive phenomenon. On the other hand, 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. In cases of deeply divided multiethnic societies, in which demands for ethnic autonomy are vigorous and feasible, it is very important to design a hybrid federal model that could promote autonomy and power-sharing but without encouraging the proliferation of further ethnic claims. Of course, this is the most problematic scenario. Recognition of diversity in federal system must be anchored in a national ideal that transcends any fixed divisions of power. A hybrid federal model that guarantees group autonomy with high incentives for integration and inter-ethnic cooperation could be a forward-looking approach. As Agranoff put it 'there must be a fabric of wholeness that moves the federal idea forward' (Agranoff 1998: 14). However, the wholeness and the national idea should not be promoted through coercion, but through recurrent bargaining progression and flexible arrangements based on the principles of self-rule and shared-rule. Political arrangements in multiethnic societies should take into consideration the configuration of ethnic cleavages and rivalries on the ground. As Watts sees it the effectiveness of federalism 'in accommodation shared-rule with self-rule for constituent ethnic groups depends upon the degree to which the groups are geographically concentrated and so can be territorially demarcated (Watts 2000b: 40).

The following chapters, will explore the implementation and operation of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia in order to determine whether the Ethiopia's ethnic federal model is based on the configuration of ethnic cleavages and rivalries on the ground and whether it is capable of providing an appropriate political framework that could promote shared-rule and self-rule that reflect and suit the ethnic configuration on the ground?

## **Chapter Three: Factors behind the emergence of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia**

In this chapter, the major focus will be to investigate the major impetus behind the ethnic federal arrangement in Ethiopia by exploring the very rationale behind the conception and development of ethnic federal arrangement. It investigates whether the ethnic federal arrangement in Ethiopia is evolving from a genuine aspiration as well as participation of the disparate ethnic groups that constitute the Ethiopian state. Thus, the chapter starts by examining the origin and goal of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), because it is the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) that has initiated ethnic federal arrangement in Ethiopia after defeating the military regime in 1991. In addition, the chapter examines the justification of the TPLF for waging an ethnic liberation movement against the centralized Ethiopian state and its strategy in establishing the EPRDF.

The chapter also scrutinizes the process of ethnic federalism was conceptualised, negotiated and endorsed. In this connection, the focus will be on the three most important activities of the transitional period, namely the July 1991 conference, the charter and the transitional government. The July 1991 conference was the first step that wedded ethnic discourses in official Ethiopian political terrain. The matrimonies of the conference were filled by an intriguing and unadorned stratagem of modalities in enrolling the participants, setting the agendas and reaching agreements or consensuses. As a result, it begs an investigation in order to unfasten the bolts and nuts of the process of the conference. The charter, which was also the main progeny of the conference but filled with a lot of controversial and ambiguous notions of the Ethiopian society, had become the first 'legal' document in Ethiopian history to reminisce ethnic recognition and ethnic rights. It can be certainly established that the charter was the basic document that imbued the succeeding Ethiopian constitution in 1994, as its tone and vocals were visibly stamped in the core principles of the constitution. Therefore it is a paramount task to unpack the charter in order to understand the orientation and frame of reference of the framers with reasonable clarity. Lastly, the chapter attempts to determine whether the transitional government can be considered as a genuine coalition government of the ethnic groups that constitute the Ethiopian state. It ties its analytical investigation by focusing on the essence of the transitional government in which the actual political power fixture was conducted with a blend of Machiavellianism and political naivety. By doing this, the chapter attempts to throw a light upon the validity, theoretical clarity, justifications and

empirical evidence and legitimation of the initial phase of the implementation of the ethnic federal arrangement in Ethiopia.

### **3.1 The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF): Origin and Objectives**

The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) was established in 1975 by the Tigrayan university students<sup>2</sup> who had been motivated by an idea of waging a class-based revolution to guarantee a regional autonomy for the people of Tigray (Harold Marcus 2002: 221). According to a key activist of the movement that the TPLF's motivation was born out of the conception that the modern Ethiopian State was created by the process of domination and imposition of the language, religion and culture of the Amhara ruling elite's over the other ethnic communities in the neighbouring territories which therefore has resulted in sufferings of the various ethnic groups from ethnocentrism, xenophobia, and national inferiority (Kinfu 1994: 23). TPLF holds a belief that the present day Ethiopian state was created as a result of the successful conquests and expansions of Emperor Menelik at the end of nineteenth century. The Menelik's expansion was largely so violent which destroyed the traditional self-governing institutions of the peoples of the south and brought their territories under the control of the expanding army. As a result the contemporary Ethiopian state was created and emerged as a unitary centralized state by undermining and disregarding the rights of various ethnic communities that constituted the state, therefore for the TPLF, Ethiopia need to be taken apart and put together again by respecting the identities and autonomy of every group (Clapham 2002: 26).

However, the TPLF conception of the Ethiopian state was influenced by the 1960s and 70s student movement in Ethiopia which had extensive debates on various issues and problems of Ethiopia, such as land reform, class struggle, nationalities' question and Eritrean secession. At the time, the student movement and debates were 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 national questions (Teshale 1995: 176,

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<sup>2</sup> According to Harold Marcus that they were about thirty-seven members, of which eleven started the armed struggle, nine went to the towns to agitate and recruit fighters, seventeen went to EPLF for military training, Marcus 1994: 222)

Messay 2002: 12; Marcus 2002: 221). Therefore being part of the Ethiopian student movement, there was a great motivation for the Tigrayan students to pursue the same doctrine. As Adhana (1998: 48) confirms that the participation of Tigray university students in the student movement was, 'in essence, the first school of revolutionary thought and practice' that produced a new cadre of Tigray nationalists' (Ibid. p. 48). The student movement was very radical in its tone of criticising the ruling class for the whole misery and neglect of the nationalities in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian radicals in 1970s espoused a belief that a nationalities question in Ethiopia should be considered favourably to allow some sort of regional autonomy or self-government (Clapham 2002: 21). Thus, the Tigrayan university students, who were highly troubled by the miserable socio-economic condition of their province, had got an affirmation for the view broadly held in Tigray which claimed that 'the misery in Tigray was due to a deliberate neglect of the province by the ruling Amhara elite at the centre' (Aregawi 2004). As a result, the Tigrayan nationalism, which was articulated by the educated Tigrayan elite, was espoused for the liberation of Tigray province from the Amhara domination (Teshale 1995: 173). Interestingly, Leenco stresses that the Tigrayan were the junior partner of the Amharas in creating and dominating the present Ethiopian state. In due course they 'became increasingly dissatisfied with their position within the Amhara-dominated ethnic hierarchy to such an extent that they too joined the struggle for self-determination' (Leenco 1999:41-42). Similarly, Marcus also states that 'Tigrayan felt marginalized by their Christian Amhara cousins, even though the Tigray had participated in Emperor Menelik's empire building and in Emperor Haile Selassie's effort to establish a nation' (Marcus 2002: 221).

Accordingly, Kinfu Abreha argues that 'the Tigrians also resent the unfair historical process through which the Tigrians overlordship of Emperor Yohannes IV was lost to Menelik II, leading to the gradual decline of the region from the citadel of the Empire' to a quasi autonomous one' (Kinfu 1994: 159). He writes that: 'The Tigray resistance is naturally the outcome of the gradual decline of the region whose human and material potentials was spent in the preservation of the territorial integrity of Ethiopia. It was the case of a candle that consumed itself while giving light to its surroundings' (Ibid.). This assertion may reflect the disquiet of the Tigrayan elite on lost pride due to 'a humiliating sense of exclusion from the important centre of power'. Similarly, Adhana claims that Tigray, defined by its predominant Christian character, formed not only a durable component of the Ethiopian nation but was also part of the backbone of the Ethiopian state and thus 'everything that defined the Ethiopian state was a result of Aksumite invention and innovation.' (Adhana 1998: 43).

However, Adhana states that the history of Tigray since 1889, after the death of Emperor Yohannes, was full of conspiracy 'against Tigray emerging as a fully fledged nation' and the subversion of Tigray's identity (Ibid. p. 47). He adds that 'the newly introduced system of state education, which promoted Amharanization, not only constituted an onslaught on the language of and culture of the Tigray, but also worked to distance the Tigray from the Amhara concept of the Ethiopian nation-state' (Ibid.).

No doubt that the introduction of Amharic language in school and state institution had an impact in hampering the inclusion of the Tigray elite's admittance into the emperor's loyalist networks. However, the TPLF's claim of a deliberate neglect of the Tigray province by 'Amhara rule' is very controversial, since the emperor rule had neglected also every province in Ethiopia including the King's ancestral province. Moreover the excessive centralisation policy of the emperor had weakened all regional power bases throughout Ethiopia, so it was not unique to Tigray. So, what were the motivating factors for the growing resentment in Tigray since 1950s? Messay argues that the emperor's excessive centralisation, which was introduced by nominating mainly 'Shewans or individual closely related to the Shewan aristocracy to regional and local positions of power,' had resulted in alienation of regional elites including non-Shewan Amharas. (Messay 1999: 316). So, in Tigray, wherein the Aksumite legacy has always inspired provincialism, rebellious attitude against the Shewan Amhara domination and state centralization had emerged. 'This same legacy defined the goal of the Tigrean uprising against the Derg and sustained its combative mood' (Ibid. p. 398). Similarly, Teshale states that 'the competition between Tigray, on the one hand, and Shewa, on the other, was not an ethnic competition between Tigrayans and Amharas,' rather it was because of the reduction of Tigray from a regional power broker into a minor status due to the beginning of modern education, and centralisation of power in Addis Ababa (Teshale 1995: 175). Thus, Teshale concludes that the nature of Tigrayan nationalism is 'a compound of aspirations for hegemony and struggle against Amharic linguistic oppression' (Ibid.). It is very difficult to determine the reasons with accuracy that the TPLF's origin in 1970s was whether motivated by the desire for re-claiming hegemony, however, the lost pride and glory coupled with material impoverishment in Tigray province might have triggered a vigour force for rebellion.

As it has been the case in Ethiopia, controlling the state institutions meant power, prestige, status, honour, and access to economic benefits (Ibid. p. 116). Thus isolation from the state power could result in loss of these privileges.

The Tigray province, a home of the famous Aksum obelisk and the source of Ethiopian civilisation, has been suffering from recurrent drought and famine and, thus its population has been highly impoverished and experienced forced as well as voluntarily migration to other regions. Therefore, the Tigrayan elites could have worried on this sorry situation of the land and the people, which was once depicted as the beacon of Ethiopian as well as African civilisation. Thus, TPLF flamed nationalism in Tigray by blaming 'Amhara rule' for the material, environmental and psychological degradation of Tigray. Adhana claims that 'Yohannes IV presided over the Ethiopian state for seventeen years, (1872-89). Ruling the Tigray and the Gonder region directly, he kept Wollo under close supervision, while he ruled Gojjam and Shoa indirectly by unifying the local dynastic houses and expansion of the Tigray political elite (Adhana 1998: 44). However, after the death of Yohannes in 1889 Tigray found itself politically orphaned, militarily battered, economically shattered and psychologically disoriented' (Ibid. p. 45). Thus, there was a great rage to eliminate the constraints that had stood in the way of Tigray (Ibid. p. 49).

Hence, 'Amhara rule' was held responsible for such impoverishment and disorientation (Kinfe 1994, Adhana 1998, Aregawi 2004). As a result, it was constructed as a targetable enemy to wage war against. The Tigray political elite explained the centralised Ethiopian authority in terms of Amhara rule- an ethnic classification- that was a powerful symbolic factor to mobilise the Tigrayan peasantry to fight against an ethnic domination. Ethnicity was used, as a decisive factor in mobilising resistance, without describing the target in terms of ethnicity; it would have been difficult to create a concrete target to wage a war. As Thompson claims that when an individual or a group's collective identities have been forged in the context of primordial communities, and when these communities' autonomy is threatened by the present-day necessity of forging a new and as yet unstable state order, then primordial sentiments may serve to define politically significant social movements. (Thompson 1989: 58). Subsequently, the Tigrayan population was imbued with an emotional and cultural significance that could bring significant social movement that should challenge the centre in which the Shewan Amhara was accused of monopolizing, therefore the Amhara and its concomitant identities were depicted as the major target to be resisted, rejected and dismantled. Thus, the TPLF constructed a powerful enemy in order to give a

rational and justifiable cause for its struggle. As Pierre Van Berghe claim that 'ethnic and racial groups can be politically mobilised, even on a huge scale, with greater ease and rapidity, than other social groups, especially under external threat from an enemy who is himself defined in ethnic or racial terms' (van den Berghe 1995: 362).

Similarly, the Tigrayan nationalists or TPLF's leadership reflected a narrow outlook in framing their liberation goal as the dismantling of the imposition of Amhara rule over Tigray. The Haile Selassie regime (1936-1974) was relied to a great extent on 'Shewan tribalism' that equally alienated non-Shewan Amharas from his autocratic rule (Messay 1999: 122). The military regime (1974-1991), had no preference based on ethnic classification, rather it was the one that ruthlessly dismantled the autocratic rule of Haile Selassie and his loyal Shewan aristocracy and replaced it by leadership of junior officers. The ethnic origin of these junior officers neither was a criterion nor did have any significant meaning in assuming a leadership role. Moreover, the 1975 land reform was a radical measure that abolished the exploitative domination of the Shewan aristocracy over the southern peasants.

However, this is not to claim that there were no justifiable reasons for the rising of resistance in Tigray, there were many factors that fomented and aggravated resentment in Tigray. First, the emperor Haile Selassie's centralization policy in 1940s drastically reduced the power of the regional nobility and made Addis Ababa the center of power and privilege. Though the trend was similar in the countrywide, 'the autonomy of Tigray was eroded due to the concentration of power on Haile Selassie, who preferred to rely 'on a bureaucratic class as the vehicle of control and change' (Marcus 2002: 155). Second, the response of the emperor for the 1943-1944 peasants uprising (or the Woyane insurrection) in Tigray was so brutal, many peasants were slaughtered by the air bombing. The peasants uprising were 'sparked by misadministration, excessive taxation, official corruption, and consequent brigandage' (Ibid.). Third, more severely, 'Tigray was reduced in size, part of it added to Wello, which was the domain of the Crown Prince' (Teshale 1995: 115). Fourth, with the introduction of modern education and state institutions, Amharic language, which was a language of the rulers, has become a language of instruction in schools and government offices since 1940s (as it happened everywhere that the language of the rulers used to be the language of administration). There is no doubt that this practice 'hampered all those whose mother tongue was different, and Amharic language proficiency acting as a principle of

selection, and hence of exclusion' (Messay 1999: 315). Hence, in Tigray it created the hegemony of the Amhara language over the Tigrean language in public offices and elementary schools.

Fifth, Tigray was one of the worst hit areas in the 1984-85 famine and while children and parents were dying in camps in Mekele and *Korem* in connection to the famine, Addis Ababa was preparing for a massive and expensive celebration for the ten year accession of the military junta to power. More sadly, Mengistu used proffered food aid as a weapon against his enemies by refusing to allow relief supplies to enter rebel-held territory, in effect seeking to starve partisans of the TPLF and EPLF into submission.' (Marcus 2002: 209). Sixth, in the 1986 resettlement programme, hundreds of thousands peasants from Tigray were forcefully resettled to south and west of Ethiopia. The programme was inadequately planned and pre-prepared, as a result many families had been broken-up, and many people had died during the trip and after the resettlement. In Tigray, especially by TPLF, the resettlement programme was considered 'as a political and military ploy for reducing the popular support for its movement among the rural Tigrayan population' (Kinfie 1994: 98). Seventh, the military government measure that prohibited peasants from working in the towns had severely affected the farmers' household economies in Tigray. 'Given the decreasing ability of the province's exhausted land to support a growing population; over 200,000 Tigrayans annually had sought periodic work in commercial centres or followed cash crop harvests around Ethiopia. Now that these practices prohibited, the standard of life in the average household deteriorated.' (Marcus 2002: 222).

It is obvious that the above factors had strengthened Tigrayan resentment against the central rule of the Ethiopian state and provided a golden opportunity for the TPLF in building up moral and human support for their adoration of Tigrayan particularism. However, the enemy was defined in terms of ethnicity as 'an Amhara rule' in order to fit the agenda of Tigrayan particularism which was upheld by TPLF. Defining the enemy in terms of ethnicity would make easier to mobilize the Tigrayan peasants in the name of defending their identity and rights against the incursion and threat of Amhara rule. As van de Berghe (1995) claims that defining the enemy in ethnic or racial terms is relatively easier to mobilise support through ethnic or racial solidarity. A struggle defined in terms of ethnic factors like the Tigrayan people to rebel against Amhara domination could be more motivating than, to rebel against the Shewan Amhara aristocratic class who did not have any exploitative relation in Tigray. It was certainly known for the Tigray elites that Yohannes army was highly dependent on supply from Menelik from Shewa



(Marcus 2002: 76). Tribute and generous supply of food, cattle and other items from Menelik's Shewa were well known among the Tigray nobility as well as their armies (Afework 1909). So, Tigray's economic importance was very marginal to invite Shewan aristocracy's economic exploitation when compared to the southern Ethiopia which was structurally and materially more conducive to penetration. 'Exportable products such as coffee and gold were already being produced in the south. Land was plentiful and most appropriate for cash crop products of whatever kind'. (Messay 1999: 53). More importantly, 'the impinging world economy was changing the subsistence based Ethiopian feudalism into a complex absolutist system sustained by a more rigorous exploitation of the natural economy and international trade (Marcus 2002: 77). Thus, expansion to the south was more attractive and rewarding to the Ethiopian state. The expansion to the more abundant south was carried out under overwhelming dominance of the Shewan aristocracy, which resulted in further marginalisation of the Tigray province and alienation of the Tigray elite. Thus, the response of Tigray was to rebel against its marginalisation and alienation by rejecting the power of the Shewan aristocracy who didn't incorporate the Tigray elite who claim a historical right to rule Ethiopia. The excessive centralisation and brutality of the military government in mid 1970s added significant impetus to build up and buttress the resentment in Tigray against the centralised Ethiopian state. Though TPLF was formed in 1975, the factors for its emergence could be traced to the accumulated bitterness of Tigray for many decades, especially since the 1889's death of Emperor Yohannes, mainly due to the exclusion and marginalisation of Tigray from the power centre rather than the domination of Tigray by the power centre of the Ethiopian state. Because 'appointment to state office meant power, prestige, status, honour, and access to economic benefits' and thus exclusion meant loss of these privileges' (Teshale 1999: 116). As Markakis also elucidates that:

'Competition for resources in conditions of increasing scarcity is the process that shapes the confrontation between groups and individuals in the Horn of Africa. The mediating role the state plays in it renders this process intrinsically political, and this mean only groups can compete. Competition takes place not in the economic but in the political realm, and the immediate object is access to power, the key to the acquisition of material and social resources.' (Markakis 1994: 235).

Nevertheless, there are still unresolved controversy concerning the initial objectives of TPLF- regional autonomy or secession- some claim that at its inception, TPLF's goal was to fight for regional autonomy within the context of the Ethiopian state, but in the face of an oppressive Ethiopian state, the TPLF stood

for the province's separation and independence (Marcus 1994: 224). Marcus argues, 'in the TPLF inaugural Fighters Congress held in Agame on 18 February 1976, the first anniversary of the front, its entire membership of 170 approved the Manifesto of TPLF, which asserted that the organization's first task was to establish an Independent Democratic Republic of Tigray' (Marcus 2002: 223). Likewise, the founding members<sup>3</sup> of TPLF also reveals that the idea for an independent Tigray republic was stated in the TPLF manifesto of 1976 by section of the leadership<sup>4</sup>, but the idea was not supported by either the majority members of the Front or 'by the people of Tigray, who constituted the historic core of the Ethiopian polity' (Aregawe 2004: 591). Aregawi also argues that the secessionist ethos was also faced strong opposition from the EPLF, thus faced with such opposition from inside and also significant pressure from EPLF, TPLF officially dropped the independent Tigray option in 1978.

According to Aregawi that the notion of Tigray independence was mainly espoused by a section of TPLF leadership who committed for 'an ultra-left ideological brand of Marxism-Leninism which culminated in the formation of a group called the Marxist-Leninist League of Tigray (MLLT)<sup>5</sup> in 1986' (Ibid. p. 392). Aregawi argues that an independent Tigray republic has never been an objective for the Tigrayan liberation movement, even from the start. Rather, according to Aregawi, in 1970s the university students from the Tigray region believed that the miserable condition and poverty in Tigray were by far the worst than other regions of Ethiopia. As a result, the Tigrayan university student agreed to start a national armed struggle for 'the formation of a democratic Ethiopia in which the equality of all nationalities is respected' (Ibid. p. 579). However, he concedes that the comparative poverty assessment of Tigray was 'often expressed sentimentally, in relation to the past glory of Tigray and its standing in the history of the Ethiopian nation' (Ibid. p. 576).

Nonetheless, it is still an unresolved issue since the chief protagonists of the idea of an independent Tigray republic are still member of the core leadership of the TPLF and particularly the sole ideologue of the idea, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi is the leader of the TPLF and EPRDF. It should also be kept in

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<sup>3</sup> Former members of the TPLF, Tesfay Atsbeha, and Kahsay Berhe in their article September 2002: 'TPLF-Two Groups of the TPLF and Two Issues of Ethiopia' argues that the secession idea within TPLF is espoused by few leaders of TPLF including its head, the Prime Minister Meles Zenawi who was the chief ideologue of the idea.

<sup>4</sup> Which include Abay Tsehay, Sibhat Nega, Seyoum Mesfin and Meles Zenawi

<sup>5</sup> Aregawe states that that 'the inclusion in the current Ethiopian Constitution of a right to secession for every nationality (article 39.1), and the adoption of 'revolutionary democracy' as a guiding ideology by the current government, are intrinsically linked to both the ethno-nationalist and ultra-leftist stances of the faction led by Meles Zenawi, who governs Ethiopia today', contrary to many of Tigray nationalists. (Aregawi 2004: 592).

mind that Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was an ardent advocate of the inclusion of the right-to-secession clause in the 1994 Ethiopian Constitution (Alem 2005: 326). Among the TPLF's leadership, many of those who opposed the independent Tigray republic idea have been either expelled or left the organisation. As a result, it is difficult to ascertain whether the independent Tigray option is completely abandoned or kept latent for the time being as TPLF has transformed itself from the antitheses of the Ethiopian state to the owner and custodian of the Ethiopian state via EPRDF.

### **3.2 The creation of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)**

In 1989, following the liberation of the entire Tigray province from the central authority, the TPLF adopted a new strategy to continue the fight against the military regime by establishing a new front called the EPRDF. The establishment of a 'coalition' front under the name of the EPRDF in 1989 could be a kaleidoscopic cursor that would indicate the direction and motives of the TPLF. In the TPLF's perspective, the major argument of the TPLF to transform itself from a uni-ethnic autonomy movement to a pan-Ethiopian movement was that the liberation of Tigray would be a temporary phenomenon if not supported by the liberation of other ethnic groups in Ethiopia. Though many Tigrayans questioned the need to continue fighting, the TPLF leaders argued that unless the military government was completely overthrown, the Tigray province could still be re-occupied or become a target of a harsh punitive military hit by the central military government (Marcus 2002:229). It is hinted that after liberation of Tigray, about 35,000 TPLF fighters had laid down their arms and headed for their village and civil life, but with significant pressure placed on their parents and relatives, the fighters were persuaded to return to the front (Leenco 1999: 123). In their unrelenting motivations, the leadership of TPLF also able to manoeuvre and secure support from Orthodox priests who echoed that the liberation of the whole of Ethiopia from the atheist Marxist military regime would be an advantage for the revitalization and strength of the Orthodox Church of Ethiopia (Marcus 1994: 230).

Strategically and politically, the decision of the TPLF to continue the fight might be correct, but there are also other crucial factors that might have pressed the TPLF leaders to continue the war. An independent Tigray province may not be a viable option in terms of economic consideration. The Tigray province has suffered from frequent drought and famine, deep environmental degradation and it is also

without any viable economic or natural resources to tackle the extensive and chronic poverty in the province. The Tigray province was highly dependent on the rest of Ethiopia in many aspects; therefore it could have terrified the TPLF leaders to think about seceding the province without any tangible economic benefit to the people. Had they chosen secession, they could have quickly lost the sympathy of the Tigray people. As a result, the TPLF leaders shifted their objective by changing themselves from a uni-ethnic liberation front to a multi-ethnic liberation one, from TPLF to EPRDF and thus, to fight for the liberation of the whole of Ethiopia from the brutal military dictatorship, the objective which was more feasible and rewarding to fight for.

Thus, by forming the EPRDF, the TPLF has transformed itself from an ethnic liberation movement to a 'multiethnic' liberation movement by forging separate organisations for the Amhara, Oromo and after victory, for Southern Ethiopia various ethnic groups under the EPRDF, but under the leadership of the TPLF (Clapham 2002: 26; John Young 1989: 321). In reality, the creation of the EPRDF has helped the TPLF 'to play a role beyond the bounds of Tigray province' (Markakis 1994: 230). The EPRDF is comprised of four ethnic organisations namely, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), Oromo People's Democratic Organisation (OPDO) and Southern Ethiopia Peoples' Democratic Front (SEPDF).

The ANDM was established in 1980 by former members of the EPRP under the name of the Ethiopian People Democratic Movement (EPDM) with an encouragement and subsequent support of the TPLF at the time of the armed struggle (Clapham 2002: 26). At its inception, the EPDM was a multiethnic pan-Ethiopian movement without any reference to a particular ethnic group and its members were also drawn from various ethnic backgrounds. In 1989, the EPDM made a 'coalition' with the TPLF to form the EPRDF in order to expand the liberation struggle in Amhara areas such as Gonder, Gojjam, Wello and North Shewa and, thus it played a great role in liberating these areas from the military government and eventually facilitated for the downfall of the military government in 1991. In 1994 the EPDM was declared as an Amhara organisation by changing its name to the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) and re-assorting its members (Tegegne 1998: 122). Though the leaders of the ANDM claim that they represent the Amhara people, many Amharas, particularly the majority of educated Amhara elite considers the ANDM as an instrument of the TPLF to rule the Amhara people through surrogate organisation (Vaughan and Tronvoll 2003: 115). Besides, large numbers of Amhara

are not happy to accept ethnic classification, for them Amhara is virtually coterminous with being Ethiopian, but for ANDM/EPRDF, Amhara is now a constituent identity within a larger state (Clapham 2002: 29). It is argued that both the TPLF and ANDM (former EPDM) were created as Marxist guerrilla movements and, organised and trained to fight for state power in the bush, they were not political parties to compete in a democratic arena and their structure and conditioning have not altered greatly since 1991 (Vaughan and Tronvoll 2003: 119).

The Oromo Peoples Democratic Organisation (OPDO) was established by the TPLF in March 1990 by ex-prisoners of war and deserted soldiers of the military regime. In its final offensive operation toward Addis Ababa and the central Ethiopia territories, which are surrounded by the Oromo territories, the TPLF used Oromo fighters and cadres who would make easier for the mobilisation of the Oromo people against the military regime under the name of OPDO. Since 1991, the OPDO, allied with the TPLF, has become the sole ruling party in Oromia regional state, apparently by producing a one-party exclusive controlled politics. Expression of Oromo identity outside OPDO is not tolerable in the Oromia regional state (Clapham 2002: 29). Significant number of Oromo intellectuals inside Ethiopia and majority of the Oromo Diaspora believe that the OPDO was created by the TPLF to undermine the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which was not willing to accept a subordinate role to TPLF. The OLF enjoys a considerable support among the Oromo community inside and outside Ethiopia and becomes one of the most important political movements in Ethiopia (Markakis 1994: 232; Mohammed Hassen 1999: 241; Forrest 2004: 158; Vaughan and Tronvoll 2003: 115). Since its inception, the OPDO has suffered a series of defection and dismissal of its top leadership members. More discussion about the OPDO will be made in Chapter 7 that examine the Oromia regional state.

The establishment of the South Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Front (SEPDF) in 1992 was orchestrated by the EPRDF for the aim of extending its authority in the southern Ethiopia in incorporating the diverse ethnolinguistic groupings under a single political command and structure. The SEPDF was a coalition of 20 ethnic based political organisations which most of them were established by EPRDF as PDOs (peoples democratic organisations) by specially trained EPRDF's cadres from the various areas of the south who were 'pre-positioned' to move in their home areas in order to mobilise the people to facilitate the EPRDF's rule (Vaughan and Tronvoll 2003: 116). In September 2003, the SEPDF was reorganised by dissolving its 20 constituting ethnic organisations and merging their members into a single

organisation called the SEPDM (South Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Movement). SEPDF has remained weak and marginal within the EPRDF coalition. Further discussion about SEPDF will be made in Chapter 6 that examines the SNNP regional state.

Thus, the EPRDF is considered to be a coalition of the Tigrayan, Amhara, Oromo and Southern ethnic groups and since 1991 the TPLF has assumed the reins of power in Ethiopia in the name of the EPRDF. An asymmetry of power among the coalition members has taken ethnic ingredients. Despite its multiethnic façade, many, including the EPRDF coalition members, believe that the Tigrayan ethnic ingredient has been very dominant within the EPRDF coalition. The TPLF, which is one of the four ethnic groupings in the EPRDF, is the building block and founder of the front. The TPLF is highly skilled in manipulation and control, as it played a pivotal role in establishing the three political organisations and other many People Democratic Organisations (PDOs). As Merera put it that the PDOs 'is the strategy of manufacturing a political support base by creating controlled ethnic-based organisations for the various ethnic groups of the country (Merera 2003: 146). Due to the nature of their conception and incorporation, therefore, the three parties are regarded as puppet for the TPLF and greatly lack the genuine support of their respective ethnic communities. As a result they faced formidable challenge to get the legitimacy of their respective ethnic communities in free and fair elections due to the strength and independent of main rival ethnic parties. EPRDF's coalition formation strategy was not made based on equal terms, rather it appeared to be based on a sort of a patron-client relationship, in which TPLF, the Tigrayan core has acted as a patron that can protect, favour, punish and lead the other groups. EPRDF emerged in such controlled process and thus has derived its operational guidelines from the ethos and logics of its conception. Its deficiency has originated from the stage of its conception and thus has become the poison of its *modus operandi* in dealing with other ethnic groups; it seems to be a defective organisation at its birth. TPLF ventured on bringing together individuals from disoriented, deserters and prisoners of war to form ethnic associations and coalition to forge intrinsically impaired EPRDF in the name of a power-sharing scheme.

There are two different views regarding the coalition strategy of EPRDF. First, it is argued that the best means for the TPLF to retain a leading position in Ethiopia, where the Tigrayans constitute a small proportion of the country's population, is to maintain an ethnic-based coalition with elements of the numerically superior Oromo and the historically dominant Amhara (Young, 1996: 534). The second

argument is that the strategy is designed mainly to weaken other opposing ethnic movement of the Oromo, Somalis, and others that did not want to organise themselves under the domination of TPLF (Scherrer, 1998: 51).

However, the TPLF argue that the creation of the EPRDF was motivated by two major objectives: the liberation of the whole of Ethiopia from the brutal military regime and ensuring the formation of a democratic Ethiopia in which the equality and self-administration of all nationalities is respected (Young 1997). However, this claim will be scrutinised in the next section, which explores the essence of the EPRDF by considering the actual activities on the ground by investigating, first the transitional period, second post-transitional federal-state relation, third the operation of ethnic federalism in three regional states.

### **3.3 The July Conference, the Charter and the transitional government**

The July 1991 conference is the first step that facilitated the way for the imposition of ethnic restructuring in Ethiopia. In the May conference, the TPLF-led EPRDF argued that the future of Ethiopia lies on establishing a state structure that could guarantee self-administration rights of the various ethnic groups. The transitional period charter which was produced by the conference, made an explicit provision that the right to self-determination including secession was the inviolable right of the 'nations, nationalities and peoples' of Ethiopia (Article 2 Transitional Charter, 1991). For the EPRDF, the major cause of conflict in Ethiopia was the 'oppression of nationalities' due to the imposition of a centralised state that rejected the rights of the various ethnic communities to use and promote their language and to develop and promote their culture and to determine their affairs.

Consequently, the EPRDF argued that many ethnic groups, which include the TPLF, OLF, ALF, ONLF, had taken arms to resist the central state domination that rejected their existence and as a result the country has been immersed into unending conflict and constant bloodshed that could have lead to the disintegration of the Ethiopian state altogether. For the EPRDF's leadership, therefore, the only solution that could guarantee the survival of the country in united and peaceful manner is through the introduction of an ethnic federal system that could provide self-administration for every ethnic group in Ethiopia. Ethnic federalism was presented as a choice beyond disintegration or oppression' (Meles

Zenawi, 1994: Interview *Efoyita Magazine*). ‘The better alternative to relying on force of arms is the mutual consent of the people to live together’ (Nahum 1994: 158). Similarly, a staunch TPLF’s advocate argues, ‘neither the Amharas and Tigrrians nor the Oromos have a monopoly to dominate Ethiopia’s political scene on the basis of dynastic credentials, traditional claims, demographic advantages or the advantage of being better endowed with resources. The less endowed and the small nations also have legitimate rights to participate in its political process, economic life and in the burdensome task of rebuilding it. (Kinfie 1994: 63). Thus, in 1991, ethnic federalism was considered as the only option that could save the state collapse. The EPRDF leader Prime Minister Meles Zenawi asserts that without giving assurance to the ethnic communities for self-administration and equality, the 1991 Ethiopia was not in a steadfast position to protect its territorial integrity within the centralised mould (Marcus 1995). However, there are disagreements whether the 1991 Ethiopian situation was in a verge of state disintegration or not. It is well known that some liberation movements were actively operating in the country, but except some of the movements like the EPLF, TPLF and to some extent OLF, the others did not show any noticeable military pressure to challenge the centralized military regime.

Rather it was the TPLF and the July 1991 conference that have given an exaggerating impression that the ethnic question was a very fundamental issue in Ethiopia and thus claimed for the right of ethnic self-administration for various ethnic groups. The conference was the first step that wedded ethnic discourses in the official Ethiopian political framework. The procedure of the conference was filled by intriguing and adorned modalities in enrolling the participants, drafting the agendas and reaching agreements or consensuses. The charter, which was the main offspring of the conference, was filled with some controversial provisions such as the right to secede. This was the first ‘legal’ and official document in Ethiopian history that endorsed ethnic recognition and ethnic rights. It can be certainly established that the charter was the basic document that impregnated the succeeding 1995 Ethiopian constitution as its tone and vocals were visibly stamped in the core principles of the constitution. Therefore it is a paramount task to unpack the charter in order to understand the orientation and frame of reference of the framers with reasonable clarity. Finally this chapter tie its analytical investigation by focusing on the transitional government in which the actual political power fixture was conducted with a blend of Machiavellianism and political naivety. By doing this, the chapter will attempt to throw light upon the theoretical justifications and empirical evidences of the initial phase of the implementation of ethnic federal arrangement in Ethiopia



### **3.3.1 The July 1991 'Peace and Reconciliation' Conference: was it a representative and legitimate convention?**

The entrée of the transitional period was commenced with the July 1991 conference which was organised by the EPRDF, as it had promised in May 1991 London agreement<sup>6</sup> which was brokered by the United States of America that it was ready to establish a coalition government with other political organisation in Ethiopia. The EPRDF, a victorious interim government which removed the military regime in May 1991 had appeared to keep its promise to establish a transitional government collaborating with 'representatives' of the various ethnic groups and political organisations in order to prepare a national constitution and to transfer power to democratically elected government. However, its uncontested position made it to play a dominant role in setting the agenda and procedures of the conference and nominating the participants. The conference was attended by about twenty-seven political organisations, in which most were organised in ethnic lines. Since the preceded military regime had banned all forms of domestic civilian political organisations and movements, the July 1991 conference was attended in most cases by self-appointed individuals, who simply claimed to represent their ethnic communities and political parties operating inside and outside the country. All the participants were specially selected by the victorious EPRDF in a very swift and arbitrary manner. Moreover, most of the ethnic organisations were established during the one-month interim rule of the EPRDF. 'The new regime, itself a coalition of ethnic movements and apparently determined to re-fashion the political system in its own image' (Markakis 1998: 145) As Merera stresses that 'the EPRDF leaders, keen on the consolidation of their hard-won victory, made sure to selectively invite weak parties most of which were created overnight, and selectively excluded the actual or potential real power contenders from the process' Merera 2003: 121) Very popular non-ethnic political movements such as the EPRP were barred from attending the conference.<sup>7</sup> The reason provided by the EPRDF was that these groups rejected the transitional conference and engaged in armed struggle to disrupt the process.

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<sup>6</sup> The London agreement was scheduled between the Ethiopian military government and the opposition forces, mainly EPRDF, EPLF and OLF, but because the leader of the military government, Mengistu H/Mariam fled the country and EPRDF had controlled the whole part of the country except Addis, it became useless to involve the delegates of the military government. Therefore the agreement was signed only between EPRDF, EPLF and OLF. At the time the US State Department for African Affairs declared that no support to EPRDF if it was not ready for a power-sharing and democratisation government in Ethiopia.)

<sup>7</sup> TPLF-led EPRDF accused EPRP for engaging in military operation against its rule, but the June 'Peace and Democracy' conference in June 1991 was aimed to address the demands of various armed groups in the country to find out peaceful solution in democratic manner, therefore barring EPRP because of such reason was a mistake.

But the main reason could be more than that. Parties like the EPRP, which had a significant influence in Ethiopian student movement and also eliminated by the TPLF from the Tigray province, could have made an impact in the conference by setting contrary agendas that could derail the ambition of the EPRDF (Kiflu 1998). As it was observed afterwards that the ambition of EPRDF could have suffered if it had invited the EPRP, which had a significant role in Ethiopia's political history. At least, it could have been very difficult for the EPRDF to get an endorsement of the transitional charter so easily.

The conference adopted a transitional charter as an interim period constitution and appointed a representative council that became a legislative body for the interim period which was agreed to last a maximum of two years period and to transfer power to an elected government. The conference also recognized the de facto government in Eritrea and agreed to respect the rights of the Eritrean people for independence given that Eritrean people in a referendum would decide the matter<sup>8</sup>. However, the Eritrean question was decided beforehand by the TPLF and the 1991 conference simply accepted the TPLF's deposition. As Marcus confirms that 'Meles visited London and Washington in February and March 1990 ...When Meles did not demur to Eritrea's claim of independence, US officials scrapped the long-standing policy of supporting the inviolability of Ethiopia's frontiers (Marcus 2002: 230).

Advocates of the process described the conference as the first multinational convention in Ethiopia where delegates of various nations and organisations were given a fair and equal chance to voice their unheard views (Kinfu 1994: 23). Some of the participants also claimed: 'the transitional period definitely did take off by signalling the dawning of new pluralist era in Ethiopian political history, (Leenco 1999:26). A staunch critique of the EPRDF also comments that the conference had produced a charter, with the hope, that it could facilitate the transition to democracy in Ethiopia (Mesfin 2000: 156).

Though many of the participants had claimed that they could negotiate on behalf of their respective ethnic communities, it can be certainly established that they were simply self-appointed representatives without a valid mandate to negotiate on behalf of the community that they had claimed to represent. As a result, it can be inferred that the conference did not have a mandate from the Ethiopian people as well

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<sup>8</sup> Legally it is very difficult to accept a major nation wide decision from loosely organized, non-representative body which needs people's approval or should be decided by elected government, but the conference should not have such mandate to decide such crucial matter. It is even very surprising for the international community, such as the UN to accept the letter from this transitional government which did not have a political mandate over the Ethiopian people.

as the various ethnic communities in Ethiopia. In addition, the conference participants simply transformed themselves into the transitional government by appointing themselves as a representative council or the transitional parliament and establishing a cabinet largely among themselves. Thus, ethnicity has become a political asset that provides access to resource by attracting numerous ethnic entrepreneurs eager to turn it into political capital (Markakis 1998: 145)

At the start, it was a great success for the EPEDF since the conference did not bring any challenge or alteration to its core policies and principles. As Kinfu claimed that the charter, the basic document of the conference was a proposal of the EPRDF and was completely approved by the convention (Kinfu 1994: 24). However, the apparently initial positive step forward in the Ethiopian political tradition has taken a disappointing path in a while.

### **3.3.2 The Charter: was it a genuine covenant?**

The Charter was one of the major outcomes of the July 1991 ‘peace and democracy conference’. It served as a supreme legal document for the transitional period. The charter included crucial human and democratic rights provisions based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations, which declared for unconditional respect of human rights. Notably, it claimed to have the beginning of a new chapter in Ethiopian history in which ‘each nation, nationality and people have the right to administer its own affairs within its own defined territory and effectively participate in the central government on the basis of freedom, and fair and proper representation’. The formal recognition of ethnic diversity and equal treatment of all ethnic groups had become the core principle of the charter. Article 2 of the charter declared that: the right of nations, nationalities and peoples to self-determination is affirmed and to this end, each nation, nationality and people is guaranteed the right to:

- Preserve its identity and have it respected, promote its culture and history and use and develop its language;
- Administer its own affairs within its own defined territory and effectively participate in the central government on the basis of freedom, and fair and proper representation;
- Exercise its right to self-determination of independence, when the concerned nation/nationality and people is convinced that the above rights are denied, abridged or abrogated.

However, the distinction between the three terms- 'nations, nationalities and peoples' was not clearly defined. Nahum, a constitutional advisor in the EPRDF-led government, confirms that no explanation was given the difference between a nation, a nationality and a people (Nahum 1997: 160). In defining the three terms together, the charter stated that 'nation, nationality and people' denote 'a group of people who have or share a large measure of common culture, or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identities, and who predominantly inhabit an identifiable contiguous territory.'

This definition is similar with Smith's categorization of ethnic community that classifies it as 'a named human population with myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity among at least some of its members (Smith 1996: 6). In this case, the subjective identification and orientation to the past play a key role. 'The destiny of the community is bound up with ethno-symbolism with its own understanding of a unique, shared past.'

The EPRDF's classification of ethnic groups is very close to Shilean's and Geertzian's primordial classification of ethnic communities, which views ethnicity as extended kinship which emphasize the primacy of biological and psychological bias toward kin in any group's social relations. It is the construction of the affective dimensions of group by amplifying the maxim 'blood runs thicker than water'. This conceptualisation of ethnic community is founded on the belief of the 'overpowering and 'ineffable quality' of primordial attachments that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language and following particular social practices (Geertz 1963). As Meles claimed that Ethiopia's peoples had to sort out their identities before mobilizing their energies to build a new nationalism (Marcus 1995).

The EPRDF's advocate argues that the approach is 'a psychological and political breakthrough for the majority of Ethiopians, especially the small and large nations' that had been denied legitimate recognition (Kinf 1994: 28). Nahum (1994) also stress that: 'Ethiopia is made up of many ethno-linguistic groups at different stage of development and with varied life-style. There is also general agreement that they are entitled to some sort of self-expression. There has been a strong feeling of ethnic and cultural suppression and resentment among some ethnic groups- these are some of the salient issues

that need to be properly understood and carefully addressed' (Nahum 1994: 157). Consequently, ethnic federalism is considered as a best framework to enhance ethnic equality and democracy by allowing ethnic groups to develop their cultures openly and equally (Ibid. p. 185).

Thus, the EPRDF used the conference for legitimising its agendas and policies in re-organising the Ethiopian State in ethnic lines. In the main, the conference by adopting the transitional charter resonated the beginning of an era of ethnic entitlement in Ethiopia as it utterly endorsed the EPRDF's conception and propositions that required the precedence of ethnic right in re-organizing the society and state in Ethiopia. As Merera writes that in the EPRDF's state re-construction project, the rights of ethnic groups have become 'the cornerstone of all the policy initiatives, be political issue, economic matters or educational, linguistic, and cultural domains' (Merera 2002: 118). The EPRDF assumed that the basic political question in Ethiopia is the recognition and protection of the rights of ethnic groups and their absolute right for self-determination.

Though, the EPRDF has considered the transitional period charter as a legitimate contract to restructure the Ethiopian polity into an ethnic federal system, the charter was produced by an assembly which had neither the direct representation of the Ethiopian peoples or the approval of the various ethnic groupings. It was just a collection of self-appointed ethnic elites who assumed that they could know and represent the interests of their respective ethnic communities. But in what kind of representative modality this kind of self-appointed representation could be justified to make a fundamental political decision?

It can be clearly established that the ethnic federal structure in Ethiopia was negotiated in a manner that neither the Ethiopian people nor the ethnic groupings have been provided an opportunity for consultation; it was engineered by the EPRDF and agreed by the ethnic elites. The assumption was that 'the leaders of the different nations bear the moral and political burden of guiding and counselling the people in their national and political constituencies (Kinfu 1994: 62). In this view, the major responsibility in transforming politics and society in Ethiopia was laid upon the ethnic elites rather than the ethnic communities or the people because that it was that ethnic elites kinship tie with their community would give them a better chance for leadership and privileged position. Basically, it was an imposed structure. The ethnic elites may have naively and egoistically legitimised the EPRDF's blue print. However, once its power was anchored, EPRDF started the process capturing the ethnic

communities through manufacturing surrogate ethnic organisations and of course by sidelining the ethnic elites that established the transitional government.

Initially, some non-EPRDF ethnic movements such as the OLF, ONLF and many southern elites, who voiced that their ethnic identity was a matter of disgrace and derision, supported the EPRDF's policy orientation (Marcus 2002: 232). The Oromo nationalists claim that the Ethiopia state was created by Christian highland rulers, largely through a process of political subjugation and economic exploitation of outlying populations such as the Oromo, Sidama, Somalis, Wolaita, Afar, Anuak, Benishangul etc in the late 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Leenco 1999: 41). However, their support to the EPRDF was quickly evaporated by claiming that the TPLF-led EPRDF was not genuine in its policy, rather it is an instrument to install the hegemony of the Tigrayan elite on the rest of Ethiopia (Ibid. p. 76).

In general, added to its military muscle and political intrigue, the EPRDF had got a support from the United States, which was very happy to see the overthrow of the Mengistu's 'socialist' regime. This helped the EPRDF to easily achieve the approval of the Charter and the establishment of the transitional government based on its best interest. These two most important outcomes of the conference had facilitated the EPRDF's dominant position.

### **3.3.3 The transitional government: was it a genuine coalition government?**

It is vital to determine whether the transitional government was a coalition or a coalesced government. Was it a façade coalition or patron-client network? The transitional government was established after the July 1991 conference and lasted about four years from 1991-1995, despite the initial plan of two years. The legislative responsibilities of the transitional period were carried out by a council of representatives, which was the supreme power of the transitional period. Its 87 seats were filled by representatives of about 29 ethnic movements and political associations and most of the members were also participants of the conference. As I have discussed above that the participants of the conference promoted themselves to become members of the transitional government.

The seats of the council were distributed based on vague criteria, and which were of course very arbitrary. Accordingly, out of the 87 seats 32 (36%) seats was allocated to the EPRDF, 12 seats for the

OLF (14%), various southern ethnic groups together took 19 seats (21%), the other three Oromo organizations 7 seats, four multinational organizations each got one seat, workers' representative and university teachers' representative each got one seat, and the rest 12 seats were allocated/distributed to other minority ethnic groups (Kinfe 1994: 22). Only 24 ethnic groups were represented in the council, from the total of about 80 ethno-linguistic groups in the country. The Council of Representatives was given a power to elect a president and to approve the appointment of a prime minister and other ministers who were members of the council of ministers, which was a cabinet of the transitional government. The council of representative was also given a responsibility to constitute a commission to draw up a draft constitution and to arrange the modalities for a national election to transfer power to an elected body. Though no legal or political explanation was provided why the Council seats are limited to 87, it was very clear that because the EPRDF control 32 seats which was more than one-third of the seats (36 percent) that was enough to allow the EPRDF to block any legislative declaration that could obstruct its interest.

The executive responsibility of the transitional government was carried out by a cabinet, which was called a Council of Ministers. The then president, Meles Zenawi with the approval of the Council of Representatives, appointed its members. The appointment in the cabinet was done based on ethnic representation. Though there were no pre-determined and official agreements on the allocations of posts, there was a tacit agreement that was stipulated from the power sharing notion that key posts such as a president, prime minister and vice chairmanship and secretary of the council would go to different nationalities (Kinfe 1994: 25). However, there was no reference made to party representation, and thus the allocations of posts on ethnic background but without considering party affiliations did mask a single party monopoly as the EPRDF had appointed individuals from different ethnic groups. Most of the vital posts such as the president, prime minister, foreign ministry, defence force, security and police activities were occupied by the EPRDF<sup>9</sup>. This clearly depicted the underlying motives of the EPRDF to remain the uncontested power in the transitional period. Besides, low-ranking TPLF's officials appointed in various ministries were acted with full power without respecting the higher authorities in the ministries and they were accountable only to their party, the TPLF<sup>10</sup>. Thus, this superficial or cosmetic power-

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<sup>9</sup> There was a demand from the OLF group to get the prime ministerial position (Marcus 2002: 232; Kinfe 1994: 25).

<sup>10</sup> According to Leenco (1999: 57), during the early months of the transition the leader of the Ministry of Information happened to be a senior OLF official, however TPLF used anti-OLF propaganda through public media which was controlled by the Ministry, because the public media department was headed by a low-ranking TPLF official).

sharing arrangement, which was aimed to embellish appearances, had created a flimsy power-sharing structure, which was highly monopolized by the TPLF-led EPRDF in a name of ethnic power-sharing.

The coalition of the transitional government faced with a major blow on 23 June 1992 when the second largest representation in the legislative body, the OLF, withdrew itself from the transitional government in connection with the July 1992 district and local government election by accusing the EPRDF of creating an unfavourable environment for conducting free and fair elections by intimidating opposition candidates and blocking access to the public media, for its goal to win the election and also to remain as the sole winner of any future elections (Leenco 1999: 67). Leenco Leta, who was an executive member of the OLF and member of the transitional government, writes that the OLF's initial expectation was that the coalition nature of the transitional government would be expanded further by embracing additional groups from societal sectors, however, in contrast, some of the coalition parties were forced to withdraw and the transitional government became under complete control of the TPLF-led EPRDF, thus 'the transition was aborted before it even got off ground' (Ibid). In addition, the EPRDF was also not showing conciliatory attitude toward other parties in the coalition government. Many members of the Southern Ethiopia Peoples Democratic Coalition (SEPDC) were also forced to withdraw in 1993 from the transitional government (Vaughan and Tronvoll 2003: 127).

In the June 1992 district and local government election the EPRDF and its allies controlled 95 per cent of regional and local government structures. In the absence of major competitors, the EPRDF became the only political power in the transitional government. According to observers the election was reported as a total failure and flaw (NDI 1992; Marcus 2002: 235; Pausewang 2002: 31) (Merera 2003: 125).

### **3.4 Summary**

Though the July 1991 conference and the transitional charter declare the establishment of a transitional government composed of the coalition of various ethnic groups in power-sharing arrangement, the ambition of the TPLF-led EPRDF to remain a dominant force has immediately resulted in breeding scepticism, mistrust and tensions within the transitional government. The EPRDF by being the only military force and exclusively monopolizing the national security apparatus became a very powerful force in the country. In comparison with other group in the coalition, the EPRDF/TPLF power was



uncontested and unmatched. Besides, its military success had fashioned a political arrogance to disrespect and reduce other groups in the coalition as its vassals.

A power-sharing arrangement requires the participation of the representatives of all significant groups in political decision-making, especially at the executive level in order to construct a genuine power-sharing device that can mitigate the danger of destructive ethnic rivalry and antagonism that could be generated due to ethnic cleavages and dissimilarity. (Lijphart 1994: 856). A successful ethnic power-sharing system often needs proportional representation that must reflect the ethnic assortment in the ground. In ethnically divided societies a power-sharing mechanism can certainly collapse or become dysfunctional because of unfair representation of groups (Ibid.). Beside, power-sharing mechanism needs to be based on incentives to compromise, rather than for the sake of convenience, because coalitions of convenience could dissolve so easily (Horowitz 1991: 171, 175).

Although, at the initial stage of the transitional period, the EPRDF established a coalition government with many ethnonational movements, such as the OLF, ONLF and other southern ethnic groups, the EPRDF's coalition making strategy in the transitional period was not based on a genuine desire for coalition arrangement but rather purely motivated by the EPRDF's exclusive interest. Contrary to the EPRDF's style of operation, coalition-making approach requires an implementation of a conscious and effective trust building measures. There were three most important factors behind the EPRDF's motivation for the coalition arrangement in the transitional period. The first was motivated by a need for presenting a good image internationally in order to secure a much needed foreign assistance both politically and financially. The pressure from foreign powers, especially by the US, which was the mediator of the 'London peace accord', required the Front to invite other groups in the transitional government. Moreover, the Front was very keen to get massive external assistance in order to jump-start the economy, which had been devastated by the long years of conflict and misguided economic policies of the overthrown regime. As Merera also argued that 'the TPLF, with its narrow ethnic support base in the North has to outflank other contending forces in securing support from the Western powers, especially from the Americans (Merera 2002: 118)'.

The second factor was because of a need for protecting and ascertaining its victory over the military regime. Though the military regime was overthrown in May 1991, the EPRDF was not in full control of

the country. Many thousands soldier of the military regime were not properly demobilized and most of them were still armed, the countrywide administrative structures completely collapsed, some non-EPRDF armed liberation groups such as the OLF had managed to control some territories, and overall the country was in the sate of lawlessness and disorder. As a result, the EPRDF needed support and cooperation of various ethnonational movements and groups in order to create stability and to extend its effective control throughout the country. As one of the signatories of the transitional charter, Leenco concludes that 'they feel cheated and used at a critical moment merely to lend a façade of plurality to a set-up that was, in reality, intended to culminate in the ascendancy of a basically Tigrean-dominated regime' (Leenco 1999: xiii).

The third and most important factor was focused on seeking support internally for its objective in dismantling the 'old order' and constructing the new one in its own image. The EPRDF needed a support and cooperation from the ethnonational movements in its battle against the Amhara elite, what the EPRDF called as the hegemony of Amhara in the Ethiopian state. Thus, it sought alliance with other ethnonationalist movements 'in containing any possible resistance by the overthrown elite' (Ibid. p. 134). Many ethnonational movements such as the OLF, and ONLF had similar claims. The OLF claims that Oromo people and territory were conquered by the Ethiopian armies since 1890s by systematically dismantling the traditional Oromo self-rule structures, like the *Gada* system and by imposing a harsh and violent system of the Amhara overrule (Asafa 1993), (Mohammed 1990 and 1999), (Leenco 1999). Mohammed Hassen (1999: 235) argues that the Ethiopian rulers instituted a policy of cultural '*Amharisation*' in the Oromia area by banning the Oromo language in schools and public use.

Particularly, the TPLF's temporary cooperation with the relatively independent Oromo organisation, like the OLF, could be motivated by the need to balance the power equation against the pro-unity or one-Ethiopia forces, as the OLF was well known by its secessionist agenda. Though the OLF declared that its intention was independent for Oromo people by seceding from Ethiopia, in 1991 it showed a willingness to remain in Ethiopia if Oromia had been granted meaningful autonomy' (Forrest 2004: 157) As Leenco argues 'a new free federal Ethiopia was to be built on the grave of the empire' out of free choices of all concerned communities. Thus, 'recasting the Ethiopian state on totally new basis was thus hoped to lend a sufficiently plausible rationale for maintaining the remainder of Ethiopia [minus Eritrea] as a new entity' (Leenco 1999: 209). He adds that 'the adoption of federalism was bound to result in the

scrapping of subordination of some communities by the elite coming from a particular nation' (Ibid. p. 209-10).

Nevertheless, the TPLF-led EPRDF was unwilling to adopt a genuine power-sharing formula'. Rather it uses a strategy to divide and conquer. No frank dialogue with other members who signed the charter rather it acted, according to Edmond 'to control and manipulate the group in a hegemonic fashion' (Keller 1998: 113). For the Oromo nationalists, the change since 1991 was from Amharic towards Tigrean domination, and thus still with Abyssinian domination of the South (Leenco 1999: 46). Consequently, the TPLF itself was charged of ethnic chauvinism, as discredited by its own claim and ambition. So, the OLF, which claims to represent the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, has regarded the ethnic federation scheme as a ploy for the continuation of the northern hegemony over the Oromo. Frustrated by the behaviour of the ruling party, the OLF asserted that the Oromo deserves the right and freedom to create their own state and thus, self-determination is the objective of their movement (Scherrer, 1998: 43). Since 1992, the OLF has been engaged in armed struggle against the EPRDF. Clandestine political movements in support of the OLF have been expanding in many parts of Oromia and among many Oromo university students, and government security forces have been constantly accused for several killings and massive arrest in Oromia region (Amnesty International 2003, 2004, 2005). However recently there is a modification in the OLF's secession ethos that its current leadership and Oromo intellectuals are signalling that Oromo's self-determination quest could be met within the context of the Ethiopian state with genuine federal arrangement by creating an opportunity for the Oromo people to be administered by their own true representatives in democratic process. (An Interview by the Chairman of the OLF, January 2006; Leenco 1994: 242-44). More detail discussion concerning the political situation in Oromia will be presented in chapter 7 that deals about the Oromia regional state.

Nevertheless, the OLF also made a tactical error in its political mobilisation of the Oromo people in 1991. First, its reckless historical interpretation that portrayed the Amhara people as oppressors of the Oromo people and its impish slogan of 'Oromia for Oromo people' kind of extreme positions greatly helped the EPRDF to intervene as guardian of the rights of non-Oromo people in the Oromo areas. If the OLF leadership were clever enough, they could have advised their followers to respect the rights of non-Oromo people in Oromia, but divert the whole attention on the EPRDF, which was a ruling government with a superior military force. Instead, the OLF wasted much of its attention and action to denounce 'the

Amhara rule', which was not the problem at the time. The OLF's ideology alienated, the Amhara and other non-Oromo groups in Oromia that could be its potential supporters against the EPRDF, which was generally seen as a force that stood for the dismemberment of Ethiopia by undermining Ethiopia's historical right to have its own outlet to the sea. However, the OLF's imprudent political position and campaign resulted in violence against non-Oromo resident in Oromo areas, which resulted in killings, displacement and expulsion of non-Oromo as well as Oromo people. This created physical and psychological insecurity among the large number of non-Oromo people residing in Oromia, and this benefited greatly the ruling EPRDF party to intervene successfully to establish itself as a guardian of peace and security. Second, the OLF's obsession with secession was highly evident. Its political programme and propaganda were filled with exaggerating the dissimilarity of the Oromo people with the people of Ethiopia, particularly with Amhara and Tigrayan people. Though its willingness to join the transitional government in 1991 could be seen as its intention in changing its secessionist goal, its reluctance to declare its intention unequivocally for the public created suspicion among the people concerning the goal of the OLF. The EPRDF argued that the OLF was not genuinely interested to work within the context of Ethiopia, rather its participation in the transitional government was motivated in using the transitional period as a stepping stone to facilitate its secession agenda (Kinfe 1994: 170). Thus, this appeared a justifiable reason to contain the OLF.

In transitional period, the EPRDF also benefited from the Amhara elites' outright rejection of ethnic rights and ethnic entitlement. The outright rejection of the Amhara elites helped the EPRDF's claim to get approval and support from the various ethnic communities who found justification for the EPRDF's accusation of the 'Amhara rule' as oppressive and detrimental to ethnic rights. Thus, the EPRDF got an opportunity to attract elites from various ethnic groups to work in its coalition by hoping to protect and ascertain their rights and interests. The rejection also created division and confusion among forces outside the EPRDF. The big cry mainly by the Amhara elite in portraying 'ethnic rights' as some kind of bizarreness and wickedness created suspicion among elites of various ethnic communities concerning the motives of the Amhara elite. Leenco argues that the word 'ethnic' was employed by the Amhara elite to demonise those who spoke up for Ethiopia's subject peoples as 'tribalists' or 'narrow nationalists' (Leenco 1999: 235). He writes that: 'It is about convincing the Oromo, Sidama, Somali, Wolaita, and other peoples not to use their own language in courts, public administration offices, and schools...it is about persuading these peoples that administration by a person other than one of their own is the only

way by which their interests are best served (Ibid. pp. 235-6). He holds that the national rebellion movements in Ethiopia came into existence mostly in reaction to Ethiopian nationalism that was identical with Amhara nationalism by upholding what is Amharic is national and what is not is either 'tribal' or 'ethnic' (Ibid. p. 236). Merera also argues that the Amhara elite vehemently opposed those who accept the reality of national inequality in the past, and even accuse them of 'national nihilism' (Merera 2003: 96). Consequently, it became beneficial for TPLF to manoeuvre among the various ethnic communities in order to build up support and enlist allies.

The southern region political elite were highly divided and fragmented among ethnic lines and they were not strong enough to resist the TPLF's manipulation and domination, but few were able to forge a strong coalition against the EPRDF in the transitional government. The SEPDC, which was formed in 1993 by several smaller parties from Southern region, was very critical of the undemocratic actions of the EPRDF. Most of the SEPDC's member organisations were expelled from the transitional government in 1993 when they participated in the 'reconciliation meeting' in Paris, which was organised by opposition parties in exile that demanded for general 'reconciliation conference' among all Ethiopian political organisations and civil society groups to establish all-inclusive political process in Ethiopia. The EPRDF was actively working to weaken the SEPDC by encouraging and threatening its members to defect and thus to join new parties established by it (Pausewang 2002: 35).

Thus, by alienating the main political elites from the two majority ethnic groups- the Oromo and Amhara- and the Southern region, and by relying on its exclusive military supremacy, the TPLF became a dominant force but with narrow legitimacy and flimsy coalition in the transitional government. A report from three, internationally well-known organizations- National Democratic Institute, Norwegian Institute of Human Rights and Heinrich Boll Foundation- concluded that 'the EPRDF members parties were given the local and regional administrative positions, and based their authority on the presence of the TPLF troops. They established their control at the local level and discouraged, inhibited or even penalized all other political activities' (Ibid. p. 30). This exclusive control of the transitional government helped the TPLF-led EPRDF to put down the foundation and conditions for its subsequent hegemonic desire and goal, but at the expense of derailing the process of forging effective and genuine coalition among the various ethnic communities in the country. All major opposition groups boycotted the

subsequent key political activities such as the 1992 local election, the 1994 election for constitutional assembly and the 1995 and 2000 general elections.

The above presentation reveals that, at its inception, the ethnic federal process in Ethiopia lacks genuine negotiation and bargaining among the country's major political and national forces. Ethiopia's ethnic federal arrangement was founded on a very wobbly and fictitious foundation as it reflects only the desire of the ruling government, which came to power through armed struggle. Initially, the TPLF may have a genuine cause shaped because of frustration and hopelessness in Tigray, but in the process, when it was near in capturing the state power, it is conceivable that the TPLF was simply guided by a selfish desire of its interest to remain a dominant force in commanding the Ethiopian state. The TPLF would have believed that its hegemonic control of the state would provide various advantageous for itself. First, it could compensate the peasant and people of Tigray who paid much sacrifice to fight the military government. Second, to be sure that the subsequent political system in Ethiopia would be founded on the best interest of Tigray. Third, the Tigrayan political elite may have desired that they have the right to be the contemporary rulers of Ethiopia to re-claim the lost pride of the Tigrian dominance of the Ethiopian State. Fourth, in Ethiopia, the state has a tremendous power in controlling and distributing resources and benefits. As a result, capturing the state power has created a golden opportunity for the Tigrayan elite to access wealth and privileges. Thus, ethnic discourse becomes more an excuse and ploy to rule rather than govern with fair representation and coalition.

Had EPRDF really desired for inter-ethnic elite consensus, it could have done so by embarking on genuine trust building approach rather than choosing such an intriguing and unworthy journey. However, TPLF was inherently and structurally deficient to embark on establishing a genuine inter-ethnic coalition. The TPLF claims to represent the Tigray province and the Tigray people. The Tigray people constitute less than 10 percent of the total population of Ethiopia, a very minority in Ethiopia's ethnic configuration when compared to the Oromo and Amhara people that represent 35 and 30 per cent of the Ethiopian people respectively. The Tigray province has been the most impoverished, famine stricken and environmentally degraded province in Ethiopia. Without siphoning or supplementing resource from the other part of Ethiopia, it is unlikely that the province could sustain the current, though still precarious, life standard. Conceivably, therefore the TPLF's ethnic empowerment discourse damages more the interest and benefit of the Tigray people and the TPLF, if it is to be implemented

genuinely. The TPLF would have been undermined by its own ethnic empowerment discourse, had it established a genuine ethnic coalition government. As a result, the TPLF would not willingly accept a genuine ethnic coalition government in Ethiopia that would undermine its ambition to remain a hegemonic power. Rather, the TPLF attempts to remain in power through superficial and deceitful coalition device that has been emerging as the political culture of the EPRDF. The TPLF-led EPRDF is striving to sustain a political travesty that would assure its hegemonic project by using ethnic rights discourse in the way to protect its interest. Division of people into ethno-linguistic groups could ensure the political dominance of TPLF. Ethnic rights and ethnic entitlement have become an attractive inducement for many of elites from various ethnic groups to fall so easily in the trap of the TPLF's manipulation and machination. These self-appointed elites, which did not have any legitimacy from their respective ethnic communities, have become an instrument of the TPLF's hegemonic desire, as they were easily susceptible to TPLF's rewarding or/and coercing power. In this case, the TPLF has been consistent in its original policy in promoting first and foremost the interests of the Tigray people via the Tigray nationalism. As Merera claims, 'the ultimate goal has been to ensure the centrality of Tigrayan elite in the reordering of the Ethiopian State and society' (Merera 2002: 119).

Except for a fierce opposition from the OLF, which finally withdrew from the council in June 1992 and some fragmented resistance from the Southern groups, the EPRDF did not confront with any serious challenge to its hegemonic position in controlling the transitional government. It was highly likely, as it was evidenced afterwards, that the transitional government was deliberately designed by the EPRDF to create an ample opportunity for itself to remain the unchallenged power for the objective of predominantly influence the subsequent political process (which I will discuss in the next chapter) including the constitutional drafting and adoption process, electoral processes and procedures, and other vital political activities that were important to ensure its ambition to remain an hegemonic political power in Ethiopia. The next part will present the empirical evidence in this context.

## **Chapter Four: The Process and Structures of Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia**

### ***4.1 Constructing the ethnic states***

#### **4.1.1 The challenges of delimitating the ethnic states**

The transitional charter of the transitional period (1991-1995) declared that each ‘nation, nationality, and peoples’ was provided with ‘the right to administer its own affairs within its own defined territory and effectively participate in the central government on the basis of freedom, and fair and proper representation’ (Art. 2 The Charter, 1991). As a result, the transitional government enacted Proclamation of 7 of 1992 in January 1992 for the establishment of regional self-governments. Thus, the 1992 Proclamation (7 of 1992) enumerated about 60 ethnic groups, and provided for the 48 of the ethnic groups to establish their own ‘National/Regional Self –Governments’ at the wereda level or above (see table 4.1 below for detail). The remaining 17 small-sized ethnic groups were incorporated within some of the 48 self-governing ethnic enclaves as minorities. (Fasil 1997: 40). The ‘nationalities and peoples’ with small-size population, which were identified as ‘minority nationalities’ were provided with a right to have an appropriate representation in their respective wereda legislative body or council (Article 5, 7/91). By going very far, the proclamation affirmed each ethnic group’s right to exercise its right to secession if it is convinced that its rights for self-administration and self-promotion are denied, abridged, or abrogated.

The proclamation can be described as a first official decree in laying down the foundation for restructuring the Ethiopian state in a federal line. By the proclamation, 14 regional governments were established in which the total of 48 ethnic groups were provided with the right of self-governing status within the 14 regional administrative structures and other 17 ethnic groups, who were classified as minority groups, were provided with the right to have adequate representation within their respective regional government and wereda administration legislative structures (see table 4.1 below for detail). The territorial delimitation of these self-governing entities was declared to be determined based on ethno-linguistic criteria and settlement pattern. In the proclamation ‘nations, nationalities and peoples’ or ethnic groups were defined by common definition as ‘a people



living in the same geographical area and having the same language and a common psychological make-up of identity (Proclamation 7/1992).

Table 4. 1 List of ethnic groups provided with the right to establish National/Regional Self-Governments in 1992

Region	Ethnic groups
One	Tigrai*, Saho**, Kunama**
Two	Afar*
Three	Amhara*, Agaw-Kamirgina*, Agaw-Awongigan*, Oromo*
Four	Oromo*
Five	Somali*
Six	Berta*, Gumuz*, Shinasha**, Koma**, Mao**,
Seven	Gurage*, Hadiya*, Kembata*, Alaba*, Tembaro*, Yem*
Eight	Sidama*, Gedio*, Burje*, Amaro* (Kore), Gidicho*
Nine	Wolaita*, Dawuro*, Konta*, Aydi*, Gewada*, Melon*, Gofa*, Zoyisse**, Gobeze, Bussa*, Konssa*, Gamo*, Gidole**
Ten	Basketo*, Murssi*, Ari*, Hamar*, Arbore*, Dassenech*, Gnangatom**, Tsemai**, Maley*, Dimme**, Bodi*
Eleven	Keficho*, Nao*, Dizo*, Surma*, Zelmam**, Shekocho* (Mocha), Minit**, Chara*, Bench*, Sheko*
Twelve	Agnwak*, Nuwer*, Mejenjer*
Thirteen	Harari*
Fourteen	(Addis Ababa)*

\* They shall establish their own National/Regional Self-Governments at the Wereda level or above

\*\* They shall have adequate representation within their respective National/Regional Self-Governments

Source: Proclamation No. 7/1992, A Proclamation to provide for the establishment of National/Regional Self-Governments. Negarit Gazeta 51<sup>st</sup> Year No. 2

According to Fasil Nahum<sup>11</sup>, that the selection of an ethnolinguistic criterion was preferred due to the fact that the 'psychological make-up of the Ethiopian people contains a heavy dose of emphasis of ethnic backgrounds. The spontaneous ethnic political grouping so strongly reflected in the

<sup>11</sup> Since 1991 he is working as a legal advisor to the Prime Minister Meles Zenawi

Council of Representative is a good example' (Fasil 1997: 45) However, Fasil ignores the fact that the political groupings in the Council of Representative was not a true initiation and representation of the Ethiopian society, it was a reflection of TPLF's policy and conditionality in explicitly encouraging ethnic parties in its interim rule period that was opportunistically and quickly responded by the elites from various groups at the transitional period. 'The value of ethnicity attracted numerous ethnic entrepreneurs eager to turn it into political capital' (Markakis 1998: 145). The process did not necessarily reflect the verdict of the people or ethnic communities; rather, it was facilitated by the ideology of the ruling group that monopolised power and ideology in Ethiopia after overthrowing the military regime in 1991.

Although ethnolinguistic classification was the favoured criterion for granting self-governing entity, given the presence of about sixty-five officially identified ethnolinguistic groupings in the country, it became a difficult task to grant every ethnic group its own self-governing structure. Consequently, many ethnic groupings have joined with much larger ethnic groups to form a state. (Fasil 1997: 52). Nonetheless, no convincing explanation has been provided in granting a separate regional state status for some very small ethnic groups like Harari (with 20, 000 population, only half of them do live in the regional state) whereas denying the same status to the larger ones such as Sidama, Wolaita and others who indeed have more than a million populations. Thus, neither the population size nor the ethnic identity was a systematic and operational criterion for establishing self-government entities. It was arbitrarily and feebly constructed and imposed without a proper bargaining process among the constituting units, because 'had population size, ethnicity, and the consent of the people been the criteria, there would be at least forty to fifty regional states making the constituent parts of the federation' (Mesfin, 1999: 162).

The fickleness in demarcating regional states has created many rolling challenges for the federal system in Ethiopia. There are many ethnic groups with significant population and better economic capacity that can fulfil the working procedure to get a separate regional self-government. By making comparison of their capacity and their population size with those who have already been granted regional government status, the political elites from many ethnic groups such as the Sidama, Wolaita, Benishangul (Berta), Sheka, have a belief that they can definitely get the consent of their

respective people to get their own self-administration territory. For example, the demand from the Sidama political elites within the EPRDF coalition, the ordinary citizens and opposition groups like the Sidama Liberation Front (SLM) have agreement in the demand for separate regional state for Sidama people. Sidama ethnic group has about 2 million populations (1994 Census) with relatively viable economic capacity and territorially concentrated Sidama population that can make it feasible to get its own regional states when one make comparison with others regions such as the Harari, Afar, Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz. As a result, it is very essential to provide a convincing and stronger argument why some ethnic groups like the Sidama were not allowed to establish their own regional government whereas very lesser population groups like Harari and others have been provided the right to establish their own regional government. The tension in SNNP and particularly in Sidama need to be addressed in terms of the principles of federalism rather than the application of force and state violence. A forceful suppression of demand for rights is inimical to the federal process and principles (Elazar 1989), especially when the demand is raised based on pledged promises and agreed covenants. In a legal term the demand of the Sidama elites are legitimate and accurate. (I will discuss this issue in detail in chapter 6 that deal about the SNNP regional state). According to Vaughan and Tronvoll, such tensions have emerged because the TPLF's policy of ethnic rights in Ethiopia incorporates two contradictory notions. The first notion follows that 'a community can be mobilised better in its own language, using its own culture, by its own people – effectively 'from within'. The second notion is that 'the criteria for the establishment of 'nations, nationalities, and peoples' are objectively and externally identifiable, and verifiable by a vanguard organisation independently of the views of the groups' members- effectively 'from above' (Vaughan and Tronvoll 2003: 13).

Furthermore, the ethnic make-up and stature in Ethiopia reveal the difficulties associated with the discourse of self-government to every 'nations, nationalities and peoples' in Ethiopia. It becomes a challenging task to adequately and fairly represents the 80 ethnic groups in nine regional states. Only few ethnic groups like the Tigrean, Afar, Amhara, Oromo, Somali and Harari have got a privileged position and right to satisfy their rights for self-government from the total of about 80 ethnic groups that are promised to have their own self-administration rights. Though the Federal constitution came into force in August 1995, the restructuring of internal boundary on basis of ethno-linguistic lines was started at the transitional period, earlier than enacting the federal constitution, the period in

which the transition government did not have any popular or constitutional legitimacy to embark on such fundamental restructuring of the Ethiopian state. The transitional period Charter, article 13 vaguely assigned a duty to the transitional government to draft a law that to establish a local and regional councils through election, but without making any specific identification with regard to restructuring the whole state in ethnic federal lines. As a result, Ethiopia's ethnic federal restructuring was implemented before any popular or constitutional legitimacy. It was decided by the self-imposed elites who assumed that ethnic federalism would be the best option for the Ethiopian people.

Practically, the 7/1992 Proclamation was a precursor for an ethnic federal arrangement in Ethiopia by officially endorsing the establishment of a federal-like state arrangement that had two levels of governments: the transitional government at the centre and the regional governments at regional level. The transitional government at the centre was responsible for foreign affairs, national defence, economic policy, monetary and fiscal policies and management, citizenship, building and administering major development infrastructures and establishments. It was provided with a power for budget allocation to the regional governments. (Article 9, Proclamation 7/92). Likewise, the regional governing entities were provided broad powers on all matters within their territorial jurisdiction except for those assigned to the transitional/central government. Some of the major responsibilities provided to the regional governments were:

- Full power on matters related to language, culture and education policies
- A right to establish their own legislative, executive and judiciary bodies
- A right to enact their own constitution, but in conformity with the central government (or the federal constitution)
- To establish, direct and supervise social and economic development establishments or enterprises

Theoretically, the promise was very comprehensive but the most important matter is how far it was respected practically. In many regards, the newly established regional and local self-governments at the transitional period were highly subordinated to the centrally located transitional government. The central government was superior over the regional ones due to its exclusive control of key areas such as budget allocation power to the regional governments, and control of the countrywide security and

military apparatuses and operations. It may be not surprising in situation where the tradition of statehood in Ethiopia has been in favour of highly centralized and autocratic state system. In addition to the above norm, the new regional government leadership posts were staffed by inexperienced, less educated, submissive and non-popular individuals who were calculatingly handpicked by the EPRDF in order to facilitate its ambition in dominating the overall political space in Ethiopia.

The efficiency and capacity of the leadership of the regional states were extraordinarily low. For instance, in some regions like Benishangul-Gumuz, Afar, Gambella there were many regional government officials who did not attend a level of education above elementary school.

Due to its ethnic right and ethnic entitlement policy, the TPLF/EPRDF has been keen to employ and appoint local elites regardless of their education background. According to Yong 'in Gambella, with its limited population of educated people, many of those appointed had not completed high school (Young 1999: 330). There were also individuals at a leadership position who cannot read and write at all (A member of the regional executive from Gumuz, Interviewee 5 2002: 4). It is complained that 'the combined requirements to recruit personnel on the basis of ethnic quotas, *and* political affiliation or loyalty means that the most able and efficient functionaries are continually overlooked' (Vaughan and Tronvoll 2003: 14). Thus, better-educated, self-assured and prominent individuals were deliberately pushed aside by EPRDF cadres from the leadership position may be because of a fear that these people may not be submissive and faithful followers of EPRDF's hegemonic project. The hegemonic motive of EPRDF has become the main factor in alienating the major section of the Ethiopian society and set the foundation for the unpopular and lonesome journey of EPRDF's federal project.

As a result, the professional capacity and efficiency in the civil services and other public institutions of the regional states were also very weak. According to the World Bank's report on regionalisation in Ethiopia that 'in several regions a lack of professionals such as accountants, economists, engineers, managers and planners, hinders the implementation and efficacy of public programs' (World Bank 2000: 11). In 1997, 85.8 percent of the 300,000 civil servants in the country are serving in the regional states. But the education level of more than three-quarters were not above 12 grade or less than higher (tertiary) education; only 13 percent had college or university education and most of them were working in the federal government. (UN Country Team, 1999: 40). Especially, regions such as Afar, Somali, Gambella and Benishangul (combined have 10% of the total population) have

very little experience in self-administration; in the past, local as well as provincial administrators were usually appointed by the central governments and nearly all of the administrative personnel were staffed by ‘non-indigenous’ personnel. This historical factor has made these regional states highly dependent on the central/federal government and thus makes them highly vulnerable to the federal intervention. Political instability in Benishangul, Gambella and Somali regions clearly manifest the vulnerability.

#### **4.1.2 The features of the regional states**

Initially, in 1992, fourteen regional states were established; see the detail in Table 4.1 above. The five of the regional states, Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, Afar and Somali were designated as more or less a single homogenous ethnic territory although they inhabit a significant size of mixed groups and minority ethnic groups within the regional states. The other seven states were highly heterogeneous and inhabited by more than two ethnic groups. For example, in the 5 of the regional states in the South there were about 45 identified ethnic groups. Region 13, designated for the Harari ethnic group, but the majority (about 70 %) of the inhabitants of the region are non-Harari ethnic group. Region 14, Addis Ababa city established its own self-government. However, the proclamation didn’t give any clear territorial delimitation except identifying ethnic group that were incorporated in each regional states and this brought compounded problems to make official boarder demarcation of the regional states.

Nevertheless, in 1993 the regional states were reduced to nine after merging the five regional states (Region 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11) in the South into one single regional state under the name of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples (SNNP) regional state. There was no clear explanation how the merger was initiated, negotiated and agreed. The merger decision was made through closed-door agreement among the self-appointed ethnic organizations in the name of the people. Whatever was the justification of the decision, such kind of decision, which has a tremendous political implication for the concerned people, should have been decided in open and transparent manner. Many prominent individuals in SNNP such as Beyene Petros, Tefera Meskelea and the SNNP Council speaker, have believed that the decision was imposed on them by EPRDF in inconsistency and contrary to the agreed covenant or the transitional charter). Even if the 7/92 proclamation

allowed for merger, it had made a specific condition in a manner that the merging should not hinder each ethnic group's right to preserve its own local self-government capacity against its will.

Thus, the regional states that were established during the transitional period were officially endorsed by the 1994 constitution as constituent units of the Ethiopian federation. The constitution states that 'the federal democratic Republic of Ethiopia shall comprise of States, and the States shall be delimited on the basis of the settlement patterns, language, identity and the consent of the people concerned' (Art. 46, 1994 Constitution). The constitution also affirms the establishment of nine Regional State, which are: 1) the Region of Tigray, 2) the Region of Afar, 3) the Region of Amhara, 4) the Region of Oromia, 5) the Region of Somalia, 6) the Region of Benishangul/Gumuz, 7) the Region of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples, 8) the Region of Gambella Peoples, and 9) the Region of Harari People. The city of Addis Ababa was designated as a city administration, but directly responsible for the federal executive and the Addis Ababa people.

#### **4.1.3 The asymmetric features of the regional state**

Although the Constitution determines that the component units or states should have equal rights and powers (Article 47). As shown on table 4.1, the regional states in Ethiopia exhibit extraordinary imbalances or asymmetry in terms of natural and human resources, population size, territorial space, societal diversity as well as a political influence and roles in the federal government. Even ethnically, a Tigrean bureaucrat or politician has more freedom and confidence than others within the EPRDF coalition wherein evidently 'all are equal, but some are more equal than others'.

In terms of population of the regional states, the population size ranges from 20 million in Oromia to 150 thousand in Harari regional state. Two regional state alone, Oromia and Amhara regional states comprise about 62% of the total population of the country and when the figure from SNNPR adds into it, the three regional states alone contain 80% (which is far more than two-third majority) of the population. Politically, this has a serious repercussion; if these three regional states work closely for their advantage they can overwhelmingly dominate the federal government in all significant matters. Ethnically, based on the 1994 census, the two largest ethnic group Oromo and Amhara have 20 million and 15 million people respectively which is about 60% of the total population, and followed by 3.3 million Somali, 3.2 million Tigrayan, 2.2 million Gurage (three main sub-groups combined)

and 1.8 million Sidama. From officially identified about sixty-five ethnic groups, about fifty ethnic groups (the three-fourth) have less than a million population, about forty ethnic groups (about two-third) have less than 100,000, and about twenty ethnic groups (about one-third) have less than 10,000 population.

Nevertheless, census results have become political due to the great importance attached to the population size of the ethnic groups in granting political power, allocating financial transfers and selecting working and schooling languages. Some ethnic groups such as the Sidama, Anuk and Oromo have complained that the 1994 census might have significant errors that could affect their numerical strength. In Gambella region, for example, the Anuk elite claims that the 1994 census mistakenly made Nuer (60,000 population) a majority in Gambella regional state by erroneously registering a significant number of Nuer population who are Sudanese residents that have happened to be in Ethiopia because of the conflict in Southern Sudan (Young 1999). Anuak elite also believes that in the 1994 census many Anuak were uncounted because their village was inaccessible at the time of the census, which was conducted during the rainy season in Anuak area (UN-EUE 2002). Thus, Anuk, claim being a majority in the Gambella. In the SNNP, the Sidama political elite claims that the census result for the polio vaccination for the Sidama zone was 4 million against the 1994 census result of 2.4 million (A member of the Sidama zonal legislative (also member of the ruling party), Interviewee 30, 2002: 13).



Table 4.2 Some characteristics of the Regional States

Regions	Population* 1994/95 (The 'Indigenous' group)	Urban/Rural (percent)	Area in Sq.km	Density Sq.km	No. of Ethnic groups (The dominant group)	No. of zone	No. of Special wereda	No. of Wereda
Tigray	3,358,358	17/83	60,000.2	62.6	3 (99.4%)	4		35
Afar	1,131,437	8/92	77,000.0	14.6	1	5		28
Amhara	14,769,360	10/90	188,000.8	86.9	3 (92%)	10	2	102
Oromia	20,012,952	12/88	360,000.0	53.1	1 (85%)	12		176
SNNP	11,064,818	8/92	112,000.0	92.4	50+ (20%)	9	5	71
Somali	3,378,600	15/85	215,000.9	15.7	1	9		47
Benisha- ngul- Gumuz	492,689 (60%)	9/91	46,000.8	9.3	5	3	2	20
Gambella	194,755 (76%)	17/83	26,000.1	7.0	4	2		8
Harari (city-state)	143,587 (6%)	60/40	300	421.3	-	3		19

Sources: Condensed from The 1994 Population and Housing Census; Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation, Welfare Monitoring Unit, *Poverty Situation in Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa, March 1999); Ethiopia UN Country Team, 1999, *Common Country Assessment*, September 1999, Addis Ababa

\*The 1994 Population and Housing Census projection, the country's population has reached 59.9 million in 1998, Population size (millions) 1994= 53.5 Census 1994; (2000= 63.5 Census projection) (2005= 73.0 Census projection)

#### 4.1.4 The ethnic configurations of the regional states

Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somali regional states are considered as a single-ethnic-constituency regional states in the sense that they are characterized by the existence of a single dominant ethnic group, as it is evident from the names of the regional states that are designating by the names of the respective dominant ethnic groups. The Tigray region has 3.5 million populations, of which the Tigrayan ethnic group accounts 98 percent of the regional state population and the two very small ethnic groups, Irob and Kunama accounts 0.5 and 0.05 percent respectively, and only one percent non-'indigenous population' or only less than 2 percent non-Tigrayan people. Tigray is a highly homogenous region, and thus the Tigray ethnic group is provided with the full right of self-administration.

The Amhara regional state, which has about 15 million people of which Amhara ethnic group accounts 92 per cent, is a single-ethnic constituency in which the region is designated as a self-administrative constituency of the Amhara people. However, the Oromo that accounts 3 per cent of the regional population and the Agew-Awi people are also provided with a self-administration right in a special woreda constituencies because of their concentration in a particular area.

The Oromia regional state, which has about 20 million people, is a single-ethnic constituency for the Oromo people to exercise their self-administration rights because the Oromo people accounts 85 percent of the regional state's population. However, 15 per cent the non-Oromo people of the regional residents are without any political representation. Especially, a significant concentration of Amhara population is living in many towns and urban areas that should enjoy a comparable status as the Oromo live in Amhara regional state. Such measures are very important to create inter-ethnic collaboration and respect. Since the regional state is located very strategically by bordering most of the regional states and serving as a central and essential landmass of the Ethiopian state, most of the urban areas are predominately inhabited by ethnically mixed people. At the inception of the regional state in 1991, violent ethnic clashes occurred between non-Oromo and Oromo groups that took the lives of many civilians. Still there have been pocket of ethnic strife and widespread ethnic hostilities especially in many towns wherein in some cases the majority of the urban dwellers are non-Oromo, but the Oromo group exclusively controls the town administrations.

The Afar and Somali regional states are also designated as single-ethnic self-administrative constituencies for the Afar and Somali people respectively. The Somali regional state has about 3 million population of which the majority about 95 per cent are Somalis. However, despite ethnic similarities there have been never-ending hostilities among various clan groups that deter an establishment of an effective and viable regional state. The Somali regional state has been in the state of crisis since its inception and thus become a constant trouble for the federal government. The Afar regional state has about one million populations of which the Afar people account about 95 percent of the regional population. The Afar and Somali regional states also contain mixed ethnic communities who lack any form of political and administrative representation within their respective regional states.

The SNNP, the Benishangul-Gumuz and the Gambella regional states are designated as multi-ethnic constituencies regional state. The Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP) regional state has about 11 million population of which five ethnic groups account about 52 percent (Sidama people accounts 18 per cent, Wolaita 11 per cent, Guraghe 8 per cent, Hadiya 8 per cent, Siltie 7 per cent) and the rest about 60 ethnic groups accounts less than 50 percent of the regional population. Because more than 60 ethnic groups are compacted in a single state structure, there has been intense competition for representation, resources and government positions at the regional, zonal and woreda structures. From about 60 ethnic groups that are officially identified in the regional state, only 21 ethnic groups have been provided with self-administrative constituencies at zonal or special wereda level. Moreover, at regional government level, there is competition among the major ethnic groups like Sidama, Wolaita, Gurage, Hadiya and others to get a prominent position in the regional state structure. The Sidama political elites are threatening to secede from the regional state. Ethnic hostility and conflicts have been observed in many places since the inception of the regional state. Constant fissure and some times bloody conflicts and splits have been manifested like in the North Omo Zone, Alaba-Kembata-Timbaro Zone and Sheka zone. At woreda level also violent clashes have occurred to control political power and in selecting working languages. (I will present more concerning SNNP regional state in chapter 6. The Benishangul-Gumuz regional state has about half a million population, of which the five indigenous ethnic groups account 57 per cent of the regional population (Benishangul (Berta) people 26 per cent, Gumuz 23 per cent, Shinasha 7 per cent, Mao 0.6 per cent and Komo 0.2 per cent of the regional population). The rest 43 per cent comprised of 'non-indigenous' groups such as Amhara 22 percent, Oromo 12 percent and others 9 per cent. Although the regional state was designated as a multi-ethnic constituency, the 'non-indigenous' people are not considered as part of the multi-ethnic constituencies. The 'indigenous' groups dominate the political power in the region by curbing the political and civic rights of the 'non-indigenous' groups. Moreover, the region is overwhelmed by unhealthy competition and tension among the 'indigenous' group for power and resources (I will discuss about the region separately in chapter 5).

The Gambella regional states which has about 200, 000 population, is designated as a multi-ethnic constituency for Nuer, Anuk, Mejinger, Opos and Komos indigenous groups that

accounts 75 per cent of the regional state's population. Among the 'indigenous groups', Nuer accounts 40 per cent, Anuak 27 per cent, Mejjinger, 6 per cent and Opos and Komos 3 per cent (Census, 1994). Among the 'non-indigenous' groups, Amhara accounts 8 percent, Oromo 6 percent and 8 percent from SNNP. The regional state suffers from frequent conflict mainly between the two dominant ethnic groups- Anuak and Nuer and also sometimes between indigenous and non-indigenous groups. In 2002, bloody conflict was occurred and resulted in the loss of many lives, destruction of houses and displacement of thousands of people (UN-EUE 2002). The federal government defence force was accused of murdering Anuak civilians (Amnesty International 2005).

From all regional states, a very unique one is the Harari regional state. The regional state has about 150,000 populations, of which the Harari people account only 7 percent, the Oromo 52 percent and the Amhara 32 percent, but despite such population make-up the regional state was designated as a self-administrative constituency for the Harari people. The leadership position of the Harari political elite, who are a very minute minority in the regional state, has been fiercely resisted by the two dominant ethnic groups in the regional state- the Amhara and the Oromo. The regional state is a case for the distortion and arbitrary nature of the ethnic federal arrangement in Ethiopia. According to Merera that 'the Harari arrangement seems to be more primitive than democracy in the days of Aristotle, however it is perfectly consistent with the role of the Tigrayan political elite who claim to represent 7 percent of the Ethiopian population and are the rulers of the whole of Ethiopia in the name of ethnic rights and ethnic equality (Merera 2003: 139). Moreover, the Harari case is serving as a reference for many other ethnic groups to demand and emulate for their separate administrative structure. It is argued that Harari people were provided for self-administrative constituency mainly because of the closeness of some prominent individuals to the TPLF/EPRDF.

#### **4.1.5 Socio-economic variations among the regional states**

Except for a few self-governing urban areas like Addis Ababa, Harari and Dire Dawa, most of the regional states exhibit a similar pattern of low-level socio-economic conditions (see the details on Table 4.2, 4.3, and 4.4). Obviously, there are variations in some indicators, but the variations are not

manifesting a pattern of severe regional imbalances in a consistent way. The four emerging regional state- Afar, Somali, Benishangul and Gambella- which account 10 percent of the total population of the country, are showing a lower level of socio-economic advancement, particularly Afar and Somali are the least advanced of all regional states. A major cause could be linked to the low level of social and economic infrastructure developments in the past and their desert-like harsh climatic condition. Benishangul and Gambella regional states, which account about 1 per cent of the nationwide population are also considered as neglected and disadvantageous regions, but except in few indicators such as road network and infant and child mortality (see table 4.3 and 4.4 below), both regions have shown relatively similar pattern in socio-economic developments with other regional states. However, there may be discrepancies between the ‘indigenous’ and the ‘non-indigenous’ population and the situation among the ‘indigenous’ population is certainly worse than the regional states’ average indicators. For instance, in Benishangul-Gumuz 40 percent of the population is considered as ‘non-indigenous’ who are mostly living in urban areas. Access to social service like education and health facilities by the ‘indigenous’ population are extremely lower than the ‘non-indigenous’, because, in most cases, the ‘indigenous’ populations live far from the urban areas in scattered villages in the peripheries.

Table 4.3 Regional states' access to social services

	Population 1998 (Million)	% of people below poverty line, 1995/96	Access to safe water, HHs (%) 1994	Access to sanitation, HHs (%) 1994	Households with electricity (%) 1994	Literacy rate (%) 1994	Primary Gross enrolment (%) 1994	Road network (density in 000 km2) 1996/97
National		45.5%	24	13		23.4	25.1	
Tigray	3.5	57.9%	21.3	7.0	48.4	20.47	52.6	25.9
Afar	1.2	51.8%	13.0	8.3	53.0	7.28	7.0	10.9
Amhara	15.4	56.7%	21.4	5.8	55.2	17.79	16.1	25.6
Oromia	21.0	34.7%	22.4	12.9	61.8	22.4	21.7	28.6
Somali	3.5	34.6%	15.0	10.9	20.2	7.96	6.7	5.8
Beni- Shangul Gumuz	0.51	47.6%	18.2	19.0	38.8	17.74	25.5	8.6
SNNP	11.8	56.5%	19.2	12.8	48.8	24.44	29.8	38.2
Gambella	0.20	41.8%	26.5	14.8	26.2	29.33	51.2	12.3
Harari	0.15	29.1%	63.1	41.8	95.3	54.54	59.6	63.3
Addis- Ababa	2.35	30.0%	97.50	74.1	95.5	82.52	110.5	175.0
Dire Dawa	0.29	24.6%	77.70	55.0	87.9	51.53	57.6	28.7

\*The minimum standard per capita calorie is 2100

Sources: Condensed from The 1994 Population and Housing Census; Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation, Welfare Monitoring Unit 1999. *Poverty Situation in Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa, March 1999;

Ethiopia UN Country Team, 1999, *Common Country Assessment*, September 1999, Addis Ababa

Table 4.4 Regional states' Health and Nutrition Status

	Infant Mortality Rate (per 1000 live births) 1994	Under Five Mortality Rate (per 1000 live births) 1994	Life Expectancy 1994	Doctor/ population ratio 1996/97	Profile of calorie intake per adult per day 1995/96
National	116		50.7		1960*
Tigray	123	181	49.6	1:39,050	1902
Afar	118	174	50.3	1:75,429	1957
Amhara	116	170	50.8	1:58,608	2004
Oromia	118	173	50.4	1:63,735	1800
Somali	96	137	54.8	1:46,013	1993
Beni- Shangul Gumuz	139	206	48.6	1:16,989	1831
SNNP	128	189	48.6	1:43,391	1734
Gambella	99	142	54.2	1:12,172	2108
Harari	113	166	51.4	1:3,418	2127
Addis- Ababa	78	109	58.4	1:6,970	2040
Dire Dawa	115	168	51.1	1:8,401	2085

Source: Calculated from The 1994 Population and Housing Census; Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation, Welfare Monitoring Unit, Poverty Situation in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, March 1999); Ethiopia UN Country Team, 1999. *Common Country Assessment*, September 1999, Addis Ababa; World Bank (2000: 70)

Nevertheless, socio-economic developments do not show much variation across the regional states; the accusation that the past regimes made regional or ethnic preferences in terms of socio-economic

investments does seem unfounded. The Amhara regional state, which is identified as a homeland for the ruling Amhara ethnic group, is showing the same level of poor socio-economic condition as other regional states; even in some indicators it shows the worst (see the detail in table 4.2 and 4.3). To give some revealing illustrations, proportion of people living below poverty line, in Amhara regional state was 56.7 per cent, whereas the percent in Oromia was 34.7, in Afar 51.8, in Somali 34.6, in SNNP 56.5%, in Benishangul-Gumuz 47.6, in Gambella 41.8 and the national average was 45.5 percent in 1995/96. Access to safe water in 1994 the national average was 24 per cent, whereas the per cent in Amhara was 21.4, in Oromia 22.4, in Benishangul-Gumuz 18.2, in Gambella 26.5 per cent. Access to sanitation services in 1994, the national average was 13 per cent, whereas in Amhara 5.8, in Afar 8.3, in Somali 10.9, in Benishangul-Gumuz 19.0, and in Gambella 14.8 per cent. The national literacy rate in 1994 was 23.4, whereas the rate in Amhara was 17.79, in SNNP 24.44, in Oromia 22.4, in Benishangul-Gumuz 17.74, in Gambella 29.33 and in SNNP 24.44 per cent. Infant Mortality Rate (*per 1000 live births*) in 1994 of the national average was 116, whereas in Amhara it was the same 116, in Afar 118, in Somali 96, in Benishangul-Gumuz 139, in Gambella 96. Doctor/population ratio in 1996/97, in Amhara was 1:58,608, in Tigray 1:39,050 in Afar 1:75,429, in Somali 1:46,013, in Benishangul-Gumuz 1:16,989, in Gambella 1:12,172. The above indicators reveal that the living conditions of the Amhara people were not different from the rest of the people in Ethiopia. Moreover, when one considers the distribution of industrial establishments, 69 percent of the country's industrial establishment was concentrated in Addis Ababa city, followed by 14 per cent in Oromia, and 4 per cent in Amhara (see for the detail table 4.5).



Table 4.5 Regional Distributions of Public and Private Industrial Establishments in 1993

Region	Total	Percentage
Tigray	8	1.6
Afar	-	
Amhar	19	4
Oromia	71	14
Somali (including)		
Benishagul	-	
Southern	12	2.5
Gambella	-	
Harari	NA	
Addis Ababa	328	69
Dire Dawa	16	3
Not identified	20	4
Total	475	100

Source: Seminar Proceedings 1993. *The Impending Federalism as a basis for Development in Ethiopia: some notes on constraints* AMBO III, 1993, page 16)

#### 4.1.6 Administrative Structures in the regional states

Administratively, in most cases the regional states are organized in four-tier administrative hierarchies, namely the regional government, zonal administration, wereda administration and kebele administrations. The regional states' supreme legislative, executive and judicial powers are concentrated and centralized at the regional governments that are headed by the regional states' presidents. In all of cases, the regional states' presidents are very powerful and supreme since they operate as leaders of the regional executives, legislatures and judiciaries. Due to such high concentration of power at the regional government level, the Ethiopian federal arrangement exhibits a concentration of power rather than a non-centralization of power.

The zonal administration is the second tier of administrative structure in the regional states and its major function is to serve as a sub-regional administrative structure in order to co-ordinate and watch over the activities of the woreda administrations. However, there are regional variations with regard to

its mandate, legitimacy and functions. In the SNNPR, for instance, zones have elected councils and in some cases represent a specific ethnic community, like in Sidama zone, Hadiya zone, Wolaita zone etc. and their mandate and functions are not only to serve as a sub-regional administrative capacity but also to serve as a self-government entity for the respective ethnic groups though it has limited power and legal jurisdictions. Except the SNNPR, in other regions, zones are simply acting as a subsidiary or sub-regional administrative structure in which most of its officials were appointed by the regional state and they are responsible for transmitting decisions and power of the regional government to the woreda administration. In these regions, the woreda administrations are directly accountable and responsible for the zonal administrations and in turn the zonal administrations is accountable to the regional government in which power is concentrated at the top at the regional level. There is no precise standard or criterion for structuring zonal and woreda administrative structures, the decision is left to the regional states to determine based on their regional context, but it is understood that administrative conveniences are the major reason in establishing the structures.

Special woreda structures are provided to protect the self-government right for minority ethnic groups that do not have enough population to establish their own zonal or regional self-government structure. SNNPR has five, Amhara and Benishangul-Gumuz regional states each has one special woredas for minority ethnic groups. These special woredas are accountable directly to the regional state without any intermediary structures of zonal administration. In standard structures, woreda administrations are accountable to their respective zonal administrations.

A wereda structure is the third tier of administrative structure in the regional states and it was provided with a power to ‘prepare, determine and implement activities within its own areas concerning social services and economic development.’ (Proclamation 7/92, Art. 40, 1). It has directly elected council members and, appointed as well as elected executive and judicial bodies. According to the 1992 proclamation, in some cases, wereda administration has also served as a self-administrative constituency for minority ethnic groups. However, it is very impracticable to consider wereda administration as a self-government entity, because, first, the power and functions provided for wereda administration is very functionary, and second woreda administration is highly subordinated to the regional and zonal administrations. Thus, wereda administrations are not capable enough to provide self-governing rights for the minority ethnic groups as it has been pledged in the constitution, because

the woreda structure mandate was limited into functionary roles without any power of policy and other decision making power that matters most to the wereda areas. At last, the kebele administration is the lowest administrative structure in the regional states. Although its major functions are recognised as ensuring law and order in the kebele area and providing routine administrative service to the kebele people, it is recognised by the people as an instrument of imposing control and command on the local people. As it has direct contact with the local people, it is serving as an arm of the government to impose control and order in the name of promoting peace, security and development in the local area.

## ***4.2 The Constitution***

### **4.2.1 Constitutional distribution of power**

A New Constitution was ratified in December 1994 and adopted in May 1995 and put into effect on 22 August 1995. The constitution officially endorses the ethnic federal restructuring in the country by declaring the establishment of a federal and democratic structure and establishment of nine regional states by declaring that sovereign power should reside with the ‘nations, nationalities and peoples’ of Ethiopia (Article 1, 8, and 47, the 1994 Constitution). The constitution declares for the establishment of a parliamentary system of governance that has a two-chamber parliament at the federal level, namely House of People Representative (HPR) and House of Federation (HF) (Article 45). HPR is the federal legislative body, which has the supreme authority. Its members are elected for a term of five years by a system of a plurality of votes cast from each electoral district or constituency that has 100,000 populations. It has about 547 seats and the constitution put a limit on the number of seats of the HPR not to exceed 550.

The HPR is granted a full power of legislation in all matters assigned to the federal jurisdiction by the constitution. Some of the major responsibilities or functions entrusted to the HPR by the constitution include:

- Enacting of laws on matters specified for the federal level and ratify national policy standards;
- Enacting of specific laws on utilization of land and other natural resources, of rivers and lakes crossing the boundaries of the national territorial jurisdiction or linking two or more States; on inter-State commerce and foreign trade; on air, rail, water and sea transport; major roads linking two or more States, postal and telecommunication services; the possession and bearing of arms;
- It shall enact civil laws, which the House of the Federation deems necessary to establish and sustain one economic community.
- It shall determine the organization of national defence, public security, and a national police force.
- In conformity with Article 93 of the Constitution it shall declare state of emergency;
- On the basis of a draft law submitted to it by the Council of Ministers it shall proclaim a state of war.

- It shall approve general policies and strategies of economic, social and development, and fiscal and monetary policy of the country.
- It shall enact laws on matters relating to the local currency, the administration of the National Bank, and foreign exchange.
- It shall approve the appointment of Federal judges, members of the Council of Ministers, commissioners, the Auditor General, and of other officials whose appointment is required by law to be approved by it.
- It shall, on its own initiative, request a joint session of the House of the Federation and of the House of Peoples' Representatives to take appropriate measures when State authorities are unable to arrest violations of human rights within their jurisdiction. It shall, on the basis of the joint decision of the House, give directives to the concerned State authorities (Article 55).

The second chamber, which is called the House of Federation (HF), is composed of representatives of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' (Article 61). It can be simply called as a house of nationalities or house of ethnic groups. According to the constitution (Article 61) that: 'Each Nation, Nationality and People shall be represented in the House of the Federation by at least one member. Each Nation or Nationality shall be represented by one additional representative for each one million of its population'. In 2002, fifty-eight ethnic groups have been officially represented in the HF by about 107 members.

Constitutionally, the HF has the power to interpret the Constitution and organize the council of constitutional inquiry (Article 62). Other major powers and functions of the HF include, making of decision on issues relating to the rights of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples to self-determination, including the right to secession; promote the equality of the Peoples of Ethiopia enshrined in the Constitution and promote and consolidate their unity based on their mutual consent; make every effort to find solutions to disputes or misunderstandings that may arise between States; determine the division of revenues derived from joint Federal and State tax sources and the subsidies that the Federal Government may provide to the States; determine Federal intervention if any State, in violation of this Constitution, endangers the constitutional order (Article 62).

Although the constitution allocates very vital powers and responsibilities to the HF, its ability to exercise its power has been impaired by the same constitution that permits the HF to establish permanent and ad

hoc committees to exercise most of its power and functions and the constitution does not require the HF to have frequent sessions, rather it requires the HF to have at least two sessions annually (Article 67). Thus, the HF is exercising most of its power and functions through by few individuals working in the committees without making frequent consultation and decision of the whole member of the HF. The weak role of the HF has created an opportunity for concentration of power on the winner party in the federal government.

In addition, the procedure of representation in the HF allows more populous ethnic groups to have more representative in the house, and this means that they have more votes to than the smaller populous ethnic groups represented in the HF, as it is the case in the first legislative chamber, the HPR. As a result, more populous ethnic groups have more seats in both houses and thus more populous ethnic groups have a better (constitutional) power to protect their interest. This makes a case for the critiques that there is always huge difficulties to guarantee ethnic equality in Ethiopia in a straightforward manner. As this shows that in the Ethiopian federal system, both houses are apparently structured for proportional representation, but in many other federal systems, the first chamber is for a proportional representation and the second one is for an equal representation. Moreover, in the case of Ethiopia, the second chamber, namely the HF is not functioning as a legislative body, it is not involved in lawmaking process and it does not have regular session. As a result, it is very difficult to consider the federal system in Ethiopia as bicameral, thus it may be a noticeable deviation from the conventional federal principle that recognizes bicameral legislative structures as an inherent feature of the federal system (Lijphart 1977) (Davis 1978: 142). Besides, the second chamber is serving as ‘the house of every nationalities’ or a chamber for every ethnic groups in the country (Fasil 1999: 72). This shows evidence of the insignificant influence of the ethnic groups (as a group) in the legislative, policymaking and other important decision-making process in Ethiopia, wherein the Constitution declares, ‘sovereign power resides in the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia (Article 8, 1).

Besides the very fact that the regional state’s councils have the power to elect members of the HF, would also be disadvantageous for an ethnic group or ethnic constituency that elects an opposition candidate. Moreover, state councils in majority of the regional states are very weak and have very limited sessions per annum, thus in such situation the executive body of the regional states always have a tremendous power and influence in sending regional representatives for the HF. This practice could

diminish a check and balance system that could be very essential in multiethnic societies in which political competition is positioned around ethnic lines.

Putting aside the operational deficiencies on the ground, a paradoxical constitutional decree has made the HF flimsy and ineffectual; the constitution can be criticized for its inconsistency in giving the HF very substantial power and functions such as interpreting the constitution, determining the division of revenues and subsidies to regional states and making of decision on issues relating to self-determination, including the right to secession, whereas making the HF highly dependent on the states' councils and for that matter, as argued above, making it dependent on the executive bodies at the regional and the federal government levels. This phenomenon deprives the Ethiopian federal system the exclusive hallmark of a federal system, which is a division or separation of power (King 1982: 94). This may be a deliberate attempt by the framers of the constitution who foresee the difficulties in handling and satisfying various self-seeking and provincial demands of ethnic groups. However, in the absence of check and balance mechanisms, the political process could be easily abused by the ruling power to protect its own self-seeking and provincial interest. As Horowitz argues that constitutional designs have effects on the distribution of power, and those who gain power as a result may wish to alter the design to favour themselves (Horowitz 1999: 33).

The constitution states that the members of the HF are either elected by the state councils or elected by the people directly, however in the actual experience it has been the states' council that appoints their respective members in the HF. This means that the majority party in the states' councils has also a power to influence the HF in the federal government. This also shows the level of power concentration in the hands of a single winner party. In the current one-party dominant political process in Ethiopia, the EPRDF has used such constitutional loophole for its advantage to impose its power and also to protect its parochial interest in all level of the federal and regional power structures. The integrity of the constitutional design depends on the integrity of demarcating the boundary since 'the looser the design and the easier the adoption, the easier the alteration as well (Ibid. p. 32).

The constitution grants equal powers and responsibilities to the various regional states as it states that 'Member States of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia shall have equal rights and powers'

(Article 47). This entails that the Ethiopian federal system is constitutionally designed to be a symmetrical federal system. Each regional state has state council that function as the legislative body of the regional government. A president who is elected by the state council leads an executive power in all of the regional states. The Constitution (Article 52) reserves all powers to the states except those given expressly to the federal government alone, or concurrently to the federal and regional governments. Some of the major powers and functions entrusted to the regional states include:

- To establish a State administration that best advances self-government, a democratic order based on the rule of law; to protect and defend the Federal Constitution;
- To enact and execute the state constitution and other laws;
- To formulate and execute economic, social and development policies, strategies and plans of the State;
- To administer land and other natural resources in accordance with Federal laws;
- To levy and collect taxes and duties on revenue sources reserved to the States and to draw up and administer the State budget;
- To enact and enforce laws on the State civil service and their condition of work; in the implementation of this responsibility it shall ensure that educational; training and experience requirements for any job, title or position approximate national standards;
- To establish and administer a state police force, and to maintain public order and peace within the state

Constitutionally, it appears very difficult to reduce or alter the power and function of any of the regional states unless the council of the concerned regional state concedes to the alteration of its power, which is of course a very unusual scenario. The constitution puts a strong protection against any easy alternation or amendment of the constitution. Any proposal for constitutional amendment should be supported by a two-thirds majority vote of a joint session of the HPR and the HF, and should also be approved by a two-thirds of the Councils of the member States of the Federation by majority votes (Article 105). More strictly, amendment to Chapter three of the Constitution that contains human rights and democratic rights including the rights of nations, nationalities, and peoples and, the provision which deals with amendment of the constitution, require the approval of all state councils by a majority vote and the approval of the HPR and HF by a two- thirds majority vote. In this regard, the constitutional approach in



Ethiopia is in accordance with the basic federal principle that requires the consent of a very bigger majority group in constitutional alteration (King 1982; Elazar 1993; Watts 2000).

Nonetheless, it is one thing to put the provisions in the constitution and another to genuinely pursue them. As Leenco anticipated that the TPLF can afford to be quite generous on paper since it will not be bound by those aspects of any legislation that appear to restrain its freedom to act with impunity, (Leenco 1999: 11). Despite a gesture to devolve power to the regional states and local self-government units, the process has been marked by a centralization of power at the center that was overwhelmingly dominated by the TPLF (Cohen 1995:160; Young 1989: 321; Clapham 2002: 26; Merera 2003: 121). Due to the concentration of power on the TPLF/EPRDF, the exercise of power from the federal government to the woreda and kebele administrative structures has been flowing through the centralized TPLF/ EPRDF's party network, thus the declarations in the constitution do not reflect the actual power exercise in Ethiopia's federal system. Moreover, the higher centripetal character of the federal system in Ethiopia could also be gleaned from the concentration of policymaking power on the federal government, the concentration of financial power and budget allocation responsibility on the federal government and a weak capacity of the regional states in terms of skilled manpower (Vaughan and Tronvoll 2003: 12). Abbink (1998:167) also claims that the actual division of powers between member states and federal government in Ethiopia is 'not federal enough' because the states do not have any role in debating the policies and in proposing legislation formulated at the federal level. He justifies this claim by pointing at the fact that other federal systems, such as the German, Canadian, Nigerian and Mexican, have given more power of this kind to the member states. Moreover, in issues concerning constitutional disputes, the regional states have a very insignificant constitutional role to challenge decisions made by the HF and Council of Constitutional Inquiry, which are structured within the jurisdiction of the federal government in which the federal executive particularly the PM has a tremendous power to influence their deliberation and operation.

#### **4.2.2 Article 39: The right to establish self-government or the right to secede**

Article 39 declares an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession of every nation, nationality and peoples in Ethiopia. According to the constitution, 'nation, nationalities or people symbolizes 'a group of people who have or share large measure of a common culture or similar customs,

mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identities, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory' (Article 39, 5). Evidently, this contradicts the federal solution that aims to deter secession. According to Henze (1995: 35) that 'the right to secede' in Ethiopia constitution is narrowly specified without exhaustively elaborating various options of self-determination that could be more logical, practicable and humble than the destructive and impracticable 'the right to secession' cliché. Henze indicates experience in Spain in which autonomous communities are granted broader power of various magnitudes through a process of deliberation and bargaining in order to avoid the possibility of separation or secession. For Duchacek (1987: 207), the inclusion of the rights for secession in the federal bargain would facilitate the dissolution of the federal framework by encouraging centrifugal tendencies, but the right of secession would go along more with a confederal arrangement in which parts are completely autonomous to leave the confederation with very less difficulties and insignificant harm to each other.

The insertion of the right for secession promises in the constitution may be clichéd from the USSR constitution that put the same right in the constitution but without any practicability after the independence of Finland. At the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, the Russian federation emerged with a constitution of 1992 that allowed the right to secede as a heir of the USSR, but the 1993 constitution scrapped the right to secede and opted for a process of asymmetrical and separate arrangement with every ethnic territory for negotiated power sharing arrangements in order to deter the destructive burden of secessionism (Smith 2000). Many federal arrangements such as Canada and Switzerland have embarked on granting feasible and fair broader local autonomy arrangements in order to discourage centrifugal tendencies. In the contrary, the Ethiopia's constitutional pledges for secession; it puts a very audacious promise for 'a right to secede', but in reality the power holders are doing very little to promote genuine and feasible self-administrative structures that would discourage a pointer to the constitutional promise of secessionists' bonfire. Rather, the Ethiopian federal experience matches the ex-Soviet Union constitution that gave copious promises of self-determination including independence for its ethnic republics but responded with ruthless force when the rights were requested. To some extent, the same may be true in Ethiopia's federal constitution, which is rich and overflowing in freedom vocabularies but the actual performance is very far and opposite to the declarations. But the danger could be very great in situation which official pronouncement provokes and makes cognizant parochial ethnic consciousness by reckless advertisement of the right to secede, whereas official actions are going

in opposite and extreme directions of subjugation and curtailment of ordinary rights and freedoms which of course reinforce and justify the demand for secession.

Moreover, unfulfilled flashy and celebrated promises could create a strong adverse reaction than discreetly and slightly presented ones since undelivered promise may generate more powerful resentment than the non-promised ones. In situation where the power and the resource of the regional governments are subordinate and dependent to the federal government at the center, the right to secede rhetoric could simply provide an incentive and justification to demand for secession. The regional governments in Ethiopia's federal arrangement are highly dependent on the federal government; they operate in a manner that resembles a centralized administration. The federal government has a supreme power to decide on land and natural resources, it appropriates huge tax bases, and it owns most of the nation's industrial establishments. Besides, many of the ethnic groups are not exercising most of their rights listed in article 39, whereas a few are enjoying more than what they actually deserve. Therefore, with such sorry milieu that breeds and exacerbates resentments, the right to secede cliché can become a recipe for disaster.

Paradoxically, in Ethiopian, the ruling group, which is dominated by a minority ethnic group from an impoverished region, has an unfair control over politics and economics nationwide. At the same time, the same ruling group promises the right to secede for the various ethnic groups who are relatively better endowed with resources. However, it denies an authentic representation of these ethnic groups. Instead, it uses surrogate groups and elites to manoeuvre and control ethnic groups. It is, however, becoming very difficult to sustain the proxy system for long in an efficient and credible manner. As it is accounted that many of proxy officials 'tend to be undisciplined and corrupt, which occasionally resulted in massive dismissal and demotions' (Merera 2003: 141).

Furthermore, there is a procedural confusion regarding the constitutional provision that allows the right to every ethnic group to establish institutions of government in the territory that it inhabits and the right to establish, at any time, their own regional state. The insertion of very ambiguous and complex procedures would make the right meaningless and the intention insincere. The constitution states that the demand for statehood should be approved by a two-thirds majority of the members of the Council of the Nation, Nationality or People concerned, and it should be supported by a majority vote in the

referendum (Article 47). But in majority of cases, except in SNNP region's few ethnic groups (which have zonal council for their ethnic constituency), most of the ethnic groups do not have their own separate councils, paradoxically it is only those who have been allowed to have their own self-administrative constituency that have a council, but those ethnic groups (or 'nations, nationalities and people' as constitutionally named) without self-administrative constituency do not have a council that supposed to approve their demand for self-administration constituency. For example, in Benishangul-Gumuz regional states a demand by the Benishangul (or Berta) elite to have their own council was not entertained for political discussion either in the regional council or in the HF. The Benishangul people did not have their own council to approve the demand until 2003 and the state council, which was established by the five ethnic groups (the Benishangul people have only 28 out of 80 seats), rejected their demand. This created a strained relationship between the Benishangul elite and the Gumuz elite that severely thwarted the operation of the regional state and also the hostility has been deepening not only between the political elite's of the two groups, but also among the ordinary people of Benishangul and Gumuz (A member of zonal executive from Berta, Interviewee 8 2002: 10; An Elder from Berta, Interviewee 7 2002:18; (A regional official, from Gumuz, 1, 2002: 1). A similar problem is occurring in the SNNP regional state, some of these were the Sidama group has resented against the SNNP's council decision to deny them the ownership of Awassa city, the North Omo zone disintegrated in a bloody conflict due to the inability of the four ethnic groups to agree in a single council, the Gamo and Gofa elites are continuing their demand for a separate zonal administration and their own separate council.

Thus, the constitutional pledges for a right to self-administration or secession is more of rhetoric than an achievable promise for many of the ethnic groups, as the long and complex procedures seem difficult to fulfil. In the future, however, it would be used for facilitating and legitimising an exit for a region that could build a capability to do so. Especially, there is a widespread suspicion that, Tigray could be the first candidate to ask for secession, if the hegemonic position of the Tigray elite in ruling Ethiopia is in jeopardy. It may be for such purpose that article 39 that pledges the right of secession is highly protected from any alteration and it needs the approval of all the regional states for its amendment, as it is declared in the constitution (Article 105) that article 39 which is included in 'fundamental principles of the constitution' can not be changed without the approval of all of the councils of the regional states, but to show a revealing comparison, article 47 of the constitution that declares the establishment of the nine

regional states can be changed by the approval of a two-third of the councils of the regional states. Currently, however, the rhetoric of secession has produced two great challenges. First, it becomes an incentive for various ethnic groups to demand for a separate self-administrative constituency and separate regional state that has resulted for bloody conflict, displacement and ethnic hostility. Second, the rhetoric has generated a big voice that denounced the 'secession right' as a hidden motive to destroy the Ethiopian state. However, such big denunciation has created confusion among many ethnic groups who are suspicious regarding the motive behind the denunciation. And the ruling group successfully manoeuvred the denunciation as an opposition to the rights of ethnic groups for self-administration, thus it restlessly worked for deepening the suspicion in order to capitalize political support from various ethnic groups for its hegemonic interest.

#### **4.2.3 A flawed structure: a concentration of power on the chief executive of the federal government**

The constitution (Article 45) states that Ethiopia should have a parliamentary form of government in which the majority political party or a coalition of political parties that has the greatest number of seats in the parliament, namely the HPR have a power to establish a government. This constitutional design upholds a 'winner takes all' approach. This may be a very unsuitable political system for a multiethnic society that requires a coalition or power-sharing arrangement. A federal system in a multiethnic society could be well suited to a negotiated and consociational-like arrangement that attempts to construct unity in diversity (Elazar 1987; Watts 1999; Agranoff 1998; Lijphart 2002) As a result, a concentration of power on a single winner could not satisfy the various interests and needs of the numerous and diverse communities of multiethnic Ethiopia. Constitutionally, the winner part in the federal parliament (also similar in the regional states), has very extensive power and responsibilities, some of these are:

- Responsible for appointing the prime minister who becomes a head of the government, leader of the cabinet and the commander-in-chief of the armed force. (Article 76)
- Responsible for suggesting nominees for ministerial posts
- Supervision over the implementation of the country's foreign policy

- Selects and submits for approval to the House of Peoples' Representatives nominations for posts of Commissioners, the President and Vice-President of the Federal Supreme Court and the Auditor General.
- Appoints high civilian officials of the Federal Government other than those referred above
- Supervises the conduct and efficiency of the Federal administration and takes such corrective measures as are necessary.

The majority party in the legislative always assumes an exclusive control of the executive and judiciary branches of the federal as well as the regional governments and thus the winning party assumes a total dominance of all branches of government, which is very unsuitable for a feature of multiethnic society, because federal arrangements in multiethnic would require either a coalition power centres or various centres of power. Many scholars, however, are uncertain regarding the efficiency and viability of an ethnic coalition arrangement or a proliferation of power centres in a polity (King 1982; Horowitz 1985, Elazar 1993). King, for example, argues that 'a political system within which each power is precisely checked by another would not appear to be a feasible system at all...a political system in which each social force is nicely blocked by some others, seems to represent a non-system, not a system- more anarchy than a polity' (King 1982: 64). Horowitz also claims that 'the assumption that elites in divided societies are likely to be more tolerant of other ethnic groups or less inclined to pursue advantage for their own group is extremely dubious' (Horowitz 2002: 21). Thus, he claims that creating and sustaining coalition in divided societies is a very difficult task, but, of course, not impossible. In his empirical investigation, Horowitz, finds out that 'educated elites in some countries to be less ethnocentric than their followers, in others more, in some others neither less nor more, and in still others more with respect to some groups and less or the same with respect to other groups' (Ibid.). However, in multiethnic Ethiopia in which autocratic rule is a norm, not an exception, it has been proved futile to quell ethnic or regional demands in centralized autocracy. The parliamentary system of governance based on the 'winner takes all' principle would not be a viable prototype to Ethiopia that exhibits variations in political development, tradition of statehood, cultural assortments and ethnic and language configurations.

Furthermore, the constitution gives a strong power to the executive, particularly to the Prime Minister. The power of the Prime Minister in Ethiopia is unprecedented: he controls the armed force, the cabinet (the executive) is accountable to him; he is a head of a party that is a majority in the parliament or the legislative (90 percent majority from 1995 to 2005 and two-third majority since May 2005). As the constitution (Article 74) gives him a power to select and recommend to the HPR an appointment of Commissioners, the President and Vice-President of the Federal Supreme Court and the Auditor General, he has a significant power in influencing the judiciary and other important institutions that should be vital for checks and balances in the federal systems. Moreover, since the President and Vice-President of the Federal Supreme Court are serving as a president and vice-president respectively in the Council of Constitutional Inquiry that have powers to investigate constitutional disputes, (Article 82 and Article 84), hence, the prime minister has a greater influence to interfere with the function of constitutional inquiry. This makes the power of the prime minister in Ethiopia uncontrolled and unchecked by the executive, legislative judiciary and other federal or regional institutions. For instance, recently, connected to the May 2005 election, the Prime Minister declared an unconstitutional emergency law, but no federal institution has been able to interfere to challenge him, as there is no such constitutional power delegated to other federal or regional institutions. When the opposition party brought the case into the court, the issue was decided in favour of the Prime Minister. This is an example of a unconstitutionality<sup>12</sup> that was backed by the court in favour of the Prime Minister by deliberately disregarding the constitutional decree that states, ‘it [the Council of Ministers] has the power to declare a state of emergency; in doing so, it shall, within the time limit prescribed by the Constitution, submit the proclamation declaring a state of emergency for approval by the House of Peoples’ Representatives (Article 77). Thus, the court shockingly favoured the Prime Minister’s authoritarian and unconstitutional action mainly because the court in Ethiopia is operating under a complete influence of the executive, particularly the Prime Minister.

In addition, the constitution does not put limit on the term of the Prime Minister, who has much power, but a term limit (for two terms) was placed on the post of a President, who has only a ceremonial power (Article 70). This is a very intriguing and deceptive constitutionally decree; in principle term limit should be made on the tenure of the executive in order to discourage a tendency of autocracy and power

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<sup>12</sup> Fasil Nahum, a legal advisor to the Prime Minister in press interview, June 2005 explained that the emergency decree was unconstitutional.

abuse by the power holder due to a longer tenure in power, but in the Ethiopia case the tenure of the executive (the great power holder) has been made infinite whereas the term limit was made on the non-executive, non-powerful and very ceremonial President. It should have been the other way round, if the purpose is it to limit abuse of power by the power holder.

At the same time, the judiciary branch is also highly dependent on the executive body. The court system is structured in a very susceptible manner to the interference of the executive branch as the Prime Minister and his majority party in the parliament is responsible for the appointments of judges, the President and Vice-President of the Supreme Court. All the powers allocated to the parliament are indirectly allocated to the prime minister, as the prime minister is the head of the majority party in the parliament. Thus, the parliament is simply a rubber-stump to the executive body. Constitutionally, a majority party in the parliament always belongs to the PM and therefore expected to endorse the PM's selection of the president and the vice-president of the Federal Supreme court that has supreme judicial authority in the country. On this point, articles 78 and 80 of the constitution declare that 'Supreme Federal judicial authority is vested in the Federal Supreme Court; the Federal Supreme Court shall have the highest and final judicial power over Federal matters and; the Federal Supreme Court has a power of cassation over any final court decision containing a basic error of law'.

Although the constitution declares that judges should exercise their functions in full independence and should be directed solely by the law, the Judicial Administration Council, which has a power to remove judges due to violation of disciplinary rules or on grounds of gross incompetence or inefficiency, is accountable to the parliament as its decision to remove a judge should be approved by a majority vote in the parliament (Article 79). The Prime Minister also has a tremendous influence in the operation of the Judicial Administration Council, because the Council is operating within the federal government executive structure. The Council has responsibilities to assess and determine code of professional conduct and discipline as well as transfer of judges of any court. Besides, concerning appointment of other federal judges, the federal Judicial Administrative Council has a responsibility to select candidates that should be acceptable to the PM, because the Constitution declares that: 'Regarding other Federal judges, the Prime Minister shall submit to the House of Peoples' Representatives for appointment candidates selected by the Federal Judicial Administration Council' (Article 81). The federal Judicial Administration has also a responsibility to give its views and recommendations to the regional states in



nomination of their judges (Article 81). Hence, cumulatively, the gist of the matter is that all key judicial powers are at the mercy of the Prime Minister or the head of the executive branch of the federal government.

More critically, the Ethiopian federal project suffers from the absence of an independent constitutional interpretation procedure. The constitution states that the HF has the power to interpret the Constitution (Article 62, 1), but the HF is a political institution as its members are elected or appointed from elected party members, besides its members are strongly connected to and influenced by the winner party in the government. As a result, the power to interpret the constitution can certainly fall down into non-independent and partisan arm of a government. In addition, the Council of Constitutional Inquiry that was given powers to investigate constitutional disputes would be organized by the HF and also expected to submit its recommendations to the HF. Making the matter worse the President and the Vice-President of the Federal Supreme Court would become a President and Vice-President of the Council respectively. As argued above, the PM has a tremendous influence in the appointment of the presidents of the Federal Supreme Court, thus he can get a direct influence in the operation of the Council of Constitutional Inquiry that could undermine its independence and impartiality.

#### **4.2.4 Ambiguities in the constitution**

**First**, there is ambiguity in the constitution that declares the rights of self-government for every ethnic group in Ethiopia, which are amounted to be about 80 ethnic groups, but only nine self-government regions were established and the constitution itself create hindrance for materializing the rights for self-government for other ethnic groups by making very complicated and difficult procedures to request and establish self-government.

**Second**, the constitution did not make or present any convincing explanation to form the nine regional states; the criteria are not clear or not consistently applied. No clear explanation was provided for the action in compacting the numerous (more than 60) ethnic groups with 12 million people in southern Ethiopia in a single regional self-government structure, whereas ethnic groups with lesser population and lesser viability with higher ambiguity such as the Harari people were provided a right to exercise

their self-governing opportunities in the region where they constitute less than 10 percent of the populations.

Third, there is ambiguity concerning the sovereignty power, the constitution (article 8) declares that: 'All sovereign power resides in the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia'. This may be tantamount to say that individuals or people are not recognized without their ethnic domain which can also contradict with the fundamentals of human rights provisions of the same constitution which declares: 'Human rights and freedoms, emanating from the nature of mankind, are inviolable and inalienable' (Article 10). The constitution itself is a cause for the curtailment of the rights of individual as it upholds the sovereignty of groups. It emphasises the precedent of group rights over individual rights, besides since the courts are not properly structured and function to enforce the bill of rights, thus this may reflect a deficit in the application of the provisions human rights declarations.

Fourth, there is ambiguity regarding what 'nation, nationality and people' entails or represents. Very fundamental and significant rights, for example, have been granted to every 'nation, nationality and people', but actual power of executive, legislation and other authorities are granted to the regional states, not to the 'nation, nationality and people'. 'Nation, nationality and people' are not the constituting part of the federal structure; rather the regional states are the constituting part of the federal arrangement. To make an illustration, in the SNNP regional state there are about 60 'nation, nationalities and people', but only one regional state that is the constituent part of the federal system. Since ethnic-groups or 'nations, nationalities and peoples' as a uni-group or multi-group establish the regional states, there is clear distinction between the two levels of arrangements that the constitution doesn't make any attempt to make a separation. Rather the constitution gave very ambitious rights to the ethnic groups (or 'nations, nationalities and peoples, as named in the constitution) but without making any attempt how these rights would be utilized in accordance with the professed federal system of governance. The constitutional rights provided to an ethnic group in a uni-ethnic regional state can be directly translated into the rights of the regional state, but the issue would become difficult in a multi-ethnic regional state. As it was presented in the constitution that the ethnic groups or the 'nation, nationality and people' are much more focused on their insular interest whereas the regional states are expected to operate beyond such insular and affective attachment. However, the 'nation, nationality and people' organize and control the regional state government. Thus, the regional state's government structure in multi-ethnic

state has become an arena for competition between inward-looking and parochial interests that are discernibly solidified by the constitutional pledges. Contrary to many federal arrangements, the Ethiopian model gives the right to leave the federal structure to the so-called ‘nations, nationalities and people’ (Article 39), but not to the constituting federal states, however, ‘nations, nationalities and people’ are not the constituting part of the federal structure (Article 47).

#### **4.2.5 Summary**

Generally, Ethiopian federal system suffers from a concentration of power on the federal executive branch. Concentration of power on the federal government executive and particularly on the PM can make the federal arrangement close to a dictatorship (Abbink 1998:168). The EPRDF is powerful at all level of governance and TPLF is the dominant force in EPRDF. The prime minister, Meles Zenawi, and his close allies are dominating the TPLF; therefore this concentration of power in a few elite close the PM has made the Ethiopian federal exercise more of a caricature to mask authoritarianism. Consequently, the Ethiopian federal system suffers from the principle to limit the power of government, independence of judiciary and constitutional governance or constitutionalism. According to Vestal, Ethiopia is under a new form of authoritarianism, the ‘subtler tyrannies’ of the post-Cold War World. (Vestal 1999:188). The Ethiopian federal system reflects a scanty power of the regional states, the right to secede from the federation, absence of independent judiciary, absence of independent constitutional interpretation, fiscal power compete concentration on the federal government, superfluous constitutional ambiguities and concentration of power on an individual leader. It is a facade federal system, but with a caricature to misinform and pervert righteousness.

The constitution shows either mere intentions or a cover for deception. As Paul B. Henze argues that the Ethiopian constitution contains glaring contradictions, such as ‘the right to secede’ and ‘federation’, which a concern seems to be the security of the regime, rather than the practicability and consequence of the constitution (Brietzke 1995: 35). Although democratic and human rights are unconditionally promised in the constitution, there is little tolerance for alternatives as those who come into conflict with the TPLF/EPRDF are hit just as severely by extra-legal executions, torture and imprisonment without trial (Pausewang 2002: 235). Although the constitution declares that courts shall be independent and

judges shall ‘exercise their function in full independence’ and protected from unduly removal, there have been many cases in which judges were removed for political reasons (Young 1999: 330).

It is important to give a possible explanation for such grave deficiencies of the 1994 constitution. The constitutional defect was the progeny of the defect of the transitional charter that was exclusively authored by TPLF/EPRDF with a minor role from other ethnic organizations like OLF (which withdrew from the transitional government after a year) but with the exclusion of many pertinent groups and most importantly without a genuine and free participation of the Ethiopian people. The transition charter that was produced in such flawed process became a code of conduct for the subsequent political process such as drafting of the constitution and drawing of the ethnic states. These two important functions were the basic foundations of the federal system in Ethiopia, but sadly, both of these key functions were carried out at the process that did not involve a participation and negotiation of all parties that need to be considered. Most importantly, the TPLF/EPRDF-controlled transitional government exclusively monopolized the constitutional drafting process, as it was stipulated in the Charter that the transitional government was responsible to draw up a draft constitution (Article Ten, the Transitional Charter, 1991). Consequently, the Constitutional drafting commission was established in 1993 and produced a discussion booklet, which was discussed in public meetings, international symposium and diplomatic missions. But as the whole process was controlled by the EPRDF, no substantive feedbacks were included from the public discussion. The key players were constrained from the discussion. The public discussion was simply an uninformed and uncritical deliberation that was designed for ‘a perversion of education into propaganda’ (Vestal 1999: 91). It was simply an attempt to secure political hegemony of the TPLF/EPRDF through a veneer of democracy. As Harbeson argues, ‘since 1991 Ethiopia has acquired virtually all the forms of democracy but little of its substance’ (Harbeson 1998: 62).

Consequently, the draft constitution was ratified in 1994 by the constitutional assembly which was elected from the people in which EPRDF controlled almost 95 % of the members. The oppositions completely boycotted the election. The process starting from assigning the commission to electing the constitutional assembly and ratifying the constitution was absolutely dominated by the ruling party. It was purely a façade that masked an authoritarian regime (Ibid. p. 66).

This signifies the fail of the second (the first was the transitional charter) grand covenant, which could have been the very basic foundation of the federal pact. Many groups such as nearly all the opposition groups, the civil society movements, and the Ethiopian in Diaspora overwhelmingly rejected the Constitution. As a result, the constitution has become the document of the ruling party and its affiliated organizations. It was an imposed ‘federal covenant’ on the Ethiopian people without their genuine participation and consent. It was implemented in a manner completely dominated by a power at the center in collaboration with the co-opted elites at the regional as well as local levels and the unfairly privileged very tiny ethnic groups. Thus, the 1994 Ethiopian constitution is denoted as the constitution of the TPLF/EPRDF because it only reflects the ideology and wishes of the TPLF-led EPRDF. To conclude, I will cite from John Young, a close examiner of and more sympathetic to the TPLF, who states: ‘Constitutional making under the EPRDF has little in common with the bargaining, trade-offs, and compromises that usually typify such process; rather it reflects the weakness of the country’s democratic institutions, the political objectives of the governing party, and its position of dominance with a state where serious opposition had been crushed or marginalized (Young 1998: 195).

## **4.3. Fiscal power and fiscal distribution**

### **4.3.1 Fiscal distribution and vertical imbalance**

In Ethiopia’s federal arrangement, the fiscal relation is characterised by a high level of imbalance in favour of the federal government. Almost every significant internal revenue sources are assigned under the jurisdiction of the federal government by making the regional states totally dependent on the federal transfers (or a budget subsidy) to carry out their responsibilities and tasks. The October 1992’s proclamation (Proclamation 33/92) on revenue sharing between the central government and the regional self-governments was the first official or legal document that laid down the, foundation for fiscal distribution between the central and regional governments. At the time of the proclamation, in fact, there was no *de facto* or *de jure* federal arrangement in Ethiopia. However, later on, the major provisions and declarations of the proclamation, with very minor modifications, were incorporated into the 1994 the Constitution.

According to the proclamation (Proclamation 33, 1992), the objectives of the revenue sharing were to:

- Enable the Central Government and the National/Regional Governments efficiently carry out their respective duties and responsibilities;
- Assist National/Regional Governments develop their regions on their own initiatives;
- Narrow the existing gap in development and economic growth between regions and;
- Encourage activities that have common interests to regions

The proclamation explained that the revenue sharing objectives were determined by taking in to account principles such as ownership of revenue sources; the national or regional character of the source of revenue; convenience of levying and collection of the tax or duty; population, distribution of wealth, and standard of development of each regions and; other factors that are basis for integrated and balanced economy (Proclamation 33/92)

Similarly, the 1995 Constitution also declares: ‘The Federal Government and the States shall share revenue taking the federal arrangement into account’ (Article 95, the 1994 Constitution). Accordingly, the Constitution (Article 96) assigns the following power of taxation to the federal government:

- The Federal Government shall levy and collect custom duties, taxes and other charges on imports and exports.
- It shall levy and collect income tax on employees of the Federal Government and international organizations.
- It shall levy and collect income, profit, sales and excise taxes on enterprises owned by the Federal Government.
- It shall tax the income and winnings of national lotteries and other games of chance.
- It shall levy and collect taxes on the income of air, rail and sea transport services.
- It shall levy and collect taxes on income of houses and properties owned by the Federal Government; it shall fix rents.
- It shall determine and collect fees and charges relating to licenses issued and services rendered by organs of the Federal Government.
- It shall levy and collect taxes on monopolies.
- It shall levy and collect Federal stamp duties.

The regional states also have the following power of taxations:

- States shall levy and collect income taxes on employees of the State and of private enterprises.
- States shall determine and collect fees for land usufructuary rights.
- States shall levy and collect taxes on the incomes of private farmers and farmers incorporated in cooperative associations.
- States shall levy and collect profit and sales taxes on individual traders carrying out a business within their territory.
- States shall levy and collect taxes on income from transport services rendered on waters within their territory.
- They shall levy and collect taxes on income derived from private houses and other properties within the State. They shall collect rent on houses and other properties they own.
- States shall levy and collect profit, sales, excise and personal income taxes on income of enterprises owned by the States.
- Consistent with the provisions sub-Article 3 of Article 98, States shall levy and collect taxes on income derived from mining operations, and royalties and land rentals on such operations.
- They shall determine and collect fees and charges relating to licenses issued and services rendered by State organs.
- They shall fix and collect royalty for use of forest resources.

Concurrent powers of taxation are given to the federal and state governments jointly to levy and collect taxes on profit, sales, excise and personal income of enterprises they jointly establish; to levy and collect taxes jointly on the profits of companies and on dividends due to shareholders; to levy and collect taxes jointly on incomes derived from large-scale mining and all petroleum and gas operations, and royalties on such operations (Article 98). However, these joint revenue sources are still under the entire control and appropriation of the federal government as still there is no agreed procedure for distribution between the federal government and the regional governments. Though at present no significant amount is generated from such revenue sources, there could be potentials to generate substantial revenues. Undesignated powers of taxation would be determined by two-third majority vote in a joint session of the HF and HPR (Article 99). Some of the undesignated taxation may include value added taxes, motor vehicle taxes, entertainment taxes and the like. In order to promote cooperative relationship between the

federal and state governments the constitution prohibits both the States and federal government to 'levy and collect taxes on each other's property unless it is a profit-making enterprise' (Article 100).

The tax jurisdictions of the federal and regional governments are determined on the bases of tax categories. Federal government has an exclusive monopoly over taxes on foreign trade, corporation tax, federal stamp duties, taxes on monopolies and tax on income and national lotteries. However, the exclusive monopolies of the regions are very minimal and limited to fees for land usufructuary rights and royalty for use of forest resources. Taxes on employees' income, sales, profits, dividends and profits from public enterprises owned by the federal government are collected by the federal government, whereas the regional governments likewise collect from public enterprises owned by the regions. Regional governments are also allowed to collect taxes from income of individuals like farmers and self-employed individuals.

With regard to private enterprises, regional governments are allowed to collect taxes from income of the employees of all private enterprises; sales tax, profits tax and excises from sole proprietorship private enterprises and farmers' co-operatives. Profit and dividends from companies, large scale mining income; all petroleum and gas operations and royalties on such operations are assigned jointly (Article 98). Regional governments are allowed to collect taxes on rental income of properties that are not owned by the federal government. However, the tax collection capacities of the regional states are in a very infant stage due to poor administrative and accountancy skills in the tax collection activities. Particularly, the conditions have been worse in the four disadvantaged regional states: Afar, Somali, Benishangul-Gumuz and Gambella regional states. Besides, these regions have been in a severe shortfall to utilise public finance in a disciplined and efficient manner that could help to enhance the regional capability to produce financial resources. In Afar region, for example, 'economic management went wrong from the beginning. Corruption and embezzlement became watchwords of everyday life in the region. What funds remained were left idle and the proportion of the capital budget used during 1993 and 1994 was well below 30 percent' (Ali 1998: 113). In Benishangul-Gumuz, 'few indigenous people have acquired an education, and this is proving to be a major impediment to economic progress (Young 1999: 341).

Generally, as it is shown above, the constitutional revenue distribution framework has placed a concentration of fiscal power in the hands of the federal government by granting lucrative domestic



revenue sources such as total control of taxes on foreign trade (that accounts nearly half of the total tax revenue in the country) and two-third of revenue sources from indirect taxes and non-tax revenue sources in the countrywide. According to the World Bank estimation from 1993 to 1998, the share of the federal government from the aggregate tax revenue in the countrywide was 82 percent in average (World Bank, 2000: 26). Besides, the tax system is centrally controlled and standardised by the federal government's Ministry of Finance.

Furthermore, the regions have no authority to negotiate or make agreement to obtain international grant or loan, as the constitution grants the power to the federal government to 'negotiate and ratify international agreements' (Article 51, 8) and the power to decide on borrowing 'money from domestic and external sources' (Article 77, 4). Although the constitution (article 51) implies that regional states can borrow money from internal sources on conditions and terms determined by the federal government, several regions are not borrowing from internal financial institutions. According to the World Bank the prevailing opinion in Ethiopia 'seems to be that sub-national borrowing is not desirable as it is known to create major problems in macroeconomic management' (World Bank 2000: 36). This may be due to anticipating irresponsible regional borrowings. In some federal countries like India and Brazil states' borrowings have created unsustainable debt and severe indebtedness of sub-national government. Though borrowing has a risk like other business ventures, it has also an opportunity to expand production and employment by creating vibrant and enlarging economic activities. Although the regional states are not borrowing for their spending, some regional states are using their annual budget as a collateral to farmers' loan guarantee to banks. This means a guaranteed payback by the regional governments if the farmers are unable to repay due to different circumstances. For example in 1996-97, the Amhara regional government agreed with a bank to lend farmers 32 million Birr, but only 21 million was re-paid by the farmers. The regional government cut woreda budgets by reducing the money available for communities to build schools, health posts, and other necessities, thus penalizing the communities who were hit by crop failure or other unavoidable reason for default' (World Bank 2000: 34).

The vertical imbalance in Ethiopia is higher than many federal systems in developing countries. For example, India has a vertical imbalance coefficient of 0.28, Malaysia 0.37, whereas Ethiopia has 0.52 (Ibid. p. 25). 'A high level of vertical imbalance also involves some loss of subnational autonomy since

expenditures are dependent upon transferred resources or budget subsidy from the federal government (Ibid.). It also diminishes the advantages of responsiveness to local needs, which would normally result from decentralized governance (Berhanu 1999: 27).

#### **4.3.2 Horizontal imbalances**

Although the constituent regional states in the federal Ethiopia have different degree of internal revenue generating abilities and potentials, due to the federal government's monopolization of countrywide tax and revenue sources, all of the regions have shown severe dependency on the federal transfer. In the current fiscal framework, according to the World Bank study, the regional states, with the exception of the Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa, are classified into four categories: 'one with ratios consistently between 20 and 30 per cent (Tigray, Amhara, Oromiya and SNNP), second of those consistently exhibiting ratios below 10 per cent (Benishangul/Gumuz and Gambella), third of consistently declining (Somali) and fourth fluctuating (Afar and Harari)' (World Bank 2000: 26). In case of individual regional state, from 1993 to 1998 the regional budgets' share of internal revenue for the five years average for Tigray was 23.6 percent, Amhara 18.6, Oromia 28.4, SNNP 20.4 and Harari 19.4. The better-off two city-states, Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa covered averagely 76.6 and 60.0 percent respectively. Some of the 'poorer' regional states like Afar, Somali, Benishangul and Gambella have only covered less than 10 percent of their respective regional budget through their own internal revenue (Ibid.). If regions were to be allowed to control the lion's share of tax and other revenue sources within their regional state, a few regions with higher level of economic activity like Oromia would have self-financed their expenditures and other regions such as SNNP and Amhara could have also been in a better position to finance their expenditures.

Horizontal imbalance could be a hallmark of ethnic federalism, which is entirely based on ethnolinguistic criteria. It is obvious that every region or all elites from every ethnic group could not benefit equally from the past development endeavours. In case of Ethiopia elites from few ethnic groups like Amhara, Oromo, Tigray, Gurage are relatively in a better or privileged situation, though in different degrees, to benefit from the past development efforts such as access to education and other public facilities. The difference within these elites is a matter of magnitude and scale. The Amhara elites may have been benefited relatively better due to the advantage derived from the Amharic language that has

been used as an official language since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As Teshale elucidates that the Amharic language was necessary for upward mobility (Teshale 1995: 180). However, the past benefits were simply at the elite's level without corresponding benefit to the Amhara people or region. Rather, state's development programmes and investments were concentrated in a few urban areas and chiefly in Addis Ababa. Comparatively, access to state's development programmes has been very minimal or negligible to the people in Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz, Afar, Somali and other minor ethnic groups in southern Ethiopia mainly due to the weak capacity of the Ethiopian state to expand development programmes, but it was not a deliberate policy to keep these regions backward or inferior, rather it was because of the weak and limited capacity of the overall state-led development programmes in Ethiopia. In 1993, for example, 69 percent of the country's industrial establishment was concentrated in Addis Ababa city, followed by 14 per cent in Oromia, and 4 per cent in Amhara (see for the detail table 4.6). The Ethiopia's federalism is a 'holding together' federalism, not a 'coming together' federalism, thus it could create very complex challenges to allow the regional states to monopolies taxes and other revenue source in their respective territory due to the concentration of public enterprises and investments in a very few regions. Moreover, the public sector has been the largest investor and owner of massive socio-economic enterprises and infrastructure development in Ethiopia. In 1975, almost all private manufacturing enterprises were nationalized by the state. This public property may need to be shared equally for the benefits of all of the people of Ethiopia, which therefore may require a control by a central authority or the federal government.

Consequently, the vertical fiscal imbalance in Ethiopia is dialectically connected to the horizontal imbalances that have emerged because of the ethnic federal arrangement that has created regional constituencies based on an ethnolinguistic criterion alone, without considering others factors such as economic viability or geographical suitability. The emerged regional states have contained varied levels of economic activity and thus extreme disparity in internal revenue capacity. Thus, to offset these regional imbalances the federal government has assumed a dominant control (82 percent) of taxes and other major revenue sources in the countrywide by hoping to assume as an adjudicator to re-distribute available resources in order to reduce horizontal imbalances in revenue and expenditure among the regional states. Otherwise, if most of the taxes and revenue sources are left to the regional governments there could be a severe horizontal imbalance in budget that could create few wealthy regions, but by

putting many of the regions in a precarious financial condition, particularly the fiscal condition of the disadvantaged regions would be very fragile.

#### **4.3.3 Budget subsidy and allocation procedure to the regions**

Consequently, the 1992 proclamation on revenue sharing had explicit provisions regarding the requirement of the federal subsidies to the regional governments. It recommended that ‘national/regional Governments, where deemed appropriate, shall receive subsidies from the Central Government’ in order to:

- To promote social services and economic development of the National/Regional Governments
- To accelerate the development of the hitherto neglected and forgotten areas
- To narrow-down the gap in per capita income between regions
- To support projects that will help control negative economic externalities that may be reflected from region to region and strengthen projects that provide benefit to neighbouring regions
- To encourage foreign currency earning projects and other projects of national interests

(Proclamation 33/92)

The 1994 constitution has also stated that: ‘The Federal Government may grant to States emergency, rehabilitation and development assistance and loans, due care being taken that such assistance and loans do not hinder the proportionate development of States. The Federal Government shall have the power to audit and inspect the proportionate development of States (Article 94. 2). The constitution also assigns a power to the HF to determine ‘the subsidies that the federal government may provide to the states’ (Article 62, 7).

From the period 1993/94 to 1997/98, all the regional governments combined were able to cover on average only 30 percent of their spending from their own internal revenue sources. The remaining 70 percent was covered through federal transfer or budget subsidy (World Bank 2000: 27). Federal budget subsidy to regional governments is allocated in the form of block grant and the regional states are ‘allowed’ to determine the distribution and spending based on their development objectives and priorities. However, since political power in Ethiopia’s federal and regional structures is monopolized through EPRDF’s centralized party command structure, regional states’ policy orientations and

decisions in most cases are similar with the federal government's policy directions and objectives. Thus, no major divergence and contradictions have emerged between the federal and regional preferences.

As it is explained in the document prepared by the Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation (MEDaC) in Ethiopia that: 'All Regional Governments, including Dire Dawa Administration Council, but with the exception of Addis Ababa administration, are unable to fully cover their recurrent budget needs from their own revenue sources. Thus, to bridge the fiscal gap, the regional governments are reliant on funding from the federal government (MEDaC 2000: 3). The transfer to regional governments was started in 1992/93 Ethiopian fiscal year at the transitional period based on requirements of on-going projects and approved new projects. Grant allocation formula for capital expenditures was designed in 1994/95 on the basis of five indexes: population 30%, development index 25%, tax effort 20%, capital expenditure in the previous year 15% and area size 10%. For recurrent expenditures the allocation was based on administrative structures and own revenues of the regional states (World Bank 2000: 29). In 1995/96 fiscal year a more simplified formula was designed to allocate a total expenditure envelop for the regional states which was based on three equally weighted indexes: population, development index and internal revenue effort of the regional states. In 1996/97, a revision was made to reduce the eight indicators to five indicators to calculate the development index. The five indicators include number of health clinics, number of primary schools, number of telephone lines, electricity consumption and road lengths. In 1997/98 the formula was revised again by changing the weight given to the three indexes; according to the revision, population index was given 60 percent, development index 25 percent and revenue effort index 15 percent. Besides, the development index factor was re-estimated based on six indicators that contain education level, health sector indicator, road density, electricity consumption, water supply and telephone coverage (Ibid.). Consequently, the share of subsidy entitlement of the nine Regional Governments, including Dire Dawa in 1997/98 was presented in table 4.6. There was a demand to devise a new formula for the 2005/06-budget year, but because of delays the House of Federation approved (with protest) the budget based on the previous formula ([www.ethiopianreporter.com/displayenglish.php?=-2440](http://www.ethiopianreporter.com/displayenglish.php?=-2440)).

Table 4.6 Share of Subsidy entitlements in 1997-98

Regional Government	Budget subsidy Share (Million birr) (percent)	Share from total subsidy 1997/98 (Percent)	Per capita subsidy (In birr)	Share of subsidy to regional budget (Percent)	Share of population to total population (Percent)
Tigray	255.7	7.8	76.1	76.7	5.8
Afar	225.8	6.9	199.6	95.6	2.0
Amhara	725.1	22.2	49.1	81.2	25.7
Oromia	826.2	25.3	41.3	74.4	35.0
Somali	282.3	8.6	142.6	87.2	5.8
Benishangul	161.1	4.9	326.8	95.5	0.9
SNNP	554.1	17.0	50.1	81.5	19.7
Gambella	126.1	3.9	646.7	95.2	0.3
Harari	77.0	2.4	534.7	91.9	0.2
Addis Ababa	00	00	00	00	3.9
Dire Dawa	32.0	1.0	58.6	66.4	0.4
Total	3265.3	100	58.6	85.1	100

Source: World Bank, *Region Study*, 2000, page 26 and 28,  
Ethiopia UN Country Team, 1999, *Common Country Assessment*, September 1999, Addis Ababa,  
Ministry of Economic Development and Co-operation 2000, *The Federal Budget Grant Formula in Ethiopia*, March 2000, P.4

The figure in the table 4.6 shows that the Amhara and Oromia regional states appropriate about 60% of federal subsidy. However, in terms of per capita both regional states get the lowest shares; these are 49 and 41 birr respectively, whereas the per capita subsidy in Gambella reaches 646 birr, Harari 534 birr, Benishangul-Gumuz 326 birr, Afar 199 birr Somali 142 birr Tigray 76.1 birr and Dire Dawa 58.6 birr. Though Oromia gets the largest amount and share of subsidy, in real terms it gets the lowest share as it gets the lowest per capita subsidy share. Compared to share of population, Amhara, Oromia and SNNP get less share of subsidy than their share of population, whereas Tigray, Afar, Somali,

Benishangul-Gumuz and Harari regional states get more share than their population share, particularly Afar, Benishangul-Gumuz and Gambella get nearly four times greater than their share of population. With regard to a share of budget subsidy to the regional budget, Afar, Benishangul, Gambella and Harari have shown distressingly the highest dependency that they require more than 90 percent of their budget to be covered by federal grants. The trend is also equally gloomy in most of the regional state, which require federal transfer to cover nearly 80 percent of their regional budget.

The budget subsidy formula has become a typical budget subsidy formula all through with minor modification, in 2000 to encourage regional states to enhance their internal revenue. It was believed that the last formula, which has given a population index 60 percent, development index 25 percent and revenue effort index 15 percent, would consider equity and some degree of efficiency. However, the formula is criticized from different perspectives. Firstly, it is ineffective in pushing regional governments to make effort in developing their own revenue sources, to tackle regional imbalances, neglect of the size of the regions, settlement pattern and density of population. Secondly, it underemphasized the size of the regions, especially many of the ‘neglected’ regions have large land area and scattered settlement (low density), and relatively small population, besides their infrastructure development is relatively at minimum level. These regions relatively need more infrastructure development, but on the contrary, based on the subsidy formula, the magnitude they have got is insignificant though the per capita appears very high. Particularly, the smaller population regions like Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz region has shown the largest per capita share, but very inadequate amount of money in comparison to their actual need. On the other hand, it was also learned that these regions were having criticized for inefficient use of the budget allocating to them. A weak human resource capacity has resulted in inefficient use of the resources and poor outcomes. According to the report by the World Bank that ‘officials in Gambella mentioned that, although money could be allocated, it was extremely hard to ensure service delivery staff in school, health clinics in some remote regions’ (WB regional study 2000: 13)

In 2002, a new budget subsidy allocation formula was produced, but the overall structure of the previous formula was maintained. The basic indicators used in the new formula and the corresponding weight were population size 55 percent, level of poverty 19 percent, level of development/ expenditure needs 20 percent, revenue raising effort 11 percent and sectoral output performance 4 percent (Op-cit. 2000: 22) The basic indicators were divided into 22 sub-indicators, in particular, the level of

development or expenditure needs variable was divided into 16 sub-indicators and revenue raising effort and sectoral output performance has four indicators. Therefore together with the population and level of poverty indicators, the total sub-indicators were 22. The new formula was assumed to reward efforts to raise revenue, discourage overspending, address equity and facilitate infrastructure development in the so-called neglected regions (op-cit., 2000: 34-35). However, even in the new formula, the share of the 'lagging' regions was still smaller. Second, there is no precise indicator that could discourage overspending. Besides overspending has been the problem of the federal government that spend, for example, 7.2 billion for recurrent expenditure in comparing to its total revenue 9.6 billion in 2001.

Table 4.7 Subsidy share changes 1997 to 2000

Regional States	Share of population to the total population (Percent)	Subsidy share 1997/98 (Percent)	Subsidy share 2000 (Percent)	Subsidy share 2002 (Percent)
Tigray	5.8	7.8	8.26	8.29
Afar	2.0	6.9	5.43	5.47
Amhara	25.7	22.2	20.72	21.40
Oromia	35.0	25.3	27.29	27.96
Somali	5.8	8.6	8.17	8.12
Beni-shangul	0.9	4.9	3.92	4.12
SNNP	19.7	17.0	17.17	17.97
Gambella	0.3	3.9	3.02	3.16
Harari	0.2	2.4	1.92	1.54
Addis Ababa	3.9	00	00	00
Dire Dawa	0.4	1.0	4.08	1.96

Source: compiled from the World Bank, *Region Study*, 2000, page 26 and 28, Ethiopia UN Country Team, 1999, *Common Country Assessment*, September 1999, Addis Ababa; Ministry of Economic Development and Co-operation 2000, Subsidy, *The Federal Budget Grant Formula in Ethiopia*, March 2000, P.4



Since 2003 a system of assigning a block grant directly to the wereda administration was introduced in line with the wereda decentralisation programme. In this new system, although the budget subsidy calculation is similar, the money in a block grant form is directly granted to the wereda administration to make its own decision how to utilise the grant. However, the change was introduced without building adequate capacity or institutions at the wereda level.

**4.3.4 Shortcomings of the budget subsidy mechanism**

**First**, budget subsidy to the regions is determined after federal planned expenditure.

According to the document prepared by MEDaC, (2001: 16) in the existing fiscal framework, the sum total of the regional states’ budget subsidy is equal to the total nation wide fiscal sources minus federal government’s expenditure needs, or:

$\text{Regional States budget subsidy} = \text{Total fiscal resource} - \text{Federal expenditure needs}$
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This means that the regional states’ budget subsidy is not calculated based on the priority of regional state but priority is given to the federal government. This shows supremacy of the federal government, rather than considering both levels of government at a relatively equal level. To show an illustration from the 2001 budget year, see table 4.8 below, from the total of 15 billion birr budget of the federal government, only 30 percent (or 4.5 billion birr) was transferred to the regional governments. The recurrent expenditure took 48 percent, capita expenditure 20 percent and regional subsidy 30 percent of the total federal budget. From the total budget, external assistance covered 34 percent and the share of external assistance to the capital budget was 60 percent. This means that new infrastructure development and major expansion infrastructure programmes were highly dependent on the availability of foreign assistance.

**Table 4.8 The 1994 E.C (or 2001-2002) Federal budget**

For recurrent Expenditure	7,239,400,000 (48%)
For Capital Expenditure	3,099,708,000 (20%)
For Subsidy Appropriation to Regions	4,565,109,000 (30%)
Federal government subsidy to Dire Dawa	87,913,000
 Federal Government total	 14,992,130,900
Dire Dawa Council Retained Revenue	20,820,000
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>15,012,950,900</b>
 <b>Revenue Source</b>	
Domestic Revenue	9,644,600,000 (64.6%)
External Assistance	2,095,411,800 (14%)
External Loan	3,039,819,100 (20%)
Total	14,779,830,900
Domestic Borrowing	212,300,000 (1.4%)
Total revenue, Assistance & Borrowing	14,992,130,900
 <b>Capital Budget Source</b>	
Total Capital budget	3,099,708,900
From Treasury	1,204,000,000 (38.7%)
From Assistance	551,908,800 (17.5%)
From Loan	1,343,800,100 (43.3%)

Source: Federal Negarit Gazeta no. 38, 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2001

Although the Negarit Gazeta (No. 38 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2001) stated that 70 percent of the regional subsidy was covered from domestic sources, it was made more for a political gesture in claiming that the federal government was generous in transferring grants to regional states. However, the actual calculation shows that the federal government recurrent and capital budget was 10.2 billion birr while the total domestic revenue was 9.6 billion birr, which was deficit of 0.6 billion birr. Thus, the 5.1 billion birr budget from the external source was used to cover the regional subsidy (4.5 billion birr) and the federal budget deficit (0.6 billion birr). Actually, this reveals that the federal government was not redistributing the money that it was collecting from the domestic revenue sources which it had 87 percent monopoly, rather it used external funding (loan and grant) to transfer grants to the regional state. Besides, the federal government used the lion's share (75 percent) of the domestic revenue (9.6 billion birr) for its recurrent expenditure (7.2 billion birr) that consisted of the national defence 3.0 billion (which was about 40%), public debt about 2 billion, ministerial office (economic services and social service) about 1 billion and the rest 1 billion was allocated to organs of the state, justice and public order, and general services. In June 2006, a demand was raised by the regions to increase the

overall budget subsidy to the regions. The Oromia president requested that the budget subsidy to the regions is not adequate for recurrent expenditure in the regions and he demanded that the federal budget subsidy to the regions should be increased substantially (Ethiopian Reporter, June 04, 2006).

**Table 4.9 Subsidy amount to the regional state in 2001**

Regions	In birr	Percentage of the total subsidy
Tigray	371.2 million	8
Afar	244.7 million	5.3
Amhara	958.3 million	20
Oromia	1.252 billion	27
Somali	363.7 million	7.8
Benishangul	184.5 million	4
SNNP	804.5 million	17
Gambella	141.5 million	3
Harari	69.1 million	1.5
Addis Ababa	174.9 million	3.7
Dire Dawa	87.9 million	1.8

Source: Federal Negarit Gazta no.38, 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2001

**Second,** the subsidy procedure discourages foreign assistance directly to the regions. External assistance provided directly to the regional states is considered as a ‘budget offset’ and part of the budget subsidy therefore the external assistance amount would be reduced from the budget subsidy to the regional states receiving the external assistance. It was argued by the federal government that the measure would minimize donors’ unscrupulous unwarranted interventions, to share the available resources in accordance with nationwide priorities and to maintain equity among regional states budget capacity. However, it could deter regional governments from seeking external sources to finance their development objectives within nationwide policy framework and also gives an exclusive power to the federal government to determine the overall direction and modalities of external assistance. In situation, in which the impartiality of the federal government is dubious, resentments have been widespread in connection with access to the foreign assistance. Besides, the donors may also prefer to choose the beneficiaries and targets of their assistance at the regional or local level rather than pouring their assistance to the federal government.

Third, one of the most important issue is to determine whether the subsidy is efficiently and effectively utilized. Is the subsidy used in a manner to build regional capacities or is it misused and abused for political expediencies? Is the subsidy used as an instrument of co-option of elites or is it used to promote development? Is the subsidy used to buy cheap and fleeting political support or is it directed to bring a long term and substantive change in people's lives? The subsidy can encourage inefficiency and irresponsibility in the way the regional states are utilizing resources, because expenditures are not covered by the regional states' coffer, regional states may not be cautious in spending. As the World Bank study revealed that 'because the costs of public expenditure are not fully internalised by the regions and are supported by transfers from other parts of the country, there is a reduced incentive to provide public services in an efficient manner' (World Bank Regional Study 2000: 25). In Afar region, for example, it was reported, that during 1993 and 1994 period, less than 30% of the regional state's capital budget was spent on the intended projects, the rest 70% was wasted in corruption and embezzlement (Ali, 1998: 113). Besides, huge amount of resources have been spent in office constructions (like in Afar), purchase of expensive vehicles and other luxury items, which are not directly and immediately related to development programmes. In Afar state, for example, hundreds of millions of dollars has been spent to build a new capital city while the nomadic inhabitants of the regional state are suffering from chronic shortage of water and veterinary services for their perishing livestock wealth, which are the only valuable and dearest asset for the people of the region. Similarly, in Assosa, the regional state was spending millions of dollars to build a minor and unessential asphalt road in centre of Assosa city while livestock diseases were killing large number of livestock in the region due to lack of proper veterinary<sup>13</sup>.

Fourth, high dependence on the federal subsidy could erode local legitimacy and weaken local accountability, because the regional officials may become more concerned to fulfil and respect the demand and command of the federal government that finances their spending. This situation could alienate the regional people from the regional power structure. Thus, it could undermine local needs and priorities in favour of policies and directions of the federal government, as the federal government can impose its policies and priorities because of its total power at all times to allocate resources. By and large the federal government is more worried to general countrywide goals and regional priorities and needs may not be always parallel to the federal one. This may be essential for common national

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<sup>13</sup> Base on the author field observation in May 2001

objectives, but in a condition in which the federal government is controlled by sectarian interests or regional favouritism, federal policies and priorities could become an instrument for such goals. At present, because of a complete control of the EPRDF in the federal and regional states, there is a discernible sign of centralized predisposition and there seem no noticeable deviations between the federal and regional policy orientations and priorities. Such similarities may not be surprising, in countries like Ethiopia with a nationwide's low level of human development achievements, priorities could be more or less similar everywhere in the country. However, an extraordinary convergence<sup>14</sup> of all priorities may also depict an absence of regional autonomy or authentic self-governing practice in the regional states.

Fifth, the subsidy formula could be a disincentive to expand local revenue. In the subsidy's allocation formula, the major objective of the internal revenue index was to encourage the regional states to develop their own internal revenue bases, but, as it was reported by the World Bank that 'region's own revenue is deducted from the gross budget subsidy in determining the net transfer'. In such mechanism, therefore regions may not be encouraged to increase their internal revenue bases or report their collections accurately because it is a disadvantageous as they would lose the equivalent amount of money from their subsidy share.

#### **4.3.5 Summary: The shortcomings of the existing fiscal framework**

The existing fiscal framework has been surrounded by many difficulties. First, the federal government spends the lion's share of the internal revenue for its own recurrent expenditure. As it is shown in table 4.10, from 1993 to 1998, the annum federal government public expenditure was more than all combined public expenditure of the nine regional states' combined public expenditure. In 2001, for example, the total domestic revenue was 9,6 billion Birr whereas 7.2 billion Birr was allocated to the federal government's recurrent expenditure alone, which was seventy five percent of the internal revenue total (Federal Negarit Gazeta No. 38, 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2001).

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<sup>14</sup> For instance, in Ethiopia's PRSP (or SDPRP) in all of the regions priorities are the same: education, health and road, and PRSD also shows the same pattern of sub division and budget allocation.

Table 4.10: Federal and Regional Shares in Public Expenditure in Ethiopia, 1993-94 to 1997-98

Year	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
Total expenditure (Million Birr)	7096.0	8373.0	8521.0	9458.0	11483.0
Federal share (Percent)	65.6	61.7	58.8	56.5	54.5
All Regional States' share (Percent)	34.4	38.3	41.2	43.5	45.5

Source: Adopted from the World Bank's (2000), *Ethiopia Regionalisation Study*, Report No. 1 8898-ET

Second, due to the contrived character of the ethnic coalition in the federal government and the unfair predominance of the TPLF in the federal government, there is a widespread suspicion that huge fiscal resource under the federal government could create more opportunity for the Tigrayan political elite to transfer more resources to their province. Many suspect that the federal government is not doing in the way to create regional balances, rather to keep other regions subordinate to Tigray province in economics and politics. Is this a false claim? Tigray's economic advancement since 1991 has been relatively very different from other regions. The Tigray region has acquired very big industrial establishments and infrastructures such as Garment factory, Cement factory, Pharmaceutical factory, Metal and Engineering firm, International Air Port, prominent universities and colleges. Tigray has also shown better results than any other regions in expansion of social services such as education, health services, water supply, road services and others. The town of Mekele was transformed from a medium size city to a big city, in Ethiopian standard, within one decade. Although cities like Awassa and Bahir Dar are also showing progresses, the rate of progress in Tigray is far a head, besides the progress in Awassa and Bahir Dar has been mainly related to private investment, whereas Mekele's progress has been mainly connected to public investments, TPLF affiliated NGOs, endowment firms and private business such as REST, TDA, EFFORT, Mesfine Engineering and the like which operate many millions of dollars. Comparatively, there are no such kinds of mega organizations in other regional states. Although the Tigrayan political elite claims that such achievement in Tigray has been related to the relatively better efficiency and institutions in Tigray, it becomes very difficult for many Ethiopians to believe such claims, as it is well known about the capacity of the Tigray province and the ability of the Tigrayan elite. Rather, unconvinced by the claim of Tigrayan political elite many

Ethiopians link the relative success in Tigray with the predominant position of TPLF in controlling economics and politics in the Ethiopian state. It is not also possible for the Tigrayan political elite to prove otherwise. Vestal asks: 'how did the Front, an armed movement with a narrow social base in a devastated area of a poor country, accumulate such capital in a relatively short time?' (Vestal 1999: 173). It is a naked truth; TPLF's dominant political power in Ethiopia's ethnic federal arrangement is the main factor behind such advancement in Tigray province, although the greater benefit has been channelled to the few Tigrayan elite who has close ties with the TPLF

Third, in principle, Ethnic federalism means that regions are focusing on maximizing the welfare of their kith and kin, therefore very difficult to compromise such preference to ethnic group or ethnic constituency. Ethnic preference or ethnic solidarity can always take a zero-sum aspect because ascription can make interethnic compromise so difficult in divided societies (Horowitz 1985: 54). Nevertheless, currently, because of a power monopolization by the EPRDF from the top at the federal government level down to the regional states level, there seems to be a strong party discipline to follow and obey a shared national objective, but still with many resistances from regions and ethnic constituencies. Thus, it appears that at present Ethiopia is practicing a cooperative federalism due to power centralization by the vanguard party through co-option, coercion and deception. It is difficult to claim that such centralization and uniformity would continue for long, because there has been resistance against such centralization due to the felt and visible hegemonic position of the Tigrayan political elite. Consequently, in the future, as the power of the vanguard EPRDF party diminishes, there would be a possibility for the emergence of unhealthy 'competitive federalism' due to the existence of ethnically delimited constituencies.

The federal government's excessive monopoly over the national financial resources could be detrimental for a proper function of the federal compact and it could also breed suspicion and unhealthy federal-state relation which could be an hindrance for progressing into an health federal system in Ethiopia. The current practice of the federal government certainly shapes attitudes and induces actions in some regional states or ethnic constituencies that could undermine the credibility of the federal systems. It could incite more centrifugal attitudes and demands. Unbiased fiscal framework and neutral institution need to be responsible for managing the revenue sharing mechanisms between the federal and regional states governments. It is important to establish fair and transparent procedures

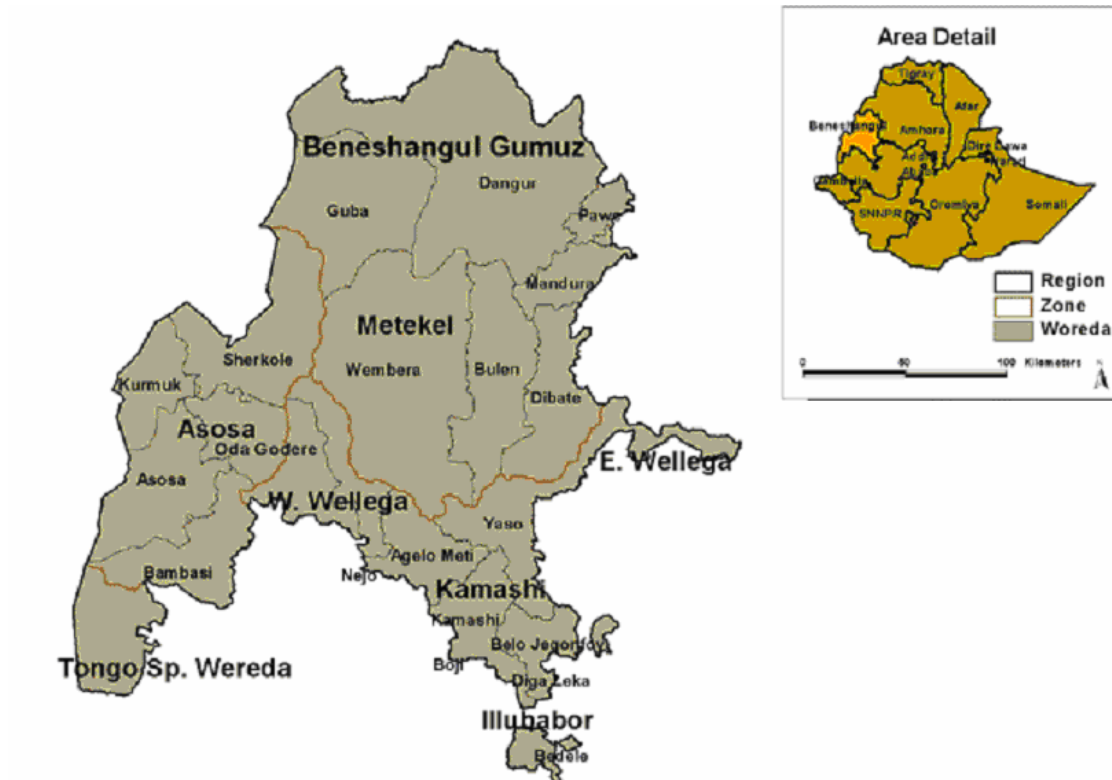
to determine regional budget subsidy share on the basis of the overall countrywide development objectives and also consistent with the federal bargain. Many federal systems such as India, Canada, Australia and Nigeria, have variety of methods to determine inter-governmental transfer procedures in order to ease wrangling and disputes arise due to doubts and assumptions on revenue distribution and allocation procedures.

In a genuine coalition system, the federal government's appropriation of the largest domestic revenue sources may not be a serious problem, as it has been the case in many federal systems. Particularly, Ethiopia has exhibited a concentration of the past investments either from public or private sources on a few central areas and a few urban centres. Furthermore, Ethiopia's federal system has been evolving out of a centralised structure as 'a holding together' process rather than 'a coming together' federal process; therefore there must be a prudent and fair procedure to equally redistribute the wealth and investments that had been resulted from the centralized nation building efforts of the past governments. However, it is very vital to craft a fair coalition and representative federal government by deflating the TPLF's unfair predominance and reducing its influence to match its corresponding constituency that it is claiming to represent.





## Chapter Five: Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State



This empirical chapter focuses on the actual operation of ethnic federalism in Benishangul-Gumuz regional state. It is chiefly an empirical investigation based on a field work by aiming to discover possible knowledge regarding power and function of state structures, federal-state relations, resource control and allocation inter-ethnic and intra ethnic relations, political representation of indigenous and non-indigenous groups and trends in the State and peoples interactions. The chapter also attempts to discover how the ordinary people living in these regional states perceive the federal arrangement; what they found that are positive or negative in it; what they would like to see changed and their overall anticipation regarding the federal process and structures.

### 5.1 General Background

The regional state of Benishangul-Gumuz is located in the northwestern part of Ethiopia. It shares boundaries in the north and northeast with the regional state of Amhara, in the south and southeast

with the regional state of Oromia, and in the west with the Sudan. The total population of the regional state in 1998 was estimated to reach half-a-million. The region has an estimated area size of 50,380 square kilometres and density 9-10, persons per sq. km. The altitude in the regional state ranges from 550 to 2,500 meters above sea level. Almost 75 percent of the area is classified as lowland which is below 1500 meters above sea level. The average annual temperature reaches from 20-25°C. The annual rainfall amount ranges from 500-1800 mm.

Of the total population of the regional state 92 percent of the population live in rural areas, to a large extent in remote and inaccessible areas. Economically active population is estimated to reach 57% (262,000). Agriculture, which is dominated by farming and cattle breeding, is the chief means of livelihood for 93.2 percent of the population. The indigenous communities are living sparsely in scattered settlements and practice very primitive agriculture. Other major means of livelihood include primitive gold mining, and charcoal and fire wood production. According to a report from MEDaC that 47 percent of the regions population is below poverty line in 1995/96 that was almost equivalent with the national average i.e. 45 percent.

In respect of social services like education, health and road networks the region is very backward but not as such very far from the national standard. Illiteracy rate in 1994 was 82.1% and primary education enrolment was 38 percent, whereas in 2003 primary education enrolment was registered 90 percent, which is nearly threefold increase within a decade (BoFED 2003: 26). However, the region has not yet started primary education in mother tongue and the majority of the non-native communities are living in remote and inaccessible areas with very little knowledge of Amharic language. A Benishangul informant confirms that primary education in non-mother tongue is very problematic for the children to understand the teachings (A member of the regional council, from Berta, Interviewee 2 2002:2). It is therefore misleading to take the figure at its face value. The gross enrolment figure would not manifest the genuine picture in the ground; it simply tries to establish a linear connection between mere enrolment and actual learning or education. Amharic language will be a media for instruction in elementary schools for an unforeseeable future due to problems and inadequacies associated with difficulties and expenses to train teachers in five of the indigenous languages. Health coverage in the region is below 50 percent in 1997 and in 2003 it was recorded 54 percent; child mortality reaches 130 (1994-2000), access to safe water and sanitation coverage in 1999 are 27 and 19 percent respectively. In 1994 the figure for access to

safe water was 18.2, which was very close to the national average and not much lower than the four relatively advanced regions-Tigray 21.3, Amhara 21.4, Oromia 22.4, and SNNP 19.2. The region's all-weather road network is very inadequate to interlink major administrative centres. In 2000 the region has a total of 1784 km of roads and only 546 km is all weather roads. On average, 50 percent of the regional capital budget is spent on road construction due to extreme inaccessibility. Many zonal capitals and woreda centres have no road access to the regional capital, Assosa. Zonal capitals and major towns in the northern part of the regional states use the long distance road network through Addis Ababa (1500 km) to reach the regional capital city, Assosa.

Despite its potentials, the region's economic activity lacks vitality and diversification; manufacturing or industrial activities are non-existing. Essential services like communication, banking and hotel services are very limited. But in making comparison with other regions, the conditions at the regional state level are not as such extraordinarily exceptional. Even in few cases, it is showing better results. Table 4.2 and 4.3 in Chapter 4 depicts the overall picture. However, the situation is certainly different and more terrible among the indigenous communities. A Benishangul informant holds that 'most of the facilities were for the settlers or '*mette*<sup>15</sup>' people or 'outsiders. Assosa hospital gave more service to the Sudan People's Liberation Army's (SPLA) soldiers and others than the indigenous people' (A member of the regional executive from Berta, Interviewee 6 2002:6).

The region has an immense potential for agricultural development and cattle rearing. Nevertheless, the traditional agricultural practice is relatively very backward, meaning very weak in utilization of tools system and usage of relatively better practices. The indigenous communities use very light tools like wood and hoe, they do not have tradition of animal-plough agriculture, as it has been common in the rest of Ethiopia. Critical shortages of agricultural experts and extension service agents have been a big snag to improve the impoverished agricultural activities in the region. Animal diseases such as tsetse fly are major impediment for cattle raising activities. Vet services and other improved technologies are virtually non-existent due to the region's unattractiveness for

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<sup>15</sup> *Mette* is an Amharic word used to denote non-natives. But its usage is very controversial, because it has been used to discriminate many people based on their ethnic background regardless of their residence time span. Many people who have lived for many generations in the regional state are considered 'outsiders' because of their ethnic difference with the so-called indigenous communities.

skilled manpower and professionals and also non-conducive conditions of sparsely scattered tiny villages in remote areas.

Other livelihood options are not widely and adequately available. Commercial activities have been declining in the region. The traditional market outlet of the region is to neighbouring Sudan, but the road has been blocked due to war in Sudan, but, of course, more affected by the changing circumstances of relation between Ethiopia and Sudan as well. Almost all interviewees<sup>16</sup> from Assosa town expressed that the closure of the boarder with Sudan has negatively affected business activities in Assosa and surrounding rural areas including Oromia areas. The region is very near to the conflict-ragged territory of southern Sudan and close to the military bases and operations of the SPLA and Oromo liberation front (OLF), therefore it has suffered from undying conflicts and easy accessibility of all sorts of weaponry that become hindrance for durable tranquillity and sustaining of the trading links with the neighbouring Sudan. Cereals, coffee, cattle and the likes used to be sent to Sudan and in turn clothes, electronics and other finished products were used to be traded in. (A leader of an Eder, Interviewee 10 2002:13; A leader of an Eder, Interviewee 11 2002:14; A civil servant from Berta, Interviewee 12 2002:17; An elder from Berta, Interviewee 13 2002:20).

Generally, the Benishangul-Gumuz area has been characterized by higher shortage of competent civil servants, higher economic underdevelopment, immature political development, inadequate basic services and infrastructures. However, the region's socio-economic indicators are not as such very different from the overall countrywide low standards of socio-economic development of Ethiopia. (See table 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 in Chapter 4). Nevertheless, the condition of the indigenous communities is worse.

The region has a huge fertile land area with abundant water resources to develop advanced agricultural production systems that could set a promising economic development trajectory in the region. From the total of cultivable land, only 26.1% is covered by permanent crop and the irrigable area is estimated to reach one million hectares (BoFED 2003: 21). It has a potential to

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<sup>16</sup> However a Benishangul informant disclosed that the closure of the boarder area is 'a blessing in disguise', because there used to be sizeable migration to Sudan among the youngsters, when ever they quarrel with their father, the youngsters quickly take the option to migrate to Sudan. Now, because of the closure of the boarder to Sudan, migration to Sudan is very less and instead the youngsters are obliged to go to school. Civil service graduate from Berta, Interviewee 12 2002: 17)

provide surplus agricultural products such as oil seeds to national and external markets like to Sudan.

The region has not been much affected by drought and famine. Major river basins like Blue Nile and Baro Akobo are found in the region. Its vast and very suitably irrigable Metekel area is located close to the huge water reserves of the famous Lake Tana. The abundant water resources of the region can also be used for hydroelectric power, which a significant potential was estimated to reach about 150 MW.

The region is rich in mining resources like gold, copper, zinc, base metal and marble resources (BoFED 2003: 21). Gold mining potentials have attracted foreign companies like Golden Star and St Genevieve to undertake studies to determine potentials<sup>17</sup>. Traditional gold mining activity are giving a livelihood for about 10 percent of the population, though it has not been recognized in the official or formally registered to be taxable. Marble production has also considerable potential. Medrock Ethiopia owns the major marble mining fields in the regional state<sup>18</sup>. Capacity for more gum production is also available.

Regional Revenue collection ability was improved from 3.5 million in 1996 to 20 million in 2004 whereas the regional budget in 2004 was 200 million. In 2003 the regional government collected about 20.2 million, its budget was 261 million and its expenditure was 224 million. (BoFED 2003: 39).

Its internal revenue amount is very abysmal, as it could not cover more than 10 percent of its budget. Neither adequate tax collecting capacities are in place, nor tax paying traditions are well established. Meheret affirms that the regional state has an acute shortage of adequately trained personnel in management, accounting and revenue collection and administration, basic budgeting and service delivery skills (Meheret 2001: xii). As a result, the region has been highly dependent on the federal government to finance about 90 percent of its expenditure. In addition, as about half of the populations of the regional state are below poverty line and diversified livelihood activities

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<sup>17</sup> According to Young (Young 1999: 340), both companies left the region in 1997. Golden Star was accused by the regional government that it had been infiltrated by the OLF

<sup>18</sup> Taxes and other revenues derive from the marble mining is controlled by the federal government...

and business enterprises are very negligible, the prospect for raising significant tax revenue is not promising at the moment.

## 5.2 Ethnic composition and relations

According to the 1994 population census, the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state has an estimated population of 460,459 of which Benishangul ethnic group (Berta<sup>19</sup>) accounts 26.7%, Gumuz 23.4%, Amhara 22.2%, Oromo 12.8%, Shinasha 6.9%, Agew 3.8%, Mao 0.6%, Komo 0.2% and others 4%. Benishangul and Gumuz account 50% of the population. Non-native ethnic communities account about 44 % of the population of the regions. Islam and Orthodox Christian are the major religion in the area that accounts 44% and 34.8% respectively and traditional religion accounts 13.1%, protestant 5.9%, and other 2.1%. The indigenous ethnic groups- Benishangul, Gumuz people and Komo people- belong into the Nilo-Saharan<sup>20</sup> language group and Mao people belong to the Omotic stocks (Hudson 2005). Benishangul and Gumuz have also been exposed to Arabic and Islamic influences from Sudan and Egypt due to Turco-Egyptian and Mahdist incursions into their areas (Baihru Zewde 1991: 05). Thus, Benishangul communities predominantly practice Islam, whereas Gumuz follow Christianity and traditional religion and Shinasha mainly practice Christianity. Mao and Komo mostly practice traditional faiths.

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<sup>19</sup> There is a difference within Benishangul people about the name and identity of the ethnic group: Benishangul is the name of a stone, Berta is the name of the people, but those who had Arab influence do not like the name Berta, because in Arabic Berta means slave, therefore they prefer Benishangul. They argue that the name Berta designated to those who didn't mix with others, but now the ethnic group is mixed therefore Benishangul is better.

<sup>20</sup> According to Encyclopedia Britannica the Nilo-Saharan languages are presumed to be descended from a common ancestral language and, therefore, to be genetically related. The family covers major areas east and north of Lake Victoria in East Africa and extends westward as far as the Niger valley in Mali, West Africa. The **Afro-Asiatic** group is the main language family of northern Africa and the Middle East and includes such languages as Arabic, Hebrew, Amharic, and Hausa.

Table 5.1 Ethnic composition (1996 CSO) (Census 1994)

Ethnic group	Total population	Percent of the region population	Percent of the total population of Ethiopian
<b>Benishangul (Benishangul)</b>	<b>122,900</b>	<b>26.7%</b>	<b>0.22</b>
<b>Gumuz</b>	<b>107,500</b>	<b>23.4%</b>	<b>0.19</b>
Amhara	102,200	22.2%	
Oromo	58,900	12.8%	
<b>Shinasha</b>	<b>32,200</b>	<b>7.0%</b>	<b>0.05</b>
Agew	14,200	3.1%	
<b>Mao</b>	<b>2800</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>0.005</b>
<b>Komo</b>	<b>920</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.002</b>
Others	18,4000	4%	
Total Regional	460,459	100	0.86

The other indigenous community, the Shinasha (Boro<sup>21</sup>) people seem to belong to an Omotic speaking group of the historical Gonga population who once lived on both sides of the Blue Nile that have absorbed the cultural impacts of Islam and Christianity in their development of a unique amalgamation of cultural trait (Tsega 2005). The present Shinasha ethnic communities are a leftover from the larger Shinasha community who had lost their ethnic identity by subsuming into the neighbouring Amharic, Agaw and Oromo speaking groups due to the sixteenth century's major population movements in the area.

According to Gumuz and Benishangul informants that Shinasha people are relatively **better educated than** the five indigenous communities. But due to their minority status in the region it becomes difficult to utilize their expertise adequately as the ethnic arrangement requires allocation of offices based on ethnic quota. The major key offices are held by either Gumuz or Benishangul elites because of their population share (A regional official from Gumuz, Interviewee 1, 2002: 1) A Shinasha informant has also complained that there was error in the 1994 census, otherwise the population of Shinasha would be more than 32, 000 (A council member from Shinasha, Interviewee 3 2002: 2).

All the five indigenous communities have **their own language**, but they use Amharic language as official language in the regional administration, education and other related activities. There is a

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<sup>21</sup> Boro is the group's self name widely in use after 1991. According to oral traditions Boro is believed to be their original ancestral father and they would like to be called after him (Tsega 2005).



plan and research to use the indigenous languages in education and local administration. An informant argues that since the constitution affirms the rights of every ethnic group to develop its own language, there is strong enthusiasm from every ethnic group in the regional state to develop and use its own language in education and local administration (A council member from Shinasha, Interviewee 3 2002: 03). In September 2004, it was announced that alphabets preparation was finalised of the three languages and accordingly Latin alphabets were prepared for the Benishangul and Shinasha languages, whereas Ethiopic alphabets were prepared for the Gumuz languages. In February 2005, Berta language was introduced as medium of instruction in education in selected pilot woredas<sup>22</sup>.

In the past, despite living in adjacent territories, there was no significant interaction and mix among the five indigenous communities. However, the new regional state has enclosed the five ethnic groups in one political space to create a coalition government of the five ethnic communities. According to an informant that the general belief was that since all of the five ethnic groups belong to the disadvantaged and oppressed communities' category, it would be appropriate and convenient to create a single political space that would be shared by the five ethnic groups in fraternal and amiable temperament. However, power competition and political expediency could quickly rupture apolitical assumptions and bend and twist moral aspirations.

### **5.3 History and Evolution of the regional liberation movement**

Benishangul and Gumuz areas were incorporated into Menelik reign in 1897 but retaining some degree of autonomy by paying a fixed annual tribute to Menelik (Bahiru 1991:87). The area was ruled by sheikdoms of Khomosha and Bela Shangul (or Beni Shangul) and Aqoldi (Assosa area) that grew out of the imposition of an Arabic-speaking mercantile aristocracy of Sudanese origin on the indigenous inhabitants, the Bert<sup>23</sup>. According to Baihru Zewde, 'this ruling class was

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<sup>22</sup> It was reported in a government controlled mass media, Walta Information Centre in February 8, 2005 and September 11, 2004.

<sup>23</sup> This could be the reason for the controversy to name the ethnic group-Berta or Benishangul. Berta mean a 'slave' and Benishangul mean a 'rock'. The indigenous was considered as slave by the aristocracy in the area, who were descendants from Arabs. The elite are convinced that the name, Benishangul is better.

superimposed over an earlier aristocracy of Funji origin, or at least association with the Funji, from the Kingdom of Sennar in Sudan' Bahiru Zewde (1991: 19).

In Gumuz area also 'a similar process of superimposition was duplicated on the other side of the Abay or Blue Nile, and led to the rise of the sheikdom of Gubba, on the Gumuz-inhabited western fringes of Gojjam. By virtue of their Sudanese origin, all these sheikdoms were Muslims and fostered the propagation of Islam in the region.' Bahiru 1991: 19). The Mahdist penetration in the area was facilitated by Islam and trans-frontier trade. Before the Mahdist incursions, the area was under Egyptian dominance that had exercised annual tax-gathering raids. According to Wendy James 'the Turco-Egyptian occupation of the Sudan led to more vigorous, even exploitative gold-seeking, trading and slaving in the Ethiopian foothills...and Inzing (later to become the town we know as Assosa) was inhabited by several Arab traders notorious for slaving (James 2002: 260). The collapse of Mahdist rule in the region induced Menelik to (re) incorporate the sheikdoms of Bela Shangul (Beni Shangul), Agoldi (Assosa) and Khomosha in 1897 by launching an expeditionary force led by Ras Meonnen accompanied by Dajjache Jotte and Dajjach Dames of Wellega (Bahiru 1991: 66).

Harold Marcus also wrote that between 1896 to 1897, the European threat to the Ethiopian periphery worried Menelik enough to order Ras Makonnen westwards into Beni (or Bela) Shangul country' (Marcus 2002: 105). Lapisso (1983: 286) also explains that at the time of the battle of Adwa, Menelik ordered Dajjache Jotte, Oromo nobility from Wellega, to watch over the Benishangul area. Therefore, after his victory in Adwa over the Italian colonial ambition in 1896, Menelik extended his control to incorporate the Benishangul Gumuz to block the British colonial expansion in the area<sup>24</sup>.

There was resistance from the regional sheikhs against the incorporation but they failed to establish a successful united resistance front. Though the regional sheiks' resistance was broken by military force, Menelik restored the three Muslim leaders to their regions after a period of confinement. Menelik designated 'Abd al-Rahman Khojale (of Beni Shangul) and Muhammad

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<sup>24</sup> If the area was not incorporated by Menelik, British Colonialism could have included it in its colonial territory in the Sudan, and could be part of the disadvantaged Southern Sudanese communities in the Sudanese state dominated by the Northerners.

Wad-Mahmud (of Khomosha) with the titles of dajjasmach and fitawrari respectively; Khojale al-Hasan (of Assosa) with the traditional title of sheikh, which he wished to maintain.’ (Bahru 1991: 67)

At the time of fascist occupation of Ethiopia from 1936 to 1941, the Oromo nobilities from Wellega area who wanted to control the rich caravan trade link of Assosa to Sudan, had ousted Sheik Khojale from Benishangul area and briefly ended the indigenous or self rule status of the area. Though the Emperor Haile Selassie’s restoration to power in 1941 following the end of Italian occupation of Ethiopia had created another opportunity for Sheik Khojale family to regain control of the area, the highly centralized administrative structure put in place following the restoration of the king did not allow the same level of autonomy for the Sheik Khojale rule of the province as it was the case before. To the worst, the absolutist and highly centralization policy of the king had replaced the local rulers by centrally appointed nobilities and subordinately included the Benishangul area under the administrative jurisdiction of the neighbouring Wellega province.

The military government in its final years in late 1980s mapped out a new administrative boundaries and policies throughout the country in order to deflect demands for self-administration and secessions due to the intensified armed liberation movements in Eritrea, Tigray and other parts of the country which had seriously challenged and threatened its authority. Following the new administrative policy shift of the military government, the Benishangul area had got its own administrative jurisdiction under the name of Assosa Administration Area in which very few indigenous individuals were included in the area’s administration.

In general, it can be argued that the indigenous people of the Benishangul Gumuz area were not part of the leadership of the modern administrative bureaucracy of the Ethiopian state following the centralization of power by Emperor Haile Selassie since 1940s. The 1980s administrative reform of the military regime was able in including few indigenous individuals<sup>25</sup> in the administrative power structure but without changing the highly centralized power relation to the centralized military authority. However, the patterns of political control and suppression were similar with the situation in most parts of the country which was characterized by absence of local

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<sup>25</sup> It may be not more than three individuals, according to information collected from Sheik Khojale family and member of the Derg’s administrative structure.

decision-making and regional administration. Apart from that, as an informant from Gumuz claims, 'in the past the rulers were Amharas and Oromos, they were not from us' (An Elder from Berta, Interviewee 7 2002: 8).

Political oppositions against the central military authority was started in 1970 in Benishangul area through the support of the government of Sudan by reciprocating the military government's support of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (Young 1999: 325). According to a Benishangul informant that other liberation movements like TPLF, EPLF and OLF which had operated in Sudan played a significant role in inspiring and encouraging dissent against the central military authority in Benishangul area (A civil servant from Berta, Interviewee 12 2002:16). Particularly, relationship with TPLF and EPLF in Sudan was more successful in catalysing Benishangul's dissent against the Derg (A council member from Berta, Interviewee 2 2002:2).

The Benishangul People's Liberation Movement (BPLM) was established in Sudan by Benishangul elites with few memberships from the Gumuz group in late 1980s. Wendy James explains that the first anti-Derg movement in western Ethiopia, Jebhah al Wataniyya, which later became the Benishangul People's Liberation Movements (BPLM) was established by Khedir Ahmed Zayd, the first Derg cadre-appointed administrator of Assosa, who was dissatisfied and fled to the Sudan (James 2002: 265). According to an elder informant that the action and policy of Derg in imprisoning the local nobility, who were officially recognised by the preceding Ethiopian Kings- Menelik and Haile Selassie -, was the major factor in fomenting local dissidents and resentments in the area (An Elder from Berta, Interviewee 7 2002: 9).

In Sudan, it became possible for the BPLM to get material and other support from similar liberation movements like the TPLF, EPLF and OLF. Particularly, close relations with TPLF and EPLF since 1988 was very essential in developing military and political capacity of the BPLM. It was also very instrumental afterward to give them legitimacy in the post-Derg TPLF dominated government that was formed by the TPLF/EPRDF in 1991 (A council member from Shinasha, Interviewee 3 2002: 3).

## 5.4 The regional state structure

### 5.4.1 Administrative structures

The Benishangul-Gumuz regional state is subdivided into 3 zones, 2 special woredas, 20 woredas and 474 kebeles and the governance framework is organized into four-tier hierarchically structured administrative units, these are: regional government, zonal (or special wereda) administration, wereda administration and kebele administration.

At the regional government level, the highest and supreme political and administrative power of the regional state is concentrated at the top on the regional government, which is headed by a chief executive or a regional state president who is elected by the regional legislative body that is called a regional council. The regional council is organized to assume as a supreme legislative body of the regional state. The regional government's executive body is established by the regional president with the approval of the regional council. Regional legislative power is apparently concentrated on the regional council, which is directly elected by the people. However, the actual operation does not coincide with the constitutional decrees and intentions. The regional executive branch, particularly the regional president has a supreme administrative power in the regional state.

The highest judicial power of the regional state is residing on the Supreme Court of the regional state. The region has a total of 24 courts that consist of a Supreme Court, three zonal courts and twenty woreda courts. There are also 2 Sharia courts and 424 social courts at the village level. However, the judicial power is entirely limited into apolitical cases, except in cases which the politicians and government officials are using it as a tool for political purposes like imprisoning opponents. It rarely occurred in the activities of the judiciary in Ethiopia to protect the right of the citizens against the state's encroachment. It is very difficult to find a single case that the judiciary in Ethiopia is interfering to protect a rights of a citizen against the state officials. In most cases the judiciary is used by the government officials to legitimacy their action against the citizens<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> To cite a case that in February 2001, a journalist in Addis Ababa was arrested and taken to Assosa, a capital of the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state, by security police from Benishangul-Gumuz region who had a district court warrant from the region as instructed by the regional president.

At zonal level, three zonal administrations are set up in Assosa, Kamashi and Metekel zones on the basis of ethnic designation, and therefore viewed as self-governing structures for the respective indigenous ethnic communities residing in the area, however in all of the three zones a considerable size of non-indigenous communities are residing and their political rights of representation are violated. For instance, the Assosa zone administration is considered as a self-governing unit for the Benishangul ethnic group, but the Benishangul people accounts only 57 percent of the total zonal population. In such case about 43 percent of the zonal population is not represented in the zonal administration. The picture is the same in the other two zonal administrations in Metekel and Kamashi zones, which are designated for the Gumuz people in which the Gumuz community accounts 77 percent in Metekel zone and 33 percent in Kamashi zone of the total populations of the zones. No directly elected political body does exist in zonal administration; rather it is established by the regional government for administrative convenience to serve as a branch office or intermediary for the regional bureaus to coordinate and follow-up services and tasks in the woredas under its jurisdiction. The regional government is responsible for appointing the members of the zonal administrations which consists of heads of various line offices and departments that are counterpart to the regional bureaus.

**Two special wereda** administrative structures are organised for Amhara settlers in Pawe area and for Mao and Komo indigenous communities in Tongo area in order to provide them a self-administrative unit. Their political and administrative hierarchies and importance are similar with zonal administrations, but they are designated as a special woreda because of their small size of population. Special woreda administrative structure is designed for those small-sized ethnic communities living intact in specific territory that deserves to establish their own administrative unit and directly communicate with the regional government without any zonal intermediary.

There are about 20 woreda administrations that have their own directly elected woreda councils and a chief administrator elected by the respective wereda council among its members. The woreda council is the highest political power in the woreda administration, but putting aside the discourse of local power, its major responsibility does not go beyond enforcing laws and policies issued by the regional state and zonal councils. It is also responsible for managing social services and implementing local development activities; collecting government revenues and taxes, and

securing peace and order in the woreda through direct control of the kebele administrations which constitutes the lowest state structure in the federal government administrative hierarchy. It is relatively overburdened and under-resourced administrative structure despite its relative closeness to the people compared to the regional and zonal administrative structures. It is seldom endowed with professionals and expertise to plan, manage and monitor socio-economic development activities in its woreda jurisdictions. For example, due to extreme shortage of trained manpower in the regional state, the education, health and agriculture bureaus in the weredas are merged into one to form the 'economic development and social service office (BoPED 2000).

Though the woreda administration is elected by the people, it is more responsible and accountable for the higher authorities in the zonal and regional administration, which have potent political and financial power to seriously impact it. In the recent (2004) 'Woreda decentralisation' programme, it is believed that the woreda administration would be the most important unit of sub national full-time governance structure. However, at the time of my field work in 2002 and in the subsequent two years the 'Woreda decentralisation' initiatives was not implemented. It is beyond the scope of this study to consider the process.

**At Kebele level**, there are about 474 kebele administrations which are directly elected by the kebele to run political and administrative activities in the kebele area. It is the lowest administrative structure in the regional state administrative hierarchy, but has a very instrumental role for imposition of state control on the local communities. It usually has an elected council and chief administrator who are working on part-time base. As Meheret (2001: 03) observed that the kebele officials, for example, in Assosa town 'do not receive incentives and hence they are not committed and motivated to provide effective and efficient service to the residents'. A paradox is that a kebele administration is the only administrative body that has a direct contact with the people at the local level, but without providing adequate service to the people. However it solely plays a role to impose the state authority and control on the local people without upward channelling local people's interest and demand. It is structurally deficient to give power to the local people, as it does not have a mechanism to voice and advance local people's demands and aspirations to upward power hierarchy.

Nevertheless, it has a tremendous and crucial role to ascertain and entrench the power of the higher authorities on the local people as it controls the local people. In urban areas it provides controlling services such as registration and issuing identity card, providing verification and confirmations tasks to the dwellers, forcing the people to attend kebele general meetings, distributing relief and other essential goods. In rural area, the kebele (peasant) administration is an effective arm of the higher authority by controlling the peasantry through land redistribution, collecting taxes, distributing fertiliser, collecting debts from the peasants, distributing relief and other security duties like detaining, arresting or punishing the peasants. In rural areas, the peasant administration is everything: it is an administrator, a court, and a police.

#### **5.4.2 The regional legislative and executive powers**

The regional council, which is the supreme political body and the higher legislative body of the regional government, has 80 members who are directly elected by the people of each woreda. Each woreda, regardless of the size of its population number sends 4 individuals to the council uniformly. Except for independent candidates, who are of course very few, the majority of the candidates are nominated by the parties. In the ethnic mix woreda, the representation is based on share of population size of the indigenous communities, but it disregards the non-indigenous population.

The regional council holds two sessions annually. Its main power and function include enacting various laws, establish administrative hierarchies, elect chief executive (or president) of the regional state approval of the regional government budget, approve executive nominees, debates and endorses regional bureaus reports (Article 29, The Constitution of BGRS, 2002). However, there is a peculiar kind of a nucleus called ‘the state’s council cabinet members’ created by members of the council who are also members of the regional executive. In reality, the state’s council cabinet members’ assembly, which is a blend of regional legislative and executive bodies, takes over the responsibility and functions of the regional legislative council<sup>27</sup>. The council members have no salary for their appointment in the council; however most of the members are

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<sup>27</sup> For example in December 2002, it was reported that the appointments of heads of bureaus, commissions and offices in the regional state was approved by ‘the state’s council cabinet members’, not by the regional council (Ethiopia News Agency, December 12, 2002). The regional council had only nine sessions in the ten years time of its operation, from 1995 to 2005. Walta Information Center, September 21, 2005.



hired in various offices of the regional government's administrative and political offices in regional, zonal and woreda levels (A council member from Shinasha, Interviewee 3 2002: 4). As a result, the legislature overlaps with the executive branch and bureaucracy of the regional government.

The Benishangul elite are unhappy regarding the representation procedure in the regional council and the issue has created serious tension within the regional government. For them, using woreda as a basis for seat allocation does not create proportional representation in the council, rather the preferred seat allocation should be based on population size which is in accordance with the constitution of the country (A Berta official, Interviewee 9 2002: 12). They repeatedly demanded the federal government to revise the representation procedure but it was not resolved still (A member of the regional executive from Berta, Interviewee 6 2002: 7). They also requested to establish their own legislative council at zonal level that could exercise major political and administrative functions like appointing zonal and wereda officials, controlling budget and other similar activities in their ethnically delimited zonal administration (A member of zonal executive from Berta, Interviewee 8 2002: 10). Although it was allowed in the revised constitution of the regional state in December 2002, to establish the nationality council for each ethnic group as the supreme political power of the respective ethnic group, the council of the nationalities is accountable to the regional council (Article 74, The Constitution of BGRS 2001).

Close examination of the representation process evidently reveal that the procedure certainly disfavours more populous woredas and indeed, it has created a distorted representation in the regional legislative council. For example, according to the 1994 population census the total population of Benishangul-Gumuz was estimated 460, 459 and the Assosa zone (the delimited homeland of Benishangul ethnic group) has 194,084 population and 7 woredas and therefore it has been represented by 28 seats in the regional council, while Kamashi zone (the delimited home land of Gumuz ethnic group) has 50,783 population and 5 woredas and therefore it has been represented by 20 seats in the council. This means that per capita representation in Assosa Zone is 6931, whereas in Kamashi 2539 by taking into the total population, but since the non-indigenous communities are excluded from the representation, the per capita figure will be different for the indigenous population. In Assosa zone, Benishangul accounts 57 percent, Amhara 26 percent and Oromo 11 percent of the population of the zone. In Kamashi zone, Gumuz accounts 77 percent,

Amhara 17 percent and Berta 4 percent of the zonal population (BoPED 2000). To show it more clearly, Assosa woreda has 73,000 people, but only got 4 seats in the regional council, because it is one woreda, whereas Kamasi zone which has 50, 783 people and four woredas has 20 seat in the council; meaning 73, 000 people of Assosa woreda have 4 representatives in the regional legislative councils whereas 50,783 people of Kamashi zone have 20 representatives in the same council, simply because they have more woredas.

Many Benishangul informants claimed that this unfair representation was deliberately designed by the EPRDF to weaken Benishangul's group influence in the regional state structure. They believed that the EPRDF prefers Gumuz ethnic groups, which had insignificant contribution in the armed struggle or political movement against the Derg. The EPRDF would have worried that the Benishangul elite who have more experience in armed struggle and political movements might not become easily submissive to its hegemonic ambition (A member of zonal executive from Berta, Interviewee 8 2002: 10; An Elder from Berta, Interviewee 7 2002: 9; A member of the regional executive from Berta, Interviewee 6 2002: 7). However, Gumuz and Shinasha informants claim that the procedure was designed to block the hegemonic tendency of the Benishangul elite in the regional state (A council member from Shinasha, Interviewee 3 2002: 2; A regional official from Gumuz, Interviewee 1, 2002: 1).

Table 5.2 Seat allocations in the regional council among the five indigenous ethnic groups

	Existing number of Seats in regional council	Percentage of population	Seat allocation on indigenous criteria should be	Fair allocation of seats should be
Benishangul	28	26.7	34	20
Gumuz and Shinasha.....	44 (for both of them) .....	23.4 6.9	29 9	18 6
Mao	4	0.6	4	1
Komo	4	0.2	4	1
Amhara	0	22.2		18
Oromo	0	12.2		10
Others	0	7.8		6
Total	80	100	80	80

Source: Calculated based on information from the census and interviews

As table 5.2, above shows that seats allocation in the state council was highly in disservice of the Benishangul ethnic group and the non-indigenous communities. First, the Benishangul people should get at least 34 seats in the council based on its quota of the indigenous population of the regional state. A great favour was done to Gumuz and Shinasha ethnic group by granting them 6 more seats than their actual share of indigenous population. Eight seats were allocated to the two minority ethnic groups, apparently by reducing seats from Benishangul people. Rather it should have been reduced from all of the three indigenous group- Benishangul, Gumuz and Shinasha- in the manner that it would not affect the balance of their representation in the council. It can be done proportionally and fairly by subtracting three seats from each Benishangul and Gumuz and two seats from Shinasha without affecting the power balance in the legislative council. Or otherwise, additional seats could be allowed to the two minority indigenous groups regardless of their very small population size.

The problem was aroused because of the on-going peculiar criterion that used woreda demarcation, rather than number of population as the basis for seat allocation in the legislative council. This may occur because of the extreme difficulty to use the size of population for allocating seats in the regional legislative council in a situation where, as it is presented above in Table 5.2 above, that the smallest ethnic groups, Mao and Komo have 2800 and 920 populations respectively, whereas Benishangul and Gumuz have 122, 900 and 107,500 populations respectively. The highly skewed population size among

the indigenous ethnic groups has made irrelevant a criterion of population size to determine seats allocations in the regional legislative council. As a result, the seats are allocated based on woreda in which each woreda is allocated uniformly to send four members regardless of its population size. Because of such strange system of representation, ethnic representation in the Benishangul state council has created grave inconsistency with the national electoral system and the constitution. It resulted that the seats occupied by the majority ethnic group are less than the seats occupied by the second majority ethnic group. To put it precisely, 'the Gumuz with 107,500 people hold more seats in the regional legislation than the Benishangul with 122,900 people. This has also created a good opportunity for the Gumuz elite to control the key executive posts of the regional government like the presidential post.

Second, since the regional state council is established by the five indigenous ethnic groups that consist of 52% of total population of the regional state, 48 percent of the regional population was not represented in the regional council. In Assosa zone 43 percent, in Metekel zone 50 percent and in Kamashi zone 20 percent of the non-indigenous communities are not represented in the regional legislative council. Non-indigenous communities are not allowed to exercise their democratic right to be elected to the regional legislative body due to the rule which stipulates that a member of the legislative council should speak at least one indigenous language of the regional state. It is obvious that Amharic language is the official language of the regional government and it is also a working language of the regional council, therefore putting indigenous language proficiency requirement in order to be elected for the regional legislative appears to be simply a discriminatory measure against 40 percent of the inhabitants of the regional state who are not able to speak the indigenous languages.

The executive body of the regional government is composed of head of the various bureaus and headed by a regional president or the chief executive. There are about 19 bureaus like education bureau, health bureau, and finance bureau etc, which are established in similar prototype with the federal government's various Ministries. The executive posts are shared among the five indigenous elites somehow commensurate with their ethnic population size (A civil servant from Berta, Interviewee 12, 2002: 17). However, the major power of the regional executive has remained in the hands of the chief executive or the president of the regional state. According to the constitution of the regional state, powers and functions of the chief executive include leading the executive council of the regional state, select nominees for posts of the regional Auditor Generals, the President and Vice-President of the region's

Supreme Court, exercise overall direction and supervision over the regional state's security police forces (Article 61, The Constitution of BGRS 2002.).

Yet, the chief executive position, a regional president post, has become very crucial and powerful position in producing stiff competition and tension between the two majority ethnic groups- Benishangul and Gumuz elites. The presidential post from 1991 to 1995 was controlled by different individuals from the majority Benishangul ethnic group, which accounts 26 percent of the total population of the regional state, a majority ethnic group in the regional state. Since 1996, following serious division within Benishangul political elites and also more importantly with the emergence of hostile relation between Benishangul elite and the EPRDF, the presidential post has been occupied by a person from Gumuz ethnic group. The Benishangul elite claim that the chief executive post in the regional government, the regional presidential post, should be occupied by the majority ethnic group, but this kind of demand could not be easily accepted by the EPRDF, as the case that the federal chief executive position in the federal government is occupied by a person from a minority ethnic group. Separation of power between the executive and the legislative power is invisible; power is merged and concentrated on the executive branch.

Furthermore, the significant Amhara and Oromo population in the region who accounts about 22 and 12 percent of the total regional population respectively did not have any political representation in the regional legislative or executive offices. Except that some individuals who are members of the EPRDF are granted some key positions in various offices of the regional government. Assosa town is a good example, the town has about 14, 701 (2000) population of which the majority inhabitants (67 percent) are not from the indigenous Benishangul community, but the political leadership of the town is controlled by the Benishangul elite, but the kebele administration can be organized by non-indigenous individuals so long as they are member of the EPRDF (A leader of an Eder, Interviewee 11 2002: 15). At zonal administration level also Assosa zone or Benishangul zone has 7 woredas, 5 are recognized as having only Benishangul inhabitants and the other 2 weredas are mixed with Oromo and Amhara, but no representative from either Amhara or Oromo in the zonal administration (A member of zonal executive from Berta, Interviewee 8 2002: 10).

### 5.4.3 Human resource in the bureaucracy

Benishangul-Gumuz suffers from shortage of trained and educated manpower. In 1995, the regional state had about 9063 civil servants, of which only 167 (2 percent) are professionals and 2540 (28 percent) were teachers and 511 health personnel, the rest are administrative and financial clerics, custodial and manual labourers. Adult literacy rate was about 15 percent (BoFED 2003: 37). However, virtually all professionals and educated manpower were from non-indigenous groups. Despite resistance<sup>28</sup> from the indigenous elite the regional state has employed professionals and trained individuals from across Ethiopia without ethnic preferences. For instance in 1997 alone, more than 225 non-indigenous professionals were hired (Young 1999: 338) Since the regional state officially uses Amharic language in government structures and education, it has been easier for professionals across Ethiopia to work in the region.

However, key political, bureaucratic and administrative posts have remained in the hands of individuals from the indigenous ethnic communities in line with the rights of ethnic self-administration discourse in Ethiopia's ethnic federal principles. This situation has created a type of dual responsibilities and tensions within bureau structures in which the professionals are responsible for the technical input however the decision-making activities within these offices are controlled by indigenous individuals who have no relevant knowledge of the activities they are leading. For instance, a head of the health bureau and a head of the education bureau are high school graduates, but they were given a responsibility to lead these bureaus which are staffed, *inter alia*, by many professionals (A member of the regional executive from Berta, Interviewee 6 2002: 8). A regional state official confirms that all of the Woreda administrators<sup>29</sup> have completed at least grade five (elementary school education) (A member of the regional executive from Gumuz, Interviewee 5, 2002:4). Therefore, it is evident that tension could easily and frequently flares up in such kinds of tricky bureaucratic relationships. Mainly because of such

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<sup>28</sup> An elder express that he knows that in Gambella region the president of the regional state is elementary school graduate, so it is not unique in Benishangul Gumuz regional state (Interviewee 7 2002: 09).

<sup>29</sup> Woreda administration structure has various offices which have variety of professionals and experts like doctors, agriculturalists, engineers and others. It would be very difficult for these professionals to work under the leadership of a person who is high school graduate. I also encounter in my fieldwork in June 2002 that the head of commerce and transport bureau (a Gumuz) that respectfully declined to give an interview mentioning his lack of ability to comprehend the working procedures and rules of the regional government structures. (Interviewee 4 2002: 04)

reason and of course also owing to other better opportunities, there has been a high staff turn over and unceasing shortage of professionals and trained manpower in the regional state.

Tensions and inefficiencies associated with appointing non-qualified and uneducated indigenous individuals in heading bureaus and other decision-making managerial positions have undermined the credibility of the regional state's administrative capacity. Thus, the federal government pressured the regional state to use professionals outside the region to head bureaus and other offices that need qualified and trained manpower. In 1998 'approximately half of Benishangul's bureau heads were outsiders and 17 out of 225 appointed professionals were indigenous (Young 1999: 338).

As a result, the federal government has played a vital role in Benishangul-Gumuz regional administrative functions due to lack of experience in administration by the indigenous elites. This situation has created an opportunity for the EPRDF to play a controversial role in shaping and affecting politics in the regional state. As Young (Ibid. p. 343) documents that the EPRDF's representative in the region who considered an advisor was from TPLF and has an immense political and administrative authority such as participating in the regional council's legislative assembly, meddling between indigenous elites, crafting political positions, reviewing appointments and dismissals and commanding the *gimgima* (a sort of self-evaluation session).

In order to indigenise the civil service in the regions, a civil service college was set up by the federal government in order to train regional officials and to educate students from the disadvantaged indigenous communities by circumventing the national standard on higher education standards in order to produce professionals from the indigenous ethnic communities. According to an informant trained in such practice, that the method is appropriate to quickly catch up the other regional governments which are better endowed with educated manpower (A civil servant from Berta, Interviewee 12, 2002: 14). Other informant also mention an experience in which a Gumuz student has faced difficulty to cope with fellow students in agricultural training university in Alemaya that operate within the ordinary higher education standard (A member of the regional executive from Gumuz Interviewee 5, 2002: 6). As a result, for the indigenous political elites the only option to improve regional skills and efficiency is by raising educational capability of the regional state by concentrating in training indigenous professionals

that could replace the non-indigenous professionals who have monopolized the region's professional pool (A member of the regional executive from Gumuz, Interviewee 5, 2002: 5).

## **5.5 The political process since 1991: Turmoil and Unpredictability**

The post 1991 regional government in Benishangul Gumuz regional state has been characterized by unpredictability and ineffectiveness. Though economic underdevelopment and immaturity in political leadership could be cited as a cause, other factors such as intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic rivalries, and the intriguing and self-serving role of the TPLF/EPRDF have played a significant impact in creating turmoil and unpredictability in the regional state governance structure. The three most important factors that produced turmoil and unpredictability in the regional government are presented below.

The first factor is the imposition of the Benishangul's elite hegemony in the regional government. Earlier relationship with TPLF had helped Benishangul group to assume a prominent role in the formation and organisation of the regional state structure and also to play a hegemonic role. As a result, BPLM became a single dominant party by recruiting and acquiring more members from other indigenous ethnic communities in the region under the hegemonic role of the Benishangul elites. The EPRDF supported the Benishangul political elite's hegemonic role owing to their collaboration in Sudan and their close relationship to the government of Sudan and Eritrea. The EPRDF army forced the SPLM to leave the region and favoured the government of Sudan to reactivate the Baro river trade and also to play a prominent role in the area. This facilitated the hegemonic position of the Benishangul political elites who had friendly relation with the Sudan government. This was done, of course, at the expense of other indigenous ethnic communities like Gumuz and Shinasha people in the region<sup>30</sup>. Gumuz and Shinasha politicians were pressured and 'persuaded' to join BPLM without their consent and freewill (A council member from Shinasha, Interviewee 3 2002: 3; A civil servant from Berta, Interviewee 12, 2002: 17; A member of zonal executive from Berta, Interviewee 8 2002: 10). This unfairly imposed arrangement has created resentment by Gumuz and Shinasha and produced inter-ethnic tensions within BPLM which had a dominant control of political power in the regional state since 1991.

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<sup>30</sup> For instance, in the first national parliament in 1995 the Benishangul ethnic group were allowed to take five seats, but they should have been granted only one seat, in accordance with the rules of seat distribution in the national parliament that is based on: one seat for 100,000 population.



The second factor was that the Benishangul political elites were divided because of provincialism and greed for power. The BPLM was established in 1986 by Benishangul exiles in Sudan. Since its inception BPLM was affected by internal division. According to a Benishangul informant there were many factions such as the 'Sudan group', 'Assosa groups', 'Kumruk group', 'Khojale group', 'Mengea group' within the BPLM (A civil servant from Berta, Interviewee 12, 2002: 14). However, the most prominent factions are three. The first group was identified with people affiliated to Sudan. Sudan used to mobilize Benishangul Moslems against the military regime in Ethiopia as a reciprocal action to avenge the Ethiopian government support for SPLM. This faction was accused of promoting radical Islamist ideology in the region. The second faction was from individuals from Assosa and Bambassi area who believed that they were closer to the local people than those coming from Sudan after long absence. The third faction was formed by those who were not happy concerning their relation with Sudan.

The earliest division between the ruling aristocracy that migrated from Sudan territory and the indigenous community also had an impact in exacerbating internal split within Benishangul's elites. In addition, the Benishangul political elites are manipulated by divergent political interests. The area was exposed to various liberation movements such as TPLF, EPLF, OLF<sup>31</sup>, SPLM, EPRP<sup>32</sup> and others, therefore the indigenous elites were captured and manipulated by the interests of these various political assortments who have divergent interests and objectives.

Nevertheless, the more significant one could be the new opportunity created for the elites by accessing the state power which has provided personal benefits in terms of social status and economic advantageous. The benefits and rewards distributed by the state are not enough to satisfy every elite operating in the newly created political dispensation. As a result, factional rivalry has become intense within the Benishangul elites political fora.

Consequently, the internal division within Benishangul group becomes an additional setback for a proper functioning ethnic coalition government in the region. The Benishangul political elites are the major political force in the regional government and factionalism and continuous tensions within the group has greatly hampered a badly needed stability in the regional state for a decade. As a result, the

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<sup>31</sup> To neutralize a threat of OLF, following the intense 1992 conflict between OLF and EPRDF in the area, EPRDF favored BPLM's dominant presence in the area.

<sup>32</sup> For example, in 1995 some members of BPLM were made an alliance with EPRP and *Keffagne* (KPDM) to forge a unity front (EUF) against EPRDF regime in Ethiopia <http://www.eprp.com/doc/EUFMN.html>.

BPLM suffered from intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic tensions and divisions and became very fragile to be easily manipulated and discarded.

The third and most importantly factor was the disagreement that surfaced between the Benishangul elites and the TPLF/EPRDF (or the federal government). Due to the tension between the TPLF/EPRDF and the Sudan government in connection with the growing hostility between Eritrea and Sudan in 1994/5 and also because of the assassination attempt of Egyptian president in Addis Ababa in 1995, the once friendly relationship between the TPLF/EPRDF and the government of Sudan suffered. The close relationship between the TPLF/EPRDF and the Sudanese government suffered because of the hostility between the governments of Eritrea and Sudan in 1994, in which TPLF/EPRDF was siding with the Eritrean government<sup>33</sup>. The already deteriorated relation with Sudan faced with a total break down when the Ethiopian government swiftly and officially implicated the government of Sudan in an attempted assassination of the Egyptian president in Addis Ababa in 1995.

As a result, the TPLF/EPRDF has changed its policy of favouring the Benishangul political elites' hegemony in the Benishangul Gumuz regional state government. It is obvious that many of the Benishangul political elites had a good relationship with the Sudan government due to the support they had received in the past resistance movement against Derg, which was also facilitated by TPLF and EPLF in Sudan at the time of their struggle against the central military regime in Ethiopia (A civil servant from Berta, Interviewee 12, 2002: 17; A council member from Berta, Interviewee 2 2002: 3). Besides, equally important, the majority of the Benishangul people are Muslims and many parents preferred to send their children to Sudan to attend education in Arabic schools and thus they have also more or less positive attitude toward their relationship with the Sudanese authority, which espouses Islamic principles in politics and governance. However an elder complained that 'living in a boarder area is very problematic, both governments have suspicion on us and always want to divide and rule us. For Sudan government, we are Ethiopians, for Ethiopian government we are Sudanese and for the SPLA (Sudan People Liberation Front) we are Islam' (An elder from Berta, Interviewee 13 2002: 16).

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<sup>33</sup> In my interview with a member of the national parliament that the Sudanese authority tried to convince the Ethiopian government officials that the hostility was between Sudan and Eritrea and therefore requested for impartiality of Ethiopia. But the Ethiopian officials declined the request and openly echoed that their support was for Eritrea. This was also influenced by the policy of the US, which wanted to alienate the Islamic Sudanese government.

For many observers, however it appeared that the EPRDF/TPLF led Ethiopian government had got a 'golden' opportunity to construct a plausible case, but without adequate investigation, to break its relation with Sudan in order to completely jump into the Eritrean and the US bandwagon which it badly needed. It is also conceivable to suspect that the TPLF/EPRDF had wanted to cool down its relation with the Sudan government which was accused of terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism by the US and some Western countries. John Young (1999: 331) writes that Ethiopia (EPRDF) was received money and support from the US to help forces like SPLA which was fighting against the government of Sudan.

If the rush was not made for such political gambling, a proper and adequate investigation should have been done to prove whether the accusation and allegation that implicates the Sudanese government in the assassination attempt was true. To the surprise of many people, the government of Egypt<sup>34</sup> itself did not believe in a direct involvement of the Sudanese government in the incident, as it knew that there were strong militant radical Islamic groups in Egypt who have tried in many occasions to assassinate the president. Therefore, the same radical Islamic groups from Egypt could also carry out the Addis Ababa attempt.

Consequently, the above three factors combined have brought a significant consequence in reshaping political alignments and arrangements in Benishangul-Gumuz regional state by flinching the Benishangul elite's political platform. The Benishangul political elites, who were inexpert to comprehend such tricky political game, failed to bring a united platform to protect their regional interest and therefore easily exposed to the punitive measures of the EPRDF/TPLF for their past and continuing good relationships with the Sudanese authority that the EPRDF was not worried about. As a result, the TPLF/ EPRDF had exploited the internal division within Benishangul political elites for its own political advantage by promoting Gumuz elites to hold key political positions in the regional state.

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<sup>34</sup> Because the Ethiopian government was accused the government of Egypt that it was not cooperating in the investigation, but the Ethiopian government in advance had implicated the government of Sudan. Rather, the Egyptian government blamed the attempt on members of Egypt's militant Gama'a al Islamiya (Islamic Group) organization and said the attackers were trained in neighboring Sudan'. ([http://www.ethiopianreporter.com/eng\\_newspaper/Htm/No272/r272new1.htm](http://www.ethiopianreporter.com/eng_newspaper/Htm/No272/r272new1.htm)). According to the London-Based AL-HAYAT daily that a man who called himself Abul Noor, who the paper said belonged to bin Laden's al-Qaeda organization, as saying in an interview that a foiled attempt to assassinate Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak in Ethiopia in 1995 had been planned for three months in Somalia and Afghanistan and that the people who planned it allocated \$ 200,000 for the task.

Accordingly, in June 1996, then Prime Minister Tamrat Layne opened the so-called Peace, Democracy, and Development Conference in Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State by urging participants to unseat regional officials whom he called 'narrow nationalists and agents of foreign powers' (Ethiopian Register 1997: 14). As a result, what followed was the dismissal of all members of the Regional Council, except its president. A report states that in August 1997 that at least 120 former officials remained in detention in the region without charges (Human Right Watch 1997: 21). An insider witness that 'ten prominent leaders of the Benishangul People's Liberation Front-which was allied with the EPRDF, and which controlled the regional government until its rift with the EPRDF-remained in detention in military camps and transferred to official prison in Assosa in January 1997. The dispute between the EPRDF and local officials provided the context for the dismissal of most of the regional police force, about 800 men, and the recruitment of new officers' (Ibid. p. 21). Young also argues that the dismissal of officials and civil servants alleging for 'anti-peace and antidevelopment' activities', was a phrase assumed to cover accusing of being Sudanese agents. Some of the dismissed include the vice-chairman of the region, the education bureau head, the Ethiopian ambassador to Yemen, Yussuf Hammed Nasser, who was from Benishangul, and other lower ranking officials' (Young 1999: 333).

As a consequence, BPLM lost most of its leadership and therefore reorganized under a different name and new leadership. An informant claimed that the new leadership of both the party and the regional government did not have the mandate of the Benishangul people (An Elder from Berta, Interviewee 7 2002: 9; A civil servant from Berta, Interviewee 12, 2002: 16; A member of the regional executive from Berta, Interviewee 6 2002: 7). The new regional administration headed by Yaregal Ayesheshume (a Gumuz) since September 1996 has been a source of fierce resentment from the Benishangul group. It has become an acceptable by the Benishangul elite who believe that their ethnic group should get an upper hand in leading the regional government owing to their majority population, hosting the regional government's capital city and their significant contribution to the armed struggle (A regional official from Gumuz, Interviewee 1, 2002: 1). The presidential post is associated with high personal privileges and benefits and also it also brings greater ethnic symbolism and group satisfaction. Thus it continues to be a highly contested political apex by the political elites and ethnic communities.

The option picked by the EPRDF in 1996 to solve the political predicament in the region marked by an egoistic option that serves the EPRDF's interest better. As a result, assigning the highest executive power of the regional government to the Gumuz individual (*Yaregal Aysheshm*) has not brought the much needed stability or effective governance in the region. Rather, it created tensions within indigenous ethnic groups. According to information from Benishangul as well as Gumuz informants that the relationship between the two indigenous ethnic communities has started to suffer. There have been open and frequent ethnic naming and accusation. According to a Benishangul informant that 'we have never been in such kinds of hostility and hate against Gumuz people. We feel that Gumuz people are collaborating with the EPRDF by plotting against us who are their close neighbour' (A member of zonal executive from Berta, Interviewee 8 2002: 10). This attitude if shared widely would be very destructive and detrimental for their relationship to live in a single political space.

This divisive political game by the EPRDF/TPLF appears to aggravate resentments not only limited to the Benishangul elites but also slowly encompassing the Benishangul community. All Benishangul informants, including those organised in the new party organised by the EPRDF has expressed that the people of Benishangul are not fairly and adequately represented in the regional state. Almost all informants from the region also believe that relations between Benishangul and Gumuz and, relations between Benishangul and settlers have also been deteriorating very badly.

## **5.6 The major emerging problems**

The major problems generated in connection with the ethnic federal restructuring and arrangements in Benishangul Gumuz regional state are heightening ethnic tensions, the curtailment of human and political rights of the indigenous communities, and inefficiency and pervasive corruption in the administration. I present these problems below.

### **5.6.1 Emerging ethnic tensions**

The pre-1991 ethnic tensions in Benishangul-Gumuz areas were limited to conflict between adjacent communities for various reasons of livelihood challenges and social facets such as land grabbing, cattle raiding and cultural clashes. Very low intensity sporadic clashes used to occur between Gumuz and Amhara in Metekele area and between Gumuz and Oromo in south part of the region. John Young

(Young 1999) also mentioned about the existence of slaves raiders until 1993, but it seems that he exaggerates claims of sporadic abduction of young boys for military purpose and household services. However the post-1991 ethnic tensions are very new and induced in connection with the establishment of the regional state government. Competition for political leadership, positions in the state bureaucracy, group's hegemonic ambitions, budget allocation, language issues and other factors are inducing sectional and sectarian interests.

The major battleground among the indigenous elites is in bureaucratic posts and political offices. In particular, the Berta elite are expressing resentments regarding representation and appointments in the regional executive and bureaucracy. Seats in the regional legislative council are not allocated based on the size of population; therefore the Benishangul elite consider the arrangement as a deliberate device to deny them to be a majority ethnic group in the regional council. As a result they claim that posts in the regional government are unfairly allocated to Gumuz and Shinasha ethnic groups at the expense of Benishangul people. In addition, they are unhappy concerning the zonal structures in which the Gumuz area has two zonal administrations whereas the Benishangul area has only one zonal administration. They claim therefore that the smaller ethnic group is getting benefits and budget at two zonal administrations (An elder from Berta, Interviewee 13 2002: 19). Their resentment in terms of losing administrative bureaucracy may be true, however administrative bureaucracies are more beneficial to the elites than the ordinary people, because more administrative structures need more budgets that could be used in expanding social infrastructures for the ordinary people, but for the elites, bureaucratic positions are more attractive.

Similarly, Benishangul informants mention that Gumuz dominated regional government prefer to appoint non-indigenous individuals as bureau head, but rejecting Benishangul individuals with relatively adequate education to lead bureaus, simply because of fearfully anticipating Benishangul group's hegemony in the regional state (A member of the regional executive from Berta, Interviewee 6 2002: 8; An Elder from Berta, Interviewee 7 2002: 8). An elder elucidate that: 'We are considered as a threat because of our majority number; our population size has been envied and thus this envy turned damagingly against us. They call us Islamic fundamentals, extremists and Sudanese. But we are always Ethiopian, Sudan is our historical enemy, many of our grandfathers were dead while imprisoned in Sudan (An elder from Berta, Interviewee 13 2002: 19).

For the Benishangul elites, it is the situation in which the minority ethnic group is imposing its authority on the majority ethnic group which is contrary to the ethnic federal principles that stipulate a proportional representation in accordance with the size of ethnic group's population. As a result, they demanded to establish a separate Benishangul state by seceding from the existing regional state or to be granted their own autonomous zonal self-administration unit that enables them to control budget allocation and official appointments. (A regional official from Gumuz, Interviewee 1, 2002: 1; An elder from Berta, Interviewee 13 2002: 19). They feel rage<sup>35</sup> that Gumuz and Shinasha elites are betraying them by collaborating with the EPRDF that wanted to demote and disfranchise the Benishangul elite (An Elder from Berta, Interviewee 7 2002: 9). Their anticipation of their relation with the other indigenous groups is filled with despair and reprisal, and the resolute elites are spreading the despair at the community level and it became difficult for some of the Benishangul elite who wanted a conciliatory solution to work at the community level. 'They are blamed as unfaithful for the Benishangul cause and framed as collaborators with those groups who want to sabotage their cause and therefore the Benishangul community is rejecting them' (A member of the regional executive from Berta, Interviewee 6 2002: 8). Gumuz and Shinasha officials claim that the Benishangul community is highly indoctrinated by the hardliner elite to reject conciliatory arrangement and becomes difficult for the regional government officials including those open-minded Benishangul personnel who work in collaboration with the Gumuz and Shinasha group to operate in the Benishangul area. The elites claim total ownership and monopoly over their ethnic community and easily influence clan and religious leaders and others because of their strong call and cry for the good of the ethnic community (A member of the regional executive from Gumuz, Interviewee 4 2002: 5; A council member from Shinasha, Interviewee 3 2002: 3).

For, Gumuz and Shinasha officials that there has been fair representation in the regional government, but tensions have emerged because of the hegemonic ambition of Benishangul elites who claim a right to have the presidential post and other key executive posts simply because of their majority population and also because of their previous close relation with TPLF in the period of the armed struggle (A council member from Shinasha, Interviewee 3 2002: 2). Nonetheless, according to an informant that the

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<sup>35</sup> In my field research in May 2002 in the area, I personally observed and even experienced the rage of the Benishangul elites

regional state's presidential post is very alluring because of its power, privileges and symbolic significance (A Women, Berta official (A member of regional council from Berta, Interviewee 9 2002: 13) The regional president has a significant power in key decision making and in appointing regional, zonal and wereda officials; he is the highest authority in the regional state and he has also an extensive personal<sup>36</sup> privileges.

For an independent observer, the regional government is simply captured by power mongering individuals; it becomes a drama forum among power hungry individuals. The council representation is unfair; minority ethnic groups are imposing their will and interest on the majority ethnic group. There must be an appropriate and fair multi ethnic regional structure that could fairly and convincingly represent each group. It is always possible that when one controls a key post, the others could be offended or discriminated or covetous (An elder from Berta, Interviewee 13 2002: 19).

It is evident that the Benishangul Gumuz regional state was established by the elites from the five indigenous communities and the Benishangul elites were at the core and played a dominant role owing to their contribution in the armed struggle against the Derg, their majority population size (of the indigenous communities), their close cooperation with TPLF and EPLF in Sudan and their relatively better politically engaged elites. Thus, they controlled key political and administrative posts like the regional state president. However, since 1996 the dominant role of the Benishangul elite has plummeted and replaced by the Gumuz elite with opportunistic alliance of the Shinasha elite, and this has created unhealthy relationship among the major indigenous ethnic elites that have dominated the state government. Instead of cooperation and/or compromise, the ethnic relations have been filled with mistrust, rejection and open hostility that drastically reduced the efficiency and effectiveness of the regional state government to deliver the needed livelihood improvement of the impoverished indigenous communities of the regional state.

Although there is a consensus among the indigenous elites that ethnic federalism is beneficial to them, they are not showing a cooperative disposition and commitment to promote and materialize the

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<sup>36</sup> Living in a presidential residence with maximum security and frequent travel to Addis Ababa.



supposed benefits; rather they have been immersed with damaging revulsion<sup>37</sup> against each other by exaggerating differences, erecting fences and constructing hostilities that could be very hurtful for future cooperation and compromise among the ethnic communities sharing the same administrative and political structures and institutions.

The federal government's (EPRDF) approach in imposing forced agreement and forced cooperation is fuelling resentments and rage, because it has lost its impartiality. The federal government, which is highly dominated by TPLF interest, is viewed as a source of the problem, therefore no chance to get a role of a reliable and respected arbitrator in the matter. As a result, it opted for imposing partisan and egocentric solution that failed to convince the dissenting elites, but resorted for a carrot and stick approach by rewarding those who accepted its solution and at the same time by punishing those rejected. However, neither the rewards, nor the punishments are good enough to create a badly needed stability and vitality in the regional state. The regional state has remained very weak, inefficient and corrupt<sup>38</sup>.

The Budget allocation activities are also another conflictual issues amongst the indigenous elites in the regional government. Budget allocation used to be made at sectoral level like education sector and likewise; therefore, there was a widespread suspicion that a head of a respective sector would give priority to his ethnic area in allocating budget for his sector office. For instance, a Benishangul official blatantly complains that: 'Health bureau head is from Shinasha, thus he sends the medicine to Metekel zone and Bulel woreda. Agriculture head is Amhara, thus agricultural package projects are for Metekel settlers' (A member of zonal executive from Berta, Interviewee 8 2002: 11). There was also a case that high school was opened in area that did not have enough students to attend high school level education (A council member from Shinasha, Interviewee 3 2002: 4). As a result, Benishangul elites prefer budget subsidy from the federal government to be directly transferred to their zonal administration's coffers by circumventing the regional government's power in budget allocation and approval for the zonal

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<sup>37</sup> For instance, a Benishangul informant explain that there is much difference between Gumuz and Benishangul in respect of language and religion, we have never lived together, it was the EPRDF government that put us together. And we rarely heard regarding Shinasha, but in our oral history they were known as troublemakers An official from (Berta, Interviewee 8 2002: 11).

<sup>38</sup> For instance, in its third session in October 2002, the regional council affirmed to get rid of tribal, parochial and corrupt practices in the regional government. (Ethiopia News Agency, October 25, 2002). All over again, after three years in September 2005, the new cabinet members promised to tackle the widespread ethnic favouritism and corruption that are upsetting efforts 'to extricate their region out of the quagmire of poverty'. (September 26, 2005: Walta Information Centre).

administrations. Though this demand is absolutely unsound and unconstitutional, it may show the level of mistrust and indignation that prevail among the indigenous elites.

Moreover, selections of students for scholarship opportunities have also become very sensitive and controversial. A relatively better educated indigenous communities like the Shinasha people have better entry opportunity or access, however, the elites from Gumuz and Benishangul have worried that the practice would upset the ethnic balance by rewarding the relatively privileged ethnic group and punishing the disadvantaged one. In addition, it could have also a complex effect in the future by preparing a ground for the Shinasha elite to play a dominant or leading role in the regional state, but they account for less than 10 percent of the total population of the regional state.

### **5.6.2 Political and human rights abuse of the settlers and other ‘non-indigenous’ group**

Benishangul elites are showing a domineering stand in their administration by disrespecting and disfranchising many of the inhabitants in Assoa zone. Gumuz elites are also showing the same tendency in *Metekel* zone. The indigenous ethnic elites are showing a similar behaviour and ambition of oppressive power control practice and discriminatory treatment of non-indigenous communities in their respective territorial jurisdictions.

In Assosa zone 43 percent, in Assosa town 67 percent of the inhabitants are exempted from political representation at zonal administration and regional government level. In Metekel zone also the settlers are not represented adequately in zonal and regional government structures. A desire of monopolistic control of regional political spaces and administrative structures combined with historical legacies and grievances have induced the indigenous elite to opt for exclusionist stance in regional politics. In the past, there was unpleasant attitude in degrading the personalities of the indigenous communities as inferior and unequal. The past-inflicted stereotypes have now brought the expected reciprocal counterattack in targeted mistreatment and discrimination of the non-indigenous communities. A regional official believes that many of the non-indigenous communities are still holding deep the past stereotypes and appear disrespecting and downgrading the leadership of the indigenous elite and envy of the privileged status accorded to the indigenous political leaders (A member of the regional executive from Gumuz, Interviewee 5, 2002: 6). Many Benishangul people also suspect that the neighbouring

Oromo people as having ambition of expanding their territory and political influence in their area, therefore they are uncomfortable and very reluctant to include them in the administrative and political leadership. Past memories of domination by Oromo nobility may have its impact.

The most serious and frequent discrimination and abuses, of human as well as political rights, have been made against the settlers in Assosa zone. The settlers, which are estimated about 50,000 were brought to the area by the Derg regime due to the major 1984 famine in Ethiopia and at present they account about 25 percent of the population in Assosa zone, the enclosed homeland for Berta ethnic group. These settlers in 55 settlement villages have no political representation at regional, zonal and woreda administration levels. Their administrative and political representation is restricted at the Kebele administration level, but the kebele platform is designed to impose orders and control from the higher authorities from the wereda, zonal and regional authorities without a reciprocal power to influence higher decisions and authority.

They are exposed to gross violations of their rights like eviction, limiting their freedom of movements, destroying their property and other similar cruel atrocities. It becomes possible to assure relative peace and order in the area with the involvement of the federal military force, however deep in the villages and in routine interaction, the settlers are always exposed to every type of harassment and intimidation. Minor tensions such as quarrels in school children can grow into ethnic clashes in which the zonal and wereda officials are interfering in partisanship to their communities. In 1993 many settlers were killed, their property destroyed and their homes were burned (A leader of Eder, Interviewee 11 2002: 14). In order to end their ill-treatment and discrimination the settlers have demanded the federal government to intervene to respect their constitutional rights and demanded for political and administrative representation in the regional government structures, but the response they got was insufficient. The EPRDF, which had a warm relation with the BPLM, was not keen to spoil its relation with the indigenous Berta elite. According to an informant that the electoral board and the EPRDF's official<sup>39</sup> strongly rejected the settlers demand for political and administrative representation in the regional government (A member of the zonal executive from Berta, Interviewee 8 2002: 11). The election board

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<sup>39</sup> A Berta official explains that in 1993 Nekempt conference Abbay Tsehayee openly stated that the settlers were settled in the region for the only reason of getting land and food, which are more important than political power, and therefore their demand for representation was rejected in the conference (An official from Berta, Interviewee 8 2002: 11).

rejected the demand based on the electoral declaration that stipulates fluency in one of the regional indigenous languages is a requirement to stand for a political office. Nonetheless, a demand for fluency in the regional language is unnecessary, since Amharic is the official language in the regional state.

The indigenous community feels that their land was unjustly taken from them by the previous military regime; therefore they wish the settlement should be dismantled and the land should be returned to the community. The land under the holdings of the settlers is relatively well utilized and thus it is inducing past ownership claims by some personalities from the indigenous communities. The Berta political elites are also yearning for the settlers' eviction due to political motives, because massive population concentration of non-indigenous community in their ethnic enclave could raise a demand for political representation in near future that could reduce the hegemonic position of the indigenous elite at wereda, zonal and regional levels. (A member of regional council from Berta, Interviewee 9 2002:12; a member of the regional executive from Berta, Interviewee 6 2002:7). They are wishing for '*Bertanising*' their ethnic enclave; therefore they could resort to evicting the settlers and ethnic cleansing if they have the opportunity and the capability (A council member from Berta, Interviewee 2 2002: 2; A regional official from Gumuz, Interviewee 1, 2002: 1; A member of the regional executive from Berta, Interviewee 6 2002: 7). They claim that the settlement was motivated for political and strategic reason in the past associated with the conflict, rather than for humanitarian or drought reasons. They also remind in animosity that in the past the settlers were provided with new clinics, water services, schools and government's security protection, but without providing a similar level of service and protection for the indigenous people.

Split and provincialism within the Berta elites have also brought hurdles to solve the settlers' issues, especially Berta groups from *Bambassi* (settlement) area, which contained the major settlement villages, were strongly resisting the settlement. They were afraid of expanding more settlement in their land and also worried that the settlers would share the scarce resources allocated for starting development projects for the indigenous people that are relatively disadvantageous (A civil servant from Berta, Interviewee 12, 2002: 17).

Actually, since the settlers are living compactly in adjoining areas, they should have been provided some sort of semi-autonomous administrative territory and political representation in the regional government.

However, in the EPRDF's early 1990s political calculation, political expediencies are more important than people's rights, as in the case the EPRDF did not want to sacrifice its good relation with Berta elites because of siding with the rights of the Amhara settlers. In early 1990s the EPRDF was also worried about the strong operation and presence of OLF in the area, thus rift with the Berta elites could become counterproductive in its effort to reduce OLF's influence in the area.

There was similar tension in Metekel zone, which contains tens of thousands of settlers in 50 settlement villages. According to a Shinasha informant that there were various conflicts between Amhara and Shinasha, and Amhara and Gumuz people in 1991 to 1992. The Amhara settlers were very keen to be incorporated into the adjacent Amhara regional states, however their demand was rejected by the regional as well as the federal government (A council member from Shinasha, Interviewee 3 2002: 4). Creating a separate wereda administration for the Amhara settlers in *Pawe* area has temporarily reduced the tension (A leader of Eder, Interviewee 11 2002: 14).

Sadly, all groups used the settlers for political motives. The settlers' issue was very controversial and divisive in the regional state. The Gumuz and the Shinasha group were in favour of granting political and administration representation for the settlers, whereas the Berta group was very resistant. It was one of the major reasons that forced the Berta group to withdraw for a year from the regional state and the zonal administration in 2000, following the settlers demand for representation was approved in regional conference in 2000. The Berta elites felt that Gumuz and Shinasha political elites are allying to challenge their majority status, especially the Gumuz group who controls key regional political and administrative offices including the regional president posts are using the settlers issue to promote their hegemony.

As a result, with the intense ethnic rivalries among the indigenous groups, the relationship between the indigenous and the settlers was used for political purpose in exploiting their support to balance the political power of the rival ethnic group. This in turn has exposed the settlers for violence and atrocity from the other group. This is the case of the Amhara settlers in Assosa zone in which the Gumuz group are using them as a shield to promote their egoistic interest in order to weaken the power of the rival Benishangul group. In turn the Benishangul group has felt that the settler Amhara, living in Benishangul delimited zonal area, are a threat to its ambition and also its weakest point to be easily exploited by is

rivals. Therefore, repeated aggression, eviction and abuse of their rights in daily bases has been a reality the settlers have to live with.

The EPRDF has also exploited the settlers' issues for its self-cantered political gains. Initially in early 1990s it was in favour of the interests of the Berta group by disregarding the rights of the settlers, with the aim of defusing the threats of the OLF in the area by allying with the Berta community. The EPRDF was also deliberately ignoring a cruelty of indigenous elites against the non-indigenous community in the regional state in order to create a golden opportunity for it in an attempt to attract members who need its protection or shield against local despotism and extremism. The irony is that people seek shelter into the organisation that brought a policy for their marginalisation and discrimination; this may be a deliberate Machiavellian strategy of the TPLF, a minority ethnic group, which is anxious to attract followers by making them defenceless and victims, with the purpose of ascending into a hegemonic position in Ethiopian statehood.

### **5.6.3 Inefficiency and Corruption**

Firstly, Internal party factions, inter-ethnic hostilities and the dichotomy of indigenous and non-indigenous categories have intensified corruption and favouritism in order to erect or reinforce sectarian and factional loyalties. In a conference held in the region in June 1996, the then Prime Minister Tamrat Layne<sup>40</sup>, accused the regional government for widespread corruption and inefficiency and orchestrated follow-up actions that removed the majority of the leadership of the regional government. John Young also accounts for the plague of a high degree of corruption in the regional administration (Young 1999: 334).

Secondly, initially, federal transfer was mainly targeted toward rewarding political allies in the regional government, therefore there was no detailed project plan, implementation follow-up, appropriate accountancy, and auditing, but the money was just sent to the regional offices and used by the officials as they please to spend it. The EPRDF wanted to consolidate its rule through a bribe since 1991 in which the regional officials without accountability and auditing procedures used the regional government

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<sup>40</sup> Summary of World Broadcasts, Africa June 18, 1996: Deputy PM in Ethiopia Says Officials 'Embezzled' Budget in Western Region

budget. The EPRDF was more interested to consolidate its hegemonic position through the support of regional groupings that have been rewarded by huge money, which they have never dreamt for. The money was used to buy political allies in the regions for the EPRDF's hegemonic project. Therefore, the initial malady has become a norm. Everything is infected dangerously that no cosmetic reform could clean it therefore the need is a fundamental surgical operation that should cut out the roots. However, the EPRDF has acted to cut out the roots when it feels that this can serve its political goal to alienate the Benishangul elites that itself installed previously and ignored their abuse of power and corruption for its own sectarian political objectives. Finally, the EPRDF used the malady, which it facilitated in growing, to weaken the regional elites who became a threat to its objectives. Though the EPRDF is able to weaken the Berta elite, the corrupt practices that it facilitated initially has become unremitting and endemic. In its 3<sup>rd</sup> regular conference in October 25 2002, the regional council urged to get rid of tribal, parochial and widespread corrupt practices in the regional government, the same call was repeated in 2005 and the problem has continued to be the major problems in the region (Ethiopia News Agency, October 25, 2005).

Thirdly, inefficiency and corruption are rising due to the labelling of 'insider' and 'outsiders' professionals in the regional state's bureaucracy. The appointment of the so-called 'outsiders' in the bureaucracy is officially pronounced as a temporary and transient option due to ethnic biases and discourses. It sounds weirdly intriguing that 'we want you just for a time being because we do not have our blood kin professionals, but we will throw you out sooner when we train our kin professionals'. The so-called 'outsiders' or non-indigenous professionals know that they are in the posts for a temporary period and also know that they would be replaced immediately if ethnically fit indigenous professional are available. As Huntington puts, 'if one enters a new social situation and is perceived as an outsider who does not belong, one is likely to think of oneself that way' (2004: 23). Therefore because of such de-motivating factors and the obvious insecurity of tenure the propensities for inefficient and dispiriting performance are very evident. Besides, since their higher political bosses are from the so-called indigenous people who have neither the competence nor the knowledge of the job to check the performance and efficiency of the bureaus heads or subordinate, it is easier for these individuals to be overlooked, to engage in corrupt, and to escape from day to day follow up, timely monitoring and appropriate evaluations.

Lastly, the system has resulted in waste and misuse of available resources. There are unemployed educated and trained college graduates in other regions, but the EPRDF's ethnic federalism wait for indigenous groups to finish school and to fill the bureaucracy in the region; or otherwise the norm has been providing a short cut courses of three years to make them a junior judge, accountant etc, but it is very difficult to produce competent doctors, engineers and others that could transform the region with such kind of shortened period of training. The indigenous elites are keen to control administrative and bureaucratic positions whereas they expect non-indigenous professionals to provide skills and expertise in health services, construction and other vital areas. The region relies heavily on private contractors for construction activities, but these contractors are sacking the regions' financial resource by transferring back to Addis Ababa. The regional government used to re-send unutilised budget to the federal treasury, whereas the regional state has been characterized by absence of rural clinics, rural roads, clean water services and other essential public services (A member of the regional council from Berta, Interviewee 9 2002: 12).



**SNNPR Region**  
**Administrative Boundaries**

**Legend**

- Region
- Zone
- Woreda
- Town
- Road
- Lake

**Area Detail**

0 50 100 150 Kilometers

The Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP) regional state (henceforth referred to as the Southern regional state) is located in south and south-western part of Ethiopia, bordering with Kenya in the South, Sudan republic in the South-west, Gambella Region in the Northwest and Oromia Region in the North and East. The region has the area of 113 539 sq km and about 13 million people (in 2003), consisting of about 60 officially recognised ethno-linguistic groups<sup>41</sup> and various fragmented communities that signify remarkable heterogeneity and immense diversity in language and ethnic identities.

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Ninety percent of the regional state's population live in rural areas. Population density in the region is 104.6 people/sq km in 2000 (which was 91 in 1994), but in the highland areas which represent 40 percent of the land area and contain 80 percent of the regional population, the density is 400 to 500 persons/sq km: 479 in Gedeo Zone, 341 in Sidama Zone, 329 in Kembata and Timbaro, 296 in Hadiya and 222 in Guraghe in 2000. In contrast, the density is very low in area that represents 60 percent of the land area that accommodate 20 percent of the regional population (mostly pastoralists): 15 persons/sq. km in South Omo zone and 16 persons/sq. km and in Bench-Maji zone. Agriculture density is also high in Gedeo (394 people/sq.km), Sidama 295, Kembata Timbaro 285, Hadiya 258 and Gurage 197, while it is 56 in Keffa zone, 15 in South Omo zone and 14 in Bench Maji zone (Source BOPED 1998, SNNP). Ethnic territorial enclaves and entitlement could certainly affect resettlement and population movement to sparsely populated areas.

Agriculture including pastoral activities provides 90 percent of the total employment in the region, although farmland holding is less than 2 hectare for 72 percent of the total population. Food production deficit in the region has reached 30 per cent in 2000, and 10 percent of the population has affected by chronic food shortage (BOPED 2000).

In countrywide comparison, the region represents 25 percent of the Ethiopia's total population and 10 percent of the total landmass. It is also home for 75 percent of the 80 ethnic groups that are officially identified in the country. Economically, the region supplies 50 per cent of the country's coffee production that accounts more than 50 percent of the national's export earnings. In 1997 the Gedeo zone produced 35 per cent and the Sidama zone 22 percent of regional state's total coffee supply (Regional Agriculture Bureau 1997).

## ***6.2 Ethnic composition and relations***

The Southern regional state is home to about 60 officially registered ethnic groups with diverse languages and cultures belonging to the Cushitic, Omotic, Semitic and Nilotic language families. Sidama, Wolaita, Guraghe and Hadiya are the four major ethnic groups each with more than a million members in 2004. According to the 1994 national census, Sidama is the largest ethnic

group with 1.8 million people and followed by Wolaita 1.1 million, Guarge<sup>42</sup> 870, 000, Hadiya 861,000 and Siltie 727, 000. In 2004, with a national population growth of 3 percent per annum<sup>43</sup>, it is believed that Sidama people would reach 2.5 million, Wolaita 1.5 million, Guraghe 1.2 million and Hadiya 1.1 million populations (see table 6.1 for details). Although no single ethnic group has a majority, the five ethnic groups (Sidama, Wolaita, Gurage, Hadiya and Siltie) account for more than half of the population of the regional state.

It is recognized that out of the officially registered 60 ethnic groups about 45 of them have a population of less than 100,000, and from this about 30 have less than 10,000 populations. This reveal the massive difficulties faced in the Southern regional state to guarantee the constitutional pledges that declare for every ethnic group an ‘unconditional right to self-determination including secession, a right to establish its own governmental organisation pertinent to its geographical settlement and a rights to use and develop its own language and culture.

Prior to 1991, ethnic tensions in southern Ethiopia were limited to conflicts and competition for resources like animal watering, pasture area, land ownership and other routine or trivial issues among bordering ethnic communities and were mostly mediated by local elders and traditional mechanisms. However, since 1991 ethnic tensions and conflicts among the southern ethnic groups have become widespread mainly due to the ethnic elites’ competition for resources, political power and administrative offices (An ex-official of the regional government, Interviewee 36, 2002: 32). On many occasions, the ethnic tensions and conflicts have demanded for the intervention of the federal government’s security forces because they had become beyond the capacity of local mediation efforts as used to be the case prior to 1991. The local mediation mechanisms have been eroded because of two major factors. One, the prevalence of ethnic prejudices due to ethnic restructuring and ethnic favouritism have made difficult to create impartiality in local mediation efforts. Two, the power and influence of ethnic elites have suppressed the role of local elders and traditional mechanisms due to the heightened role granted to elites in connection with the new state structures introduced in local areas. The state structure utilizes the ethnic elites to extend its authority and control in every local area.

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<sup>42</sup> In the figure, the Guraghe population includes Sebat bet Guraghe and Sodo Gurage’s population

<sup>43</sup> Based on a report by UN Country Team 1999, *Common Country Assessment*, September 1999, Addis Ababa, page 27

With regard to a common regional language, it has become difficult to find a convenient region-based official language that can be agreeable and feasible for all ethnic communities in the regional state, therefore Amharic language is accepted as an official working language for the regional government. In a region of more than sixty ethno-linguistic groups, it would be highly unlikely to reach a consensus in selecting an official language from the diverse regional languages; therefore a selection of Amharic as a lingua franca for the regional government is a very prudent and rational option. However, some regional officials complained that the regional government is promoting a non-regional language due to the arbitrary nature of compacting about 60 ethnic groups in a single state structure.

On the other hand, few self-administrative units at zonal and special woreda levels are using their respective ethnic languages in local administrative matters and elementary education within their respective administrative territories. Twelve ethnic groups have already started using their language in office and elementary schools, and studies are also in progress to allow many more ethnic groups to start using their ethnic languages in education and local administration. According to an informant the interest is very high among the ethnic groups to develop and use their language in offices and elementary education (A regional council member from Sidama, Interviewee 23, 2002: 02). However, tensions have emerged among the constituting ethnic communities in many of the multi-ethnic administrative territories like in North Omo, Kefa-Sheka<sup>44</sup> and K.A.T. to adopt a single official language among the constituting ethnic communities. Although language is the major nodal point of ethnic identity in Southern region, fluency in particular ethnic language does not necessarily give recognition as members of an ethnic community, rather parental or ancestral lineage and ties are highly determinant.

However, it is going to be very difficult and beyond the capability of the regional as well as the federal government to satisfy the demands and interests of more than the 50 ethnic groups as resource and trained manpower are very scarce (A member of the regional executive, Interviewee 33, 2002: 23). According to a planning expert, in 2002, at the regional government level, 40

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<sup>44</sup> For example in the dissolved Kefa-Sheka zone, despite very close similarity between the languages of Keffa and Sheka, there was tension to adopt a working language for the zonal administration (A member of the regional ruling party from Sheka, Interviewee 40, 2002: 45).

percent of job positions at various public offices are unfilled, it is more serious at zonal and woreda levels (A civil servant, Interviewee 24, 2002: 06). Initially, appointments based on ethnic preferences have resulted in flight of highly trained manpower from the regional state (An ex-official of the regional government, Interviewee 36, 2002: 33). The policy is that leadership positions at regional, zonal and wereda level shall be occupied by individuals from the local ethnic groups, however, the majority of the professionals (about 60 per cent) working in various public offices and bureaucracies in the regional states are not member of the local ethnic groups. In some areas due to a lack of competent individual to lead key offices from local ethnic communities like in south Omo zones, ethnic preference has been withdrawn in appointing zonal or special wereda executive positions. However, the regional state has followed a policy to train massive manpower from individuals from ethnic groups in the region in order to totally 'southernise' the professional pool of the regional state (A regional council member from Sidama, Interviewee 23, 2002: 05). Nonetheless, according to an informant, a member of the TPLF and working in the regional government, even the regional government itself is described as incompetent to run the regional state (A civil servant and member of the TPLF, Interviewee 21, 2002: 01). According to an elder also that most of the elected officials are less educated, because party loyalty is the main criteria for appointment (A leader of Eder, Interviewee 26, 2002: 09).

Table 6.1 Ten major ethnic groups\* in the SNNP regional state in 1994 and 2004\*\*

Ethnic group	Population 1994	Share of regional population (percentage)	Estimated population 2004
1. Sidama	1,818,172	18.1%	2,443,471
2. Wolaita	1,187,299	11.4%	1,595,630
3. Gurage***	871,717	8.3%	1,171,514
4. Hadiya	861,055	8.1%	1,157,185
5. Siltie	727,788	7.2%	978,086
6. Gamo	693,732	6.6%	932,317
7. Keffa	545,960	5.1%	733,361
8. Gedeo	458,102	4.5%	615,650
9. Kembata	424,912	4.0%	571,046
10. Kulo	264,214	2.5%	355,081
Others	2,537,392	24.1%	3,410,042
Total	9,978,053	100	13,963,384

\* Not necessarily all of their populations live in their own self-administration territorial unit

\*\*2004 estimation is based on the national population growth rate of 3 per cent per year

\*\*\*Gurage includes the population of Sebat Bet Gurage and Sodo Gurage

The 5 major ethnic groups accounts 52 percent of the regional state population and has 30 percent of the seats in the state council (the legislative council).

The 10 major ethnic groups account 65 percent of the regional state's population and have 50 percent of the seats in the state council.

The 16 major ethnic groups account 75 percent of the population of the regional state and have 60 percent of the seats in the regional state council

The 44 minority ethnic groups account 20 percent of the regional state population and controls 40 percent of the state council's seat.

### **6.3 SNNP regional state Constitution**

The regional state has adopted its first constitution in June 1995 and a revision was made in November 2001 with the purpose of broadening the powers of the constituting ethnic communities by stressing the ethnic diversity of the regional state. In its aspiration and declarations, the regional constitution is very identical to the federal constitution. Similar to the federal constitution, the very first words of the preamble of the southern regional constitution start with: ‘We, the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples’, in the same way as the preamble of the federal constitution which states: ‘We, the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia’. The emphasis on ‘nations, nationalities and peoples’ in both constitutions entail that the concept of the sovereignty or will of the people is reduced to the sovereignty or will of the ethnic communities which are provided by the constitutional right to form their ‘own’ self-administrative entity with the power to issue laws and to determine its advancement.

The 2001-revised constitution attempted to correct some of the flaws in the 1995 constitution. First, according to the 1995 SNNP regional state constitution, three-fourth majority vote of the state council is needed to amend the constitution, but in the 2001-revised constitution, amendments can only take place ‘when the State council and Council of Nationalities, in a joint session, approve a proposed amendment by a two-thirds majority vote; and when two-thirds of the Councils of Zonals and Special Weredas approve the proposed amendment by a majority votes’ (Article 125, the SNNP Constitution 2001). This shows that in the 2001-revised constitution an attempt was made at least at the theoretical level to give a greater power to the constituting diverse ethnic communities in amending the constitution. In the 2001-revised constitution the power of constitutional interpretation is vested on the Council of Nationalities. The Council of Constitutional Inquiry, organized by the Council of Nationalities, is responsible for investigating constitutional disputes and making recommendations regarding the need for constitutional interpretation.

Second, in the constitution of 1995, there is a higher overlap between the legislative and executive bodies of the regional government due to the fact that it assigned a responsibility to the regional president for presiding over the state legislative council as its speaker and thus made the

regional president simultaneously a head of the executive and legislative branches. But the 2001 constitution abandoned this overlapping power of the chief executive by establishing separate speakers for the state council and the council of nationalities.

Nonetheless, as it was similar to the process in the federal constitution, the Southern region's constitution was drafted, adopted and revised in a process overwhelmingly controlled and dominated by the ruling regional party, the South Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Front (SEPDP) which is a key ally and member of the EPRDF that controlled the federal government. In fact, the SEPDP<sup>45</sup> was established by the EPRDF in 1992 to represent the Southern Ethiopian people in the TPLF's attempt to extend its authority upon the diverse ethnic communities in southern Ethiopia.

## **6.4 Regional legislative, executive and judicial Structures**

### **6.4.1 A Regional Legislative Body**

The 2001 Regional Constitution declares that the regional state's legislative body shall have two councils: the State Council and the Council of Nationalities. Prior to 2001, the state legislative body had only one chamber, i.e., the State Council but with the revision of the constitution in 2001, the second chamber, the Council of Nationalities was established in order to cope with the challenges and demands arising out of the immense heterogeneity of the regional state. The State council (or the regional parliament) is vested with the highest regional political power (Article 46, SNNP Constitution 2001). The constitution stipulates that the people shall directly elect members of the state council for five years period according to a plurality electoral system and the constitutional pledges to give due consideration for the interests of minority nationalities and peoples in the region. Some of the key powers and functions of the State Council include issuing different laws and approving social and economic programmes; establishing additional administrative hierarchies or self-administering areas; electing the regional president and approve the appointment of the members of the regional executive council, the President and

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<sup>45</sup> SEPDP was reorganised in September 2003 by dissolving its 20 constituting ethnic organisations and merging their members into one single organisation called SEPDM (South Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Movement).



Vice-President of the State Supreme Court, the Auditor and Vice Auditor General; establishing security and police force and approving the state budget (Article 51, Regional Constitution). Since the council meets only twice a year, most tasks of the council are done through various committees. Members of the state council receive no salary from their position in the council as such, but get salary for their appointment or employment in various regional state's offices at regional, zonal and wereda levels. Besides, many members of the regional council are also simultaneously serving in zonal or wereda councils.

Representation in the council is based on the number of electoral districts in each zonal or special wereda constituencies, but minority ethnic communities are likewise represented. Each electoral district has a 100,000 population which elects three representatives for the regional council; the minority ethnic groups with a population of less than 100,000 also elects three representative each. Based on the 1994 population census, there are only 16 ethnic groups with a population of more than 100,000 and the rest, about 50 ethnic groups, each have lesser population and many even below 10,000 populations. This skewed population size affects voting procedures and powers in the council<sup>46</sup>. The impact could be very high because of the existence of too many minority ethnic groups that can influence the decision making process by curtailing the rights of majority ethnic groups. Divide and rule and mischievous politics of groups also complicate the matter further. Groups in the regional as well as the federal governments could easily manipulate the slot to promote their sectional interests.

The second chamber, the Council of Nationalities was established in February 2003 by elected representatives from zonal, special wereda or woreda council members of the respective ethnic groups. Every ethno-linguistic group<sup>47</sup> is represented at least by one member and those ethnic

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<sup>46</sup> For instance, the major five ethnic groups that account for about 52 percent of the regional population control only 30 percent of the seats in the regional council, while 44 minority ethnic groups that account for about 20 percent of the regional population control 40 percent of the seats in the council. An informant from Sidama explained that, for instance Mossiya ethnic group has less than 10,000 populations and has three representatives or one representative for 3000 people, whereas Sidama with 1.9 million people has 57 representatives or one representative for 33, 000 people, which is almost 10 times under represented (A member of the Sidama zonal legislative (also member of the ruling party), Interviewee 30, 2002: 18).

<sup>47</sup> Official list of registered ethnic groups vary from source to sources, for example in House of Federation only 46 ethnic groups were listed; in the report of the regional planning bureau the figure was 32 and in Walta Information report, February 26, 2003 (WIC) speaking at the founding conference in Awassa in February 26, 2003, Hailemariam

groups with more than a million populations are granted a right to send one additional member for each one million of their additional population (Article 58, SNNP Constitution 2001).

Major power and function of the Council of Nationalities include the power to interpret the regional constitution; to organize the regional Constitutional Inquiry Council; to decide on issues relating nations', nationalities' or peoples' right to Zone, Special *Wereda* and *Wereda* administration according to the state constitution; to find solutions to disputes or misunderstandings that may arise between administrative hierarchies; to create favourable conditions for the study of the history, culture and languages of the nationalities and to approve (or reject) the regional constitutional amendment by a two-thirds majority vote. It has also a responsibility to promote and consolidate the unity and equality of the peoples of the region, based on their mutual consent. This duty is more of a kind of advocacy than arbitration, it could be very challenging for it to give a fair judgment on demands of ethnic communities to establish their own self-administration units as one of its major tasks is to promote unity, rather than separation.

#### **6.4.2 The regional executive body**

In accordance with article 64 of the regional constitution, 'the highest executive power of the regional state is vested in the regional president and the executive council'. The regional president is a chief executive of the regional state and thus serves as the head of the executive council, which is composed of the president, vice-president and head of bureaus. The regional president is elected by a majority vote (a majority party or parties) in the state council or the regional state legislative body.

Some of the major power and functions of the regional president include:

- Leading, coordinating and representing the regional executive council.

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Desalegn President of SNNP region, said that the council will be comprised of 68 members from 68 nationalities in the State.

- Selecting nominees for the post of the Vice-President of the regional state and head of various bureaus for the approval of the State council.
- Selecting nominees for the post of the President and Vice-President of the State's Supreme Court, the Auditor General and Vice-Auditor General for the approval of the State Council.
- Direct and control the state's security police forces.
- Direct, coordinate and control administrative hierarchies in zonal, special wereda, and wereda structures.

The regional president is responsible for selecting the nominees for positions of the executive council that require the approval of the state council. Since the president is drawn from the majority party or parties in the council, there is always a higher probability that his nominees could get immediate approval from the state council. This pattern can make the power of the regional president very dominant and overbearing. The constitution also affirms the concentration of the regional executive power in the hands of the regional state president as it proclaims that the executive council shall be accountable to the chief executive while its accountability to the state council is only related to the decision it makes (Article 65, SNNP Constitution 2001).

The regional executive council (or regional cabinet) is composed of the regional president, vice president and heads of various bureaus (or regional ministries) of the regional government who are nominated by the regional president and approved by the state council. No written rules or procedures exist to determine ethnic composition of the regional executive body; however it is tacitly agreed that it must reflect the diverse ethnic communities constituting the regional state. Merit and loyalty are highly considered, but merit without loyalty to the party is not acceptable, loyalty to the ruling group is indispensable to serve in the regional cabinet (A regional council member from Sidama, Interviewee 23, 2002: 02). According to an informant the executive positions are very alluring for the ethnic elites as well as the ethnic communities, people ask 'who is in office from my ethnic community', and they are keen to see their kith and kin in bureaucrat positions and also prefer to approach them for whatever reasons (An ex-official of the regional government, Interviewee 36, 2002: 32).

Major powers and functions of the executive council include implementation of laws and decision issued by the State Council and Federal government, issuing directives, preparing the regional budget submitted to the state council for approval, draft laws, formulate economic and social policies and strategies of the state as well as declare state of emergency (Article 66, the SNNP Constitution 2001). The power of the regional executive council to implement laws and decisions issued by the federal government without consulting or demanding approval from the state legislative could circumvent the power of the regional legislative council, which is the highest legislative body in the regional state, thereby making it easier for the federal government to interfere in the regional legislative power. This would be harmful for federal project. The concentration of regional state's executive power in the hands of the regional state president and direct accountability of the regional executive body to the federal government may facilitate state-federal relations, but it could also turn the regional state into a puppet of the federal government. Nonetheless, the regional state legislative power is highly reduced due to the constitutionally legitimised power concentration of the regional president and the constitutionally guaranteed power of the regional executive council to directly implement laws and decision issued by the federal government without seeking the approval of the regional legislative council. This could make the regional government instrumental or vulnerable to the interests of the federal government.

#### **6.4.3 The regional judicial power**

The regional constitution proclaims in Article 74 and 75 that the judicial power in the State is exclusively vested in the courts. The regional justice system is organized into a three-tier judicial structure that comprises the State Supreme Court, High Court, and Wereda court. This means a Supreme Court at the regional government level, High courts at zonal and special wereda levels and wereda courts at wereda level. The highest and final judicial authority over State matters is vested in the State Supreme Court and the First Instance Judicial Authority of the State is vested in the Wereda Court. The State Supreme Court is responsible for the preparation and implementation (upon approval by the State Council) of the administrative budget of courts in the regional state. The State Supreme Court has likewise power of cassation over any final court decision on State matters which contains a basic error of law, but its decision on federal matters are appealable to the Federal Supreme Court (Article 75).

With regard to the appointment of judges, the President and Vice-President of the State Supreme court are appointed by the state legislative upon recommendations by the president of the regional state. The state's legislative council, upon a recommendation by the regional state Judicial Administrative Council and advice from the Zonal and Wereda Administrative Councils and the Federal Judicial Administrative Council, appoints other judges of the high courts and wereda courts. Although the advice required from the federal judicial institution could help to maintain national standards and professional quality, it could also facilitate the intrusion of the federal government into the affairs of the regional state judicial authorities. As discussed (above in Chapter 4) the Federal Judicial Administrative Council is highly exposed to manipulations and influences of the federal executive body, particularly the prime minister. Under the circumstances, the state judicial power can also be exposed to similar pressures and interferences by the federal government's executive authority.

The State's Judicial Administrative Council is established by the majority of judges working in the regional state and the president of the State Supreme Court serves as its leader. It is responsible for determining codes of professional conduct and discipline as well as transfer of judges of any courts in the regional state (Article 77). At this level also, since the regional president has a significant influence on the appointment of the President of the State Supreme Court, it is evident that the significant executive's influence and control of the judicial operation deprives its independence and thus hinders the highly needed **separation of power** in the regional state.

Perhaps, because of budget constraint three important functions of the judicial authority, namely the Supreme Court President, the Chairman of the Judicial Administrative Council and a President of the Council of Constitutional Inquiry are given to a single individual that is very close and accountable to the regional President. The pattern is similar and even worse in the federal government where the Supreme Court President, the Chairman of the Judicial Administrative Council, the President of the Council of Constitutional Inquiry and the President of the National Election Board are concentrated on a single individual favoured by and allied to the prime minister, who is the chief executive of the federal government. It is evident that the

regional states judicial power is centralized and concentrated at the regional government level at the expense of the zonal and wereda structures due to the multitude of judicial and administrative power of the state's Supreme Court. The Supreme Court is acting as the highest and final judicial authority in the regional state with a power of cassation; it has authority in the appointment of regional judges and in preparation of administrative budget of courts in the region.

## 6.5 Zonal or Special Wereda administrative structures

Administratively, the region is divided into 13 zones, 8 special *woredas*, 104 *woredas*, and 3772 *kebeles*, (initially it had 9 zones, 5 special weredas 96 weredas)<sup>48</sup>. The Zonal or Special Wereda structures are established hierarchically next to the regional government and have their own legislative (zonal or special wereda councils), executive (zonal or wereda administrative councils) and judiciary organs (higher courts). The intention had been that ethno-linguistic identity should be used as a base in fixing the boundaries of zonal and special wereda administrations (BoPED 1998). However, except for the 12 ethnic communities<sup>49</sup> most of the ethnic communities (about 75 percent) are constituted into multi-ethnic administrative constituencies.

A special wereda structure is designed for small ethnic groups, which are too small to establish a zonal administration, but concentrated in a specific territory that can have 'political significance' to the establishment of their own self-administrative constituency. The special wereda structure has a similar constitutional and hierarchical status like the zonal structures; however it usually has a smaller population. From the total of about 50 small ethnic groups only 8 small ethnic

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<sup>48</sup> More zonal, special wereda or wereda administrations mean more budgets for administration or bureaucratic purposes, the desire is to have less of them, but due to the discourse (and policy) of ethnic rights for self-administration, there has always been a demand for separate or additional administrative structures.

<sup>49</sup> These 12 single-ethnic constituencies are Sidama, Wolaita, Hadiya, Keffa, Siltie, Gedeo, Dawro, Alaba, Amaro, Yem, Konta, Basketo, but still in these constituencies 10 to 20 percent of their populations consist of people from other ethnic communities.

groups<sup>50</sup> are granted a right to establish their ethnic constituency that could allow them to exercise self-administration.

The zonal or special wereda councils are the highest political authority within the zonal or special wereda structures but without overriding the power of the regional state council, which has the highest political authority in the regional state. The zonal or special wereda people elect directly members of the councils and the political party or parties that have the greatest numbers of seats in the Council. The council must have at least two sessions annually. It is assumed that the speaker and vice-speaker of the council represent the council in day-to-day manner in order to check and balance the executive power. But what is actually taking place is that the speakers work in collaboration with the zonal or special wereda executives by drastically reducing the separation of power at zonal or special wereda level.

According to the SNNP constitution, some of the major powers and functions of the councils include determination of the working language; protection of the rights of nationalities to speak, write and develop their languages, and preserve their history; approving of the appointment of the members of Zonal or Special Wereda Administrative Councils and choosing Presidents and Vice-Presidents of High and Wereda Courts, upon recommendation by Chief Administrator from among judges of respective courts (Article 81).

The executive power of the zonal or special wereda structure is vested on the administrative council, which consist of a chief administrator (the zonal leader), deputy chief administrator, and heads of the various government departments at zonal or special wereda level. The chief administrator, who is elected upon recommendation by the political party with the greatest number of seats in the administrative council, has more significant power than the administrative council and is accountable to zonal or special wereda legislative council and the regional president. He has a responsibility of directing the administrative council, nominating its members, ensuring the proper implementation of the State and Federal constitutions, policies,

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<sup>50</sup> The four ethnic groups: Konta, Konso, Alaba, Amro (Koyra) have a little more than 100, 000 populations, Gidole (Derashe), Yem has a little above 50,000 and Basketo and Burji have less than 50, 000 populations. But there are many groups which have the same level of population like Meienit, Mocha Malie Mareko, but did not get the opportunity for special wereda status. Since there are no clear objective criteria, the demand may arise in the future.

laws, directing and controlling the security and police forces, selecting nominees of the High and Wereda Courts from among judges, and other similar duties (Article 87).

Although the zonal or special wereda administrative unit in the SNNP regional state is supposed to be a sort of self-administrative political space for ethnic groups, the constitutional provision in article 87 stipulates that the chief administrator of the zonal or special wereda administration is also accountable to the regional president. This direct power of the regional president certainly limits the power and autonomy of the zonal or special wereda administration that is designed to guarantee ethnic autonomy and self-administration in accordance with the key promise as well as the rationale behind the ethnic federal arrangement in Ethiopia. The speakers of zonal or special wereda council in the legislative branch and the chairman of zonal or special wereda administration council in the executive branch can apparently institute a separation of power between the executive and legislative bodies. However, the chief executive who controls the financial, security and other key state offices, always has a tendency to overrun and dictate. In addition, the speakers can allay the pull of the executive and can easily join the network of power in the local areas. Thus, the administrative structure simply facilitates the imposition of tyranny through conscription of the local elites in to the network of the ruling group.

Furthermore, the judicial power of the zonal or special wereda structure is almost non-existent, as its authority is limited in selecting the President and Vice-President of the Higher Courts from among the judges appointed by the regional government. The independence of the judiciary is impeded due to the fact that the executive branches have a vital power to influence the selection of the President and Vice-President of the Higher Court. The judiciary branch at all levels has become subordinated to either the executive or the legislative branch. The pattern is similar at the federal government level as well. In addition, since members of the regional state council are working at the same time in zonal and wereda councils and are also employed in various administrative positions in the regional, zonal and wereda state structures, it impedes the existence of a separation of power among the various governance structures and state-organs. Moreover, the zonal administration has also a direct control over the wereda administrations in



budget allocation<sup>51</sup> and appointment of the public officials (A wereda administrator, Interviewee 41, 2002: 47).

In the SNNP regional state, it is evident that the ruling party the SEPDF/EPRDF exclusively controls all political and administrative spaces in the regional state in accordance with the EPRDF's political ideology of 'revolutionary democracy' that stresses centralization of party structures and governance at the same command and hierarchy. Opposition groups are allowed to operate just to make a visibility for multiparty politics at the election time, but without getting any crucial role in the executive, legislative or judicial function of the regional state at all levels of governance. In May 2000 election, for example, the opposition party the Southern coalition led by Dr. Beyene Petros managed to win in a zonal administration and secured some seats at the regional as well as federal parliament<sup>52</sup>. However, its victory caused much punishment to the zonal population like dozens of killing, thousands detention and imprisonment, denying fair budget allocation and other grave human rights abuses (A member of the federal legislative from the opposition party, Interviewee 43, 2002: 50; Pausewang and Aalen 2002: 223).

Opposition groups like the Sidama liberation movement (SLM) are allowed to open an office in Awassa town but with a restricted right to campaign and operate in the rural areas; their operation is highly controlled and interfered (A member of the opposition party, Interviewee 32, 2002: 21). The people's support for the opposition groups was not tolerated by the regional government, as areas that voted for the opposition such as, in Hadiya zone there were killings, imprisonment and vengeance measures of the regional government (A development agent, Interviewee 22, 2002: 01; Tronvoll 2002: 172)

Generally, the participations of the people in the 1995 and 2001 elections were very poor, the ruling party's nominees at all levels dominated the elections and the people had no adequate knowledge regarding the background and history of the individuals they voted for. No frequent

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<sup>51</sup> Since 2003 wereda budget was allocated in block grant to wereda administration by the regional government, but in SNNP regional state, zonal administration are considered as an ethnic administrative constituency therefore they still have tremendous power over wereda administrations structured at a lower hierarchy within the zonal constituencies.

<sup>52</sup> In 2000 election, the opposition groups in Southern regional state has won 21 seats in the state council which has 346 seats and less than 10 seats in the national parliament.

discussions and contact with candidates was made; people were not aware of what the officials were actually doing (A leader of Eder, Interviewee 28, 2002: 12). The ideology in the SNNP is that, according to the regional state official, a centralized leadership and vanguard party is very essential in transforming the lives of the people of the regional state as the SEPDEF/EPRDF is highly committed to bring socio-economic transformation in the region, 'thus to perform the task, it has to be the dominant political force and the leader of the regional state' (A member of the regional executive, Interviewee 37, 2002: 38).

## **6.6 Financial capacity and autonomy of the SNNP regional state**

SNNP regional state gets a large amount of financial transfer or subsidy from the federal government. For instance in 2001/02, from the total regional state budget of 978 million birr, 82 percent of the fund was covered through the federal transfer (BoPED 2002: 49). Sixty-two percent of the amount was allocated to cover recurrent budget and the rest for capital budget. The regional government alone appropriated 26 percent of the federal subsidy and distributed the rest 74 percent to zonal and special wereda administrative units. From the total regional state's capital budget in 2001/02, which is about 370 million birr (38 percent of the total budget) almost 81 percent was covered through external loan (34%) and aid (47%); only 19 percent of the capital budget was covered through domestic financing sources.

### **6.6.1 Budget subsidy distribution and the problems**

The subsidy from the federal government to the regional government is distributed to the 21 ethnically delimited administrative units (13 zones and eight special weredas), with the aim of allowing some sort of self-administration for the diverse ethnic groupings constituting the regional state. As a result, budget allocation to each zone or special wereda administration is viewed in terms of resource distribution among the ethnic communities in the regional state. Thus to reduce tensions and damaging competition for financial resources, a subsidy allocation formula is prepared in order to make discernible and fair budget allocations. Initially, in 1994/95 fiscal year, a grant allocation formula for capital expenditures was designed on the basis of five indexes: population 30%, development level index 25%, income generation effort 20%, capital expenditure in the previous year 15% and area size 10%. For recurrent expenditures the

allocation was based on administrative structures and own revenues of the regional states (World Bank 2000: 29). In 1995/96 fiscal year, the overall budget allocation formula was prepared on the basis of three major indexes, namely size of population, level of development and internal revenue generation effort. Size of population index is allotted the largest portion with 60%, and the level of development and internal revenue generation indexes are allocated 25% and 15% respectively.

The 1994 population census result has been used to determine the size of the population of each zone or special wereda administrative territory, but some ethnic groups claimed that errors were made in the census that made their number less than what they found out in other survey<sup>53</sup>. The level of development index includes indicators such as education services, health services, safe drinking supply, road network, and electricity coverage and telephone service. The internal revenue generation capacity index is based on the amount of revenue and tax collection of the zone or special wereda administration. This indicator is included in order to encourage internal revenue generation capacities (BoPED 2002: 8). In 1996/97, a revision was made to reduce the eight indicators to five indicators in order to calculate the level of development index. The five indicators include the number of health clinics, primary schools, telephone lines, electricity consumption and road lengths. Nomadic people are given a special treatment where 1% of the budget has been allocated to them in addition to their share (A civil servant, Interviewee 24, 2002: 06). In 2002 a revision was made to allocate 55 percent for population size, 30% for development level and 15% for revenue capacity, but the regional council approved the formula despite a significant opposition<sup>54</sup> from members from the majority ethnic groups (A regional council member from Sidama, Interviewee 23, 2002: 4).

The SNNP regional state's financial framework is characterized by a high dependency on the federal funding (85 per cent), high subsidy spending at the regional government level, high (81 percent) external assistance in capital budget allocation, and very low internal revenue share in overall regional as well as zonal and special wereda units budget. The internal revenue

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<sup>53</sup> For instance, Sidama officials claimed that the polio survey afterwards has shown higher number than the census figure, (A member of the Sidama zonal legislative (also member of the ruling party), Interviewee 30, 2002: 13),

<sup>54</sup> According to a different informant that from 346 total council members, 80 members mostly from Sidama, Wolaita and Guraghe ethnic groups voted against the new formula.

generating capacity was less than 35 percent of the total budget in all of the 21 administrative constituencies. These certainly make the regional government highly vulnerable to the federal intervention and control.

Table 6.2 Budget subsidy distributions in the SNNP, 2000

Zone or Special Wereda	Share of regional population Percentage	Share of Budget Subsidy Percentage	Share of internal revenue from total budget Percentage
1. Sidama	19.71	16.74	24
2. Wolaita	11.24	10.00	17
3. Gurage	10.90	10.54	30
4. Gamogoffa	10.41	11.83	17
5. Hadiya	9.23	7.58	21
6. Keffa	5.59	7.26	17
7. Silte	5.55	5.05	21
8. Gedeo	5.44	5.82	34
9. Kembata Timbaro	5.21	4.76	21
10. Bench Majji	3.27	4.21	23
11. Debub (South) Omo	3.16	3.58	17
12. Dawro	2.63	3.54	13
13. Shaka	1.27	1.46	35
14. Konso Special Wereda	1.52	1.36	13
15. Alaba Special Wereda	1.24	1.01	29
16. Amaro Special Wereda	0.95	1.19	15
17. Derashe Special Wereda	0.87	0.89	16
18. Yem Special Wereda	0.62	0.92	14
19. Konta Special Wereda	0.50	1.00	13
20. Burji Special Wereda	0.37	0.54	16
21. Basketo Special Wereda	0.32	0.62	14
Total	100	100	18 (the Regional state)
Regional government alone		26	3
Zones and Special Weredas combined		74	22 (average)

Source: Bureau of Planning and Economic Development 2002. 'Zones, Special Weredas and Weredas Budget distribution formula'

Moreover, the subsidy formula is surrounded by many problems. Firstly, allocating the highest amount (60 percent) to the population index for calculating the budget subsidy formula could be inimical to demographic or population policy that stresses the need of controlling population explosion. Since the budget allocation procedure magnifies the luring role of population size in securing more federal finance, it becomes very difficult to convince the ethnic elites to implement population control policies in their respective areas. Larger populations could be interpreted as a way of obtaining more money and power by the ethnic elites who control power and politics in their respective constituencies. Secondly, census results have become political as the elites are rejecting census figures that cannot fit with their assumptions or expectations. For instance, the Sidama politicians mentioned that the population of the Sidama zone was 4 million as it was reported in the census result for the polio vaccination in contrary to the 1994 census result of 2.4 million (A member of the Sidama zonal legislative and member of the ruling party, Interviewee 30, 2002: 13). Thirdly, the regional state's formula is similar to the federal budget subsidy procedure and computation. This is mainly due to a lack of expertise and adequate regional information to design appropriate formula reflecting the socio-economic conditions of the regional state (BoPED 2002: 1). Fourthly, the internal revenue generation index can create a dilemma by favouring the privileged and wealthy areas because those with better qualified manpower and more resources could benefit more than those with shortage of experts and resources that could be marginalized further. Lastly, the earlier apparent cooperative attitude among the elites of the various ethnic groups was turned into hostilities and harmful competition for budget allocations. This was especially, related to the fact that the Sidama and Wolaita zones are getting relatively large budget, and many believed that this happened because that the SNNP leadership was dominated by these two groups (An ex-official of the regional government, Interviewee 36, 2002: 32).

## **6.7 The right to self-determination in practice in the SNNP**

### **6.7.1 Impracticality of an ethnically homogeneous territory**

The ethnic federal arrangement in Ethiopia presupposes and projects an ethnically homogeneous territorial space, which may have been influenced by the reality of the Tigray province and the perception of the TPLF leadership. In the SNNP regional state which is home to about 60 officially registered ethnic groups, an attempt has been made to create ethnically delimited administrative structures at zonal and wereda levels, despite the rare existence of ethnically homogeneous zonal or wereda territories. In 2002, there were about 13 zonal and 8 special Wereda administrative structures in which the attempt was made to give about 21 ethnic groups their own ethnically delimited self-administration status at zonal or special wereda structures (see the list in Table 6.3). But in fact, the greater majority, two-third of the ethnic groups share the same zonal or wereda administrations with other ethnic groups without having been accorded their own self-administration status, which is promised in the federal and regional constitutions. Although many of the ethnic groups have majority in their respective administrative zone, the large minority population resides in each zone as well.

As a result, even most of these 21 zonal and special wereda ethnic administrative units are not structured in the way to exercise local autonomy or ethnic self-administration, as the regional constitution itself clearly declares in Article 80 that ‘the Zone and Special Wereda administration is an administrative hierarchy next to the region’ which exercises its political power without defying the State Council that is the highest political power in the regional state (Article 51 (2), The Regional constitution, 2001). In some multi-ethnic zones like the Kembata Alaba and Timbaro (K.A.T) minority ethnic groups as the Alaba have felt that they were unfairly represented in political structures and resource allocation<sup>55</sup> and therefore granted a separate ethnic administrative constituency for their ethnic community (A member of the regional ruling party from Alaba, Interviewee 42, 2002: 49). Though the Alaba group was able to get its territorial administrative constituency, others like Gofa, Timbaro are denied such rights, as there

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<sup>55</sup> According to the informant the problems include bias in budget allocation to Kembata area, scholarship allocation favors students from Kembata group, Alaba wereda officials are accountable to zonal administration which was overwhelmingly controlled by the Kembata group, which is the dominant ethnic group in the zone.

is no clear rule or regulation in granting self-administration to some while in denying it to others. Such arbitrary and discriminatory treatment by the political system itself could breed resentment that easily could flare up into violence as occurred in North Omo, Benchi-Maji and Sheka zones<sup>56</sup>.

Further fragmentation as the result of the establishment of more administrative constituencies for each ethnic community is indisputably beyond the capacity of both the national and local economies to cover the cost of such structure. Administrative and bureaucratic costs would become a burden for the poor local communities and the already impoverished economies. In reality, the source of the problem is the arbitrary nature of ethnic restructuring in Ethiopia, particularly in SNNP region and the inconsistency in tackling the emerging problems. The ruling group in the federal as well as its allies in the regional government may be more interested in consolidation and integration, but their preferred implementation approaches seem to rely more on imposition and punitive measures. As such federal restructuring is a process of continuous negotiation and bargaining, as Elazar (1989) has argued forceful imposition is inimical to federal restructuring. Mechanisms and strategies can be designed through negotiation that could downgrade the attractiveness of self-administrative zonal or special wereda structures by drying up luring inducements for ethnic elites. The recent wereda decentralization programme can also be cited as an example<sup>57</sup>.

Furthermore, due to the fact that zonal and special wereda territories are based on ethnic criteria, there is high asymmetry in capacity, resource and population size of the different units. For instance, only four zonal administrations (the Sidama, Wolaita, Gurage and Gamogofa) represent more than 50 percent of the total population of the regional states, while the six smallest self-

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<sup>56</sup> The violence in North Omo zone in 2001 was attributable to dissatisfactions with the zonal administrative structure and resulted in splitting the zone into three zones and two special weredas. Violent conflicts occurred in 1991, 1993 and 2002 in Benchi-Maji zone due to the dissatisfaction of the Mejinger ethnic groups in zonal representation and resource distribution (A member of the regional ruling party from Keffa, Interviewee 39, 2002: 42).

<sup>57</sup> For instance since 2004 budget allocation is made directly for wereda structure by allocating block grants to wereda administration without any power to the zonal administration, though the change was made not as a result of local demand and negotiation, but it was imposed from above in line with the World Bank's decentralization programme.

administrative units of Basketo, Burji, Konta, Yem, Derashe and Amaro special weredas represent less than five percent of the regional population. In other words, while the largest four ethnic administrative constituencies together represent 52 percent of the regional population, the smaller five ethnic administrative constituencies together represent less than 5 percent of the regional population.

The other major problem is the selection of a working language, particularly in multi-ethnic zones. Although the constitution of the SNNP regional state proclaims that zonal and special wereda councils have the right and duty in determining the working language of their respective administrative unit and protecting the rights of nationalities in their respective territory to speak, write and develop their languages, in the majority of cases the ostentatious constitutional intention has remained theoretical. Only few zonal administrations like Gedeo, Hadiya, Kembata, Sidama and Wolaita zonal administrations have introduced their languages in their respective zones. Two major problems occurred in the language usage. Firstly, in multi-ethnic zonal administrations such as Guraghe, Gamogofa, Benchi Majji, Debube Omo, and Sheka zones it has become difficult to select any of the indigenous languages for administrative purpose or in elementary education programmes. Secondly, in the so-called ethnically homogenous zones/special weredas, despite the dominance of a single ethnic group and introduction of a single language in administration and elementary education, there are large communities who do not belong to the dominant ethnic group. In most cases the languages of the dominant ethnic groups are imposed on others in many of the administrative constituencies, and this has resulted in unending ethnic tensions and hostilities by generating harmful competition and sectarian goals. Finally, in almost all ethnically delimited zonal and wereda administrations, a considerable proportion of people, who do not belong to the dominant ethnic groups, are living in the areas for many generations, but they are disenfranchised due to an exclusive control of a dominant ethnic group in the constituencies. These disenfranchised people are not only those identified as coming from 'out of the region', (or 'settlers') but also it includes a sizeable population of the regional state who are coming from the adjacent territories due to a movement of people for generations. For instance, in Hadiya zone 20 per cent of the zonal populations are coming from the adjacent territories like from Siltie, Sodo Guraghe and Kembata, but since the zone is delimited as Hadiya ethnic group constituency, these people from the same regional state



are counted as ‘strangers’ or ‘alien’ and thus disenfranchised. In Kembata-Timbaro zone 20 percent, Benchi Majji 33 percent, Shaka zone 40 percent and Derashe special wereda 31 percent of population, coming from the same regional state are counted as outsiders. (See the ethnic configuration of each ethnically delimited territory: zones and some special weredas in Table 6.3). The discrimination is not only limited to depriving electoral rights, but it includes also denying access to fair judicial process, discrimination from employment and other similar prejudices (A leader of Eder, Interviewee 27, 2002:10)<sup>58</sup>. According to an informant that due to massive human rights abuse and poor governance, support for ethnic federalism has deteriorated, thus ‘it should be dismantled and replaced by governance structure that serves everybody with equality and justice’ (A leader of Eder, Interviewee 26, 2002: 09). In its rhetoric on group (ethnic) rights, ethnic restructuring has brought massive abuse of individual rights. Individuals have become ‘subjects’ of ethnic groups with reduced citizenship rights. Group’s rights in self-administration, language promotion and other rights are introduced without concern for the rights- both political and human rights- of an individual. Moreover, a numerical strength of an ethnic group in a given territory has been determinant in granting a separate administrative constituency, dominant political power and access to resource such as a subsidy distribution. The numerical strength yardstick would be counterproductive in making census results very controversial and alluring for ethnic cleansing and expulsion.

Table 6.3 Ethnic groups and their share of population within the 21 administrative structures

Zone or Special Wereda	Number of Population (2000)	Share of regional population	Major Ethnic groups and their share of zonal or special wereda population in percentage	Working and School language
1. Sidama	2,466,132	19.71%	Sidama 88%, Amhara 4%, Oromo 3%, Wolaita 2%, Siltie 1%, Others 2%	Sidama
2. Wolaita	1,406,450	11.24%	Wolaita 96%, Others 4%	Wolaita
3. Gurage	1,364,715	10.90%	Sebat Bet Guraghe 70%,	Amharic

<sup>58</sup> Many interviewed individuals from Wolaita, Kembata, Gurage and other Southern ethnic groups who lived fore generations in Awassa city complained that they faced various kinds of discrimination and treated as ‘strangers’ by the city administration because of their ethnic background. The trend is the same in many of the urban areas like Hosahena, Arba Minchi, *Shebedino*, *Wolaita sodo*, *Mizan Teferi*, *Teppi* and other towns thought the region wherein people live mixing together.

			Sodo Guraghe 14%, Mareko 3%, Amhara 3%, Others 10	
4. Gamo Goffa	1,302,408	10.41%	Gamo 60%, Gofa 21%, Others 19%,	Amharic
5. Hadiya	1,155,135	9.23%	Hadiya 78%, Silti 10%, Sodo Guraghe 2%, Amhara 2%, Kembata 2%, Others 6%	Hadiya
6. Keffa	699,759	5.59%	Keffa 71%, Amhara 7%, Oromo 4%, Others 18%	Amharic
7. Siltie	694,258	5.55%	Siltie 90%, Others 10%	Siltie
8. Gedeo	680,289	5.44%	Gedeo 81%, Oromo 8%, Amhara 4%, Sidama 1%, Siltie 3%, Others 4%	
9. Kembata Timbaro	651,625	5.21%	Kembata 65%, Timbaro 12, Siltie, 9%, Hadiya 6%, Others 7%	Kembata
10. Bench Majji	408,702	3.27%	Bench 42%, Meienit 15%, Keffa 7%, Amhara 6%, Diz 6%, Suri 5%, Others 15%	Amharic
11. Debub (South) Omo	395,417	3.16%	Ari 42%, Malie 13%, Hamer 12%, Dasenech 10%, Amhara 5%, Nyangatom 4%, Others 11%	Amharic
12. Dawro	329,663	2.63%	Dawro 92%, Others 8%	Amharic
13. Shaka	159,032	1.27%	Shaka 60%, Others 40%	
14. Konso Special Wereda	190,052	1.52%	Konso 87%, Gewada 9%, Amhara 1%, Oromo 1%, Burji 0.5%, Others 1%	Amharic
15. Alaba Special Wereda	155,718	1.24%	Alaba 75%, Others 15%,	Amharic
16. Amaro Special Wereda	118,571	0.95%	Koyra 98%, Mara 1%, Others 1%	Amharic
17. Derashe Special Wereda	108,422	0.87%	Gidole 58%, Gewada 19%, Mossiya 10%, Amhara 2%, Konso 2%, Others 6%	Amharic
18. Yem Special Wereda	78,213	0.62%	Yemsa 91%, Oromo 5%, Hadiya 1%, Others 3%	Amharic
19. Konta Special Wereda	63,101	0.50%	Konta 80%, Others 20%	Amharic
20. Burji Special Wereda	46,729	0.37	Burji 84%, Koyra 11%, Konso 1% Others 4%	Amharic
21. Basketo Special	40,609	0.32	Basketo 92%, Others 8%	Amharic

Wereda				
The Regional state	12.5 million		Sidama 18.2%, Wolaita 11.5%, Hadiya 8.2%, Sebat Bet Gurage 7.0%, Gamo 6.9%,	Amharic

Source: Bureau of Planning and Economy 2001, Zonal, Special Weredas and Weredas Budget allocation formula. (In Amharic: *Yezonoche, Lliyuweredawochena Weredawoche Budget Makefafiya Kemer*).

Moreover, due to a long process of inter-ethnic integration in southern Ethiopia and population movements for many generations from other parts of the country, people of mixed ethnic background are paramount residents of most of the towns in southern regional state. Immense difficulties have been created for the residents of many towns because of demarcating of these towns under a jurisdiction of a single ethnic administrative constituency or ‘ethnic homeland’. The political and human rights of this group of people have been drastically reduced in matters regarding political representation, language usage in office and elementary school, equal employment rights in public institutions and other similar rights<sup>59</sup>.

For example, the SNNP regional state’s capital, Awassa city has been inhabited by a multiethnic communities, however the Sidama ethnic group was responsible for administering the city from 1991 to 2002 while the Sidama people represent a minority of the city’s 69,000 populations. Because the city was under the jurisdiction of the Sidama zone until 2002, the city administration including kebele administrations were as a rule run by individuals from the Sidama ethnic group, thus Sidama language was a working language for administration. Since the majority population of the city are ethnically mixed and non-Sidama, the exclusive dominance of a single ethnic group (the Sidama group) resulted for immense problems of discrimination and abuse of the rights of the majority dwellers of the city who do not speak Sidama language. In employment, priority is given for individuals from Sidama ethnic group (A leader of Eder, Interviewee 26, 2002: 09). Although the city is a center and capital of the regional state, there was no fair or equal consideration for other Southern ethnic group: The Gurage, Wolaita, Kembata and others do not have the same right as the Sidama people in Awassa town; ‘they openly request us to

<sup>59</sup> For instance in Awassa town, a long time residents belongs to Kembata ethnic group, who is considered as belonging to one of the oppressed southern ethnic communities, complained that his brother was killed by an individual from Sidama ethnic group but it becomes difficult for him to pursue the case in zonal court because of the impartiality of the Sidama administrators for their kin (A leader of Eder, Interviewee 27, 2002: 10).

leave the town by saying: 'go to your area' (A leader of Eder, Interviewee 27, 2002: 10). However, the Sidama elite feels that principles of ethnic federalism and the Constitution grant them a right to use and promote their language, to have their own self-administrative constituency and promote the overall interests and benefit of the Sidama people (A leader of Eder, Interviewee 28, 2002: 12).

For the last ten years the residents of the town had passed their grievances and dissatisfaction on the administration of the city to the regional as well as federal governments, but they felt that a regional president, himself a Sidama, was not considerate to their demands. In its part the federal government was more concerned to strengthen its relationship with the regional government, which was its chief ally, rather than siding with the people (A leader of Eder, Interviewee 27, 2002: 10). However, after the removal of the regional president<sup>60</sup> the issue was decided by the state council in 2002 that the status of Awassa city to be an independent city accountable to the regional government which became effective in 2003. It is difficult to assume whether it is because of a concern for the grievance of the city's dwellers or a change of policy from the TPLF/EPRDF to shift its alliance from Sidama elites to Wolaita elites by favouring the ascendancy of Wolaita individuals to the top office of the regional government. It can also be assumed that TPLF/EPRDF, which is, worried about the demand of the Sidama elites for separate regional state and had got a good opportunity to punish the Sidama elite<sup>61</sup> in deflating their ambition by reducing their leading role in the regional government and drastically narrowing the power base of their ethnic constituency. Nevertheless, the action of EPRDF was met with a violent resistance that led to the massacre of civilians by the government's security forces after the Sidama people's demonstration in Awassa town in May 2002. The Sidama elites believe that Awassa city is within the Sidama constituency and therefore it is under the right of Sidama people to decide the status of the city (A member of the Sidama zonal legislative and member of the ruling party, Interviewee 30, 2002: 16). An elder also claimed that 'other

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<sup>60</sup> The President, Abate Kisho was arrested in 2001 with alleged in corruption charges, but many believed that the true motive was connected to a split in TPLF in which the ex-president was close ally of the dissidents within the TPLF. Abate Kisho was promoted by EPRDF to a position of a regional president in 1991 from a position of a very junior teacher of an elementary school).

<sup>61</sup> In 1996 there was a purge of Sidama political elites such as Tesfaye Fuchala, Vice Minister of Culture and Sport Ministry

nationalities came to our land, and we were kind to accept them, but now they wanted us to leave our land, where shall we go, how on earth should our sons leave Awassa. No, we will not' (An elder from Sidama, Interviewee 35, 2002: 29).

Despite the resistance, in May 2003 Awassa became an independent city directly accountable to the regional government. In this particular case, the Sidama elites were demanding for broaden their rights like to become a regional state, but in contrast, the regional government headed by the EPRDF wants to reduce the existing right. This appears like not a compromise, but a punishment. Close negotiation and bargaining could have produced a win-win situation, instead of the forceful imposition of rules that reduces the privilege and benefits of the Sidama administration that produced fierce resistance. For instance, one win-win solution could be that Awassa city can get a city administration from the city dwellers, but under the jurisdiction of the Sidama zone by recognising the city is territorially located within the Sidama consistency, but due to its non-Sidama majority, it has to get a special protection from the regional government.

The Awassa town has an ethno-symbolic and economic benefit for the Sidama elite, but the rights and interests of the non-Sidama residents in the city have also been severely curtailed and abused for the last ten years by the Sidama political leadership who controlled the city administration. However, the action taken by the ruling EPRDF government was not made in consistent with the general pattern, as abuses of town residents' are common in most of the urban areas throughout the country. Therefore, selective and inconsistent impositions of rules and producers in Sidama area, which may be motivated by punitive measures, could easily trigger resentment and opposition. It is better to map out a countrywide strategy that can protect the right of the ethnically mixed urban dwellers whose rights have been massively violated by the leaders of the ethnic constituencies in most of the regions since 1991. Moreover, the Sidama group demand for a regional autonomy to establish their own regional state may be better tamed by allowing Awassa to remain under Sidama zone jurisdiction but with the right of the Awassa city dwellers to run the city administration with a rule of law. But the path selected by EPRDF to silence and penalise the demand was not a viable option that can create trust and cooperation in the regional state.

### **6.7.2 A demand to secede from the regional state**

In Sidama zone, the Sidama political elites argue that there is inconsistency in the ethnic federal project in Ethiopia regional state status was granted to an ethnic group with a 20,000 population like the Harari people, whereas it refused the same status for ethnic groups with 2 million people like the Sidama people. Thus the project is seen as discriminatory and suppressive (A regional council member from Sidama, Interviewee 23, 2002: 4). The argument is also made that the Sidama area has better resources than the Tigray region to finance its regional government budget (A leader of Eder, Interviewee 28, 2002: 12). The Sidama officials claim that the condensing of the earlier five regional states into a single regional state was unfair and a gross mistake which was effectuated without consulting the people of the region. It was imposed on them by the ruling group in the center, while they preferred the earlier arrangement which provided them a separate regional state with other three ethnic groups with whom they have close ties and better cooperation (A member of the Sidama zonal legislative and member of the ruling party, Interviewee 30, 2002: 13).

The Sidama council which is, constitutionally, the highest political authority of the Sidama zone decided in 2002 to establish a self-governing regional state for the Sidama people, but the demand was coercively and quickly rejected by the regional government as well as by the federal government (A member of the Sidama zonal legislative and member of the ruling party, Interviewee 30, 2002: 14). The Sidama elite argues that the ruling party, the EPRDF, which had promised the right for self-administration in the constitution, completely rejected their constitutional right. Instead the ruling party has waged an intimidating propaganda campaign against the Sidama political elite by portraying them as narrow nationalists<sup>62</sup>.

The Sidama people's resentment was manifested in a demonstration in May 2002 which turned into violence by taking the lives of 30 to 40 civilians as a result of excessive force by the federal troops. In the past 12 years, nine chief administrators were dismissed or replaced in the Sidama zonal administration, reflecting the political trouble in the zone. Actually the constitution accords

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<sup>62</sup> EPRDF dismissed many Sidama officials like Tesfaye Fuchale, Vice Minister of Culture and Sport and others who were member of SPDO/EPRDF in 1996 accusing them of narrowness, and in August 2002 arresting of 10 Sidama officials, who were member of SPDO/EPRDF, accusing them of instigating violence in Awassa.

the right to self-determination including secession to ethnic groups. Therefore the Sidama people have legality on their side to demand self-administration, but because of fear of fragmentation, the ruling group in the regional and federal governments are reluctant and have used coercion against the Sidama elite and people to quell the challenge. The Sidama Liberation Front (SLM), which was established in 1970s to struggle for a self-determination of the Sidama people, is demanding for self-determination including secession for the Sidama people and has created an alliance with the OLF to engage in armed struggle against the EPRDF (A member of the opposition party, Interviewee 32, 2002: 21). Allowing the Sidama people to secede from the regional state could endanger the entire structure by triggering other demands for self-administration in the regional state as well as in other multi-ethnic regions like the Benishangul-Gumuz and Gambella in which the respective constituted ethnic groups are still sceptical to share the same regional state with the other ethnic groups in their respective region. In 2006, after the May 2005 election, it seems that the TPLF/EPRDF has provided some concession to the Sidama political elite, such as appointing a Sidama individual as a president of the SNNP and other key appointments in the federal and regional governments in order to dissuade the Sidama political elite from pursuing the self-government agenda. The TPLF/EPRDF's reward tactic may satisfy the political elite, but may not convince the majority of the Sidama elite and the people.

Similarly, in the Sheka zone, the minority Mejinger community demanded to be included in the Gambella regional state in order to be re-united with the Mejinger ethnic group of that state in order to form the greater Mejinger community, however when their demand was rejected, the resentment manifested itself in violence. According to the regional official, the demand and the violence was instigated by power greedy Mejinger elites and their political party, while the bulk of the community did not know and care in which regional state or zonal administration they belonged (A regional council member from Sidama, Interviewee 23, 2002: 3).

In fact, the ethnic federal restructuring of the SNNP regional state has neither taken into consideration for self-administration of every ethnic community nor the human and political rights of individuals regardless of their ethnic background. Neither group rights, nor individual rights are respected in fair and satisfactory manner; the outcome has been the opposite of the pronouncement, it has resulted in massive abuse and curtailment of individual rights by illusory

promise of protecting group rights. The emerging phenomenon is the ascendancy of officious ethnic elites who impose their authority in their respective ethnic community by securing support and protection from the ruling group at the regional as well as federal government levels. As a result, the pattern resembles a neo-patrimonial structure in which the ruling group at the central/federal level monopolizes both the rewards and compelling powers to subdue and/or persuade the ethnic elites at the regional and local levels to remain its loyal at the expense of the interest and demands of their respective ethnic communities.

It can be argued that such arrangement may be necessary to consolidate a federal structure in multi-ethnic societies like Ethiopia, which may have difficulties to satisfy all the demands that arise from the manifest immense diversity. However such argument could be convincing if the ruling group at the center/federal government level operates in a genuine coalition spirit of all ethnic groups with fair and impartial judgment. Contrary to this, the reality of Ethiopia's federal arrangement is characterized as a project of hegemonic ruling group at the center dominated by elites from the Tigray regional state, who are constantly perceived as favouring their region. In addition, the Tigrayan political elite is 'elected' and represents the Tigray region that is less than 10 percent of the total population of Ethiopia. They control key power positions in the federal government which is non-proportional to what they should be accredited if the principle of ethnic federal restructuring in Ethiopia was respected. The 1994 Constitution, which is the sole covenant of the federal bargain, declares that: 'We, the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia' strongly committed, in full and free exercise of our right to self-determination, to live together on the basis of equality with equal rights and powers, and fully cognizant that our common destiny can best be served by rectifying historically unjust relationships (FDRE Constitution 1994). Given this background, the hegemony of the federal government unduly and inaptly dominated by elites from a particular ethnic or regional group is counter-productive in nurturing trustworthy federal relations in multi-ethnic societies.

### **6.7.3. Problems associated with ethnic entitlement or ethnic preferences**

The intense heterogeneity of the SNNP has become a most formidable challenge to the constituting of viable regional and local administrative structures in spite of the fact that ethnic



federalism was introduced as a device to manage the extraordinary diversity in the construction of a viable state framework in what was described as ‘a museum of nationalities’ (Cerulli 1956) or ‘a prisoners of nationalities’ (Gellner 1983). The major predicament is due to widespread egoism on the part of elites at the federal, regional and local levels that has degraded the diversity into destructive competitions and conflicts. **Firstly**, the ethnic elites are exclusively focused on their group interests making negotiations and compromises very difficult. For instance, as mentioned by an informant, despite the fact that Awassa is a regional capital where every group agrees that the city needs improvement of services for common utilisation, when it comes to approving construction projects, many feel that the benefit goes to the Sidama ethnic group. As a result, the others are reluctant to support city improvement projects (A member of the regional ruling party from Kembata, Interviewee 38, 2002: 41). Secondly, expanded opportunities of appropriating state resources at the local and regional levels connected with ethnic restructuring have created opportunities for the ascendancy of new dominant ethnic elites. Particularly in multi-ethnic constituencies, elites from majority ethnic communities act in a way to suppress demands from minority ethnic groups from accessing to political power and resources<sup>63</sup>.

**Thirdly**, inter-ethnic elites competition for key posts of the regional government has grown into group competition; for instance, friction has emerged between the Sidama and Wolaita political elites for controlling of the presidential post of the regional government<sup>64</sup>. Since 2002, tension has been high between the ordinary Sidama and Wolaita people in Awassa city and even in rural areas, because the presidential post has been connected to ethno-symbolism. The Sidama political elites believe that, because of the size of their ethnic group that the regional presidential post should be preserved for their ethnic group (A leader of Eder, Interviewee 26, 2002: 9).

**Fourthly**, in many cases the demand for separate ethnic constituencies is initiated by ethnic elites who manipulated the communities by speaking their language and appealing for kin

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<sup>63</sup> For instance, in the Sidama zone the minority ethnic group, Hadicho people and in the Keffa zone, Menga people are suppressed by the majority Sidama and Kefa ethnic groups respectively.

<sup>64</sup> From 1991 to 2001, for ten years, Abate Kisho from the Sidam ethnic group occupied the post, after his imprisoning in 2001 connected to the split in TPLF, Desalegne Haile Mariam from Wolaita has taken the presidential post. According to an informant, the regional president, Desalegne Haile Maïam was not accepted by the Sidama elite (A development agent, Interviewee 22, 2002: 01).

solidarity. For instance, although the Sidama elite demands separate regional states, it is observed, according to the regional planning expert, the budget allocated for the Sidama zone was under utilised due to inefficiency and high corruption in the leadership (A civil servant, Interviewee 24, 2002: 6). Furthermore, separate administrative structures usually bring additional administrative costs that divert resources from the expansion of social services like education and health to the community. Even in cultural terms that the elites show great interest in promoting their ethnic language, the communities, although pleased by the promotion of their language, they are keen to have their children to learn the Amharic language as it can give them better prospects to find employment in other parts of the country (An elder from Sidama, Interviewee 35, 2002: 31). **Fifthly**, the promotion of ethnic or local language in administrative institutions may offer opportunities for the local elite to prevail over competitors or ‘outside’ experts for local offices by acquiring language proficiency advantage over those who do not speak local language. But language proficiency does not necessarily lead to acquiring professional competency or technical skill. Such scenario could be disadvantageous for the local community who would have been benefited from the professional contribution of the ‘outside’ experts.

**Sixthly**, ethnic entitlement has resulted in patron-client arrangement through cooption of local elites. Local ethnic elites function as agents of control for the central authority because of an expanded incentives system created by the state’s rewarding mechanism. Actually, very attractive financial incentives<sup>65</sup> particularly at the wereda level can buy loyalty and serve to turn local leaders into instruments of central control. Thus, ethnic federalism has opened possibilities for the local elites to reap benefits from the state’s rewarding capacity in resource and political power connected to their exclusive rights to occupy all regional, zonal and wereda administrative structures. Neither ethnic federalism nor the new ethnic constituencies have brought any major change to the lives of the majority of the local people; rather they changed the persona of local power holders by replacing ‘elites from the center’ with ‘elites from the local’, but both have been promoting the interests of power holders at the center. The former were evidently an extension of the central power in the local areas, whereas the latter are co-opted into the system

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<sup>65</sup> It is recommended that wereda administrators should get about 1200-1500 birr monthly salary which is 20 times greater than the national per capita and could be very higher from the local income standard

of 'the coalition of oppressed elites' (Vestal 1999). Consequently, the ascendancy of ethnic elites in state power and their access to state coffer and privileges are being equated with the satisfaction of ethnic communities' demands for recognition and self-administration. This facilitated an opportunity for the hegemony for the Tigrayan political elite or the TPLF that controls the state center. Ethnic federalism creates an advantage for the Tigrian political elites initially to get a genuine support in many of the Southern ethnic communities by their denunciation of the Amhara ruling group as brutal and chauvinistic toward the Southern ethnic communities. However this genuine support has quickly dissipated as the intention of the Tigrayan elites has become clear that their major motive was to become a hegemonic power through co-option and surrogate mechanisms that helps what John Abbinik (1998) called a 'Tigraynisation' of the regional power structures in Ethiopia. The TPLF is exploiting tensions among the ethnic groups for its self-serving interference and hegemonic ambitions. It exaggerates and fabricates past wounds to create ethnic mistrust and vengefulness.

## 6.8 Summary

Generally, in the SNNP regional state an ethnic entitlement for a self-governing territorial autonomy has resulted in accelerating more demands for separate regional state, zonal or special wereda administrative constituency. Many ethnic groups with a territorial concentration of their ethnic community demand separate administrative units, but only few are able to get a new self-administrative entity to appease their resentments. These are the Wolaita, Dawero, Sheka, Silte<sup>66</sup>, who got their zonal administration and the Alba who seceded from the K.A.T zone to form its own special wereda, and the Basketo was granted its own special wereda after dissolving of the North Omo zone following the bloody crisis in 2001. Many of the newly created self-administrative entities contain ethnic minorities whose autonomy and rights are restricted due to the new arrangement and therefore these minority groups are demanding for their own self-governing entities. However, the expansion of self-governing administrative structures require

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<sup>66</sup> Actually Siltie was not only established its own zonal administration, but it also decided in referendum to claim it is a non-Gurage ethnic group. Previously, the identity of Siltie people was identified as a sub-group of Gurage ethnic group and therefore Siltie people were provided a wereda administration within the Gurage zone. In referendum, however, the Siltie people decided that their ethnic identity is distinct from the Gurage ethnic group and recognised themselves as a separate ethnic group. Thus, granted their separate zonal administration.

additional resources for the extended bureaucracy which become a burden on the scarce regional resources that ought to be prioritised in order to address in tackling poverty and other precarious or emergency conditions of the people of the regional state. More administrative constituencies means more administration costs that could be disadvantageous for the ordinary people, because resources that could be used for providing social services would be spent on administration related expenses.

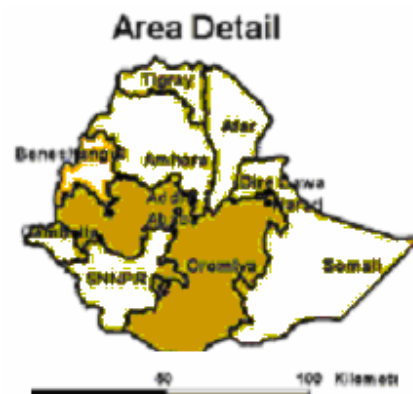
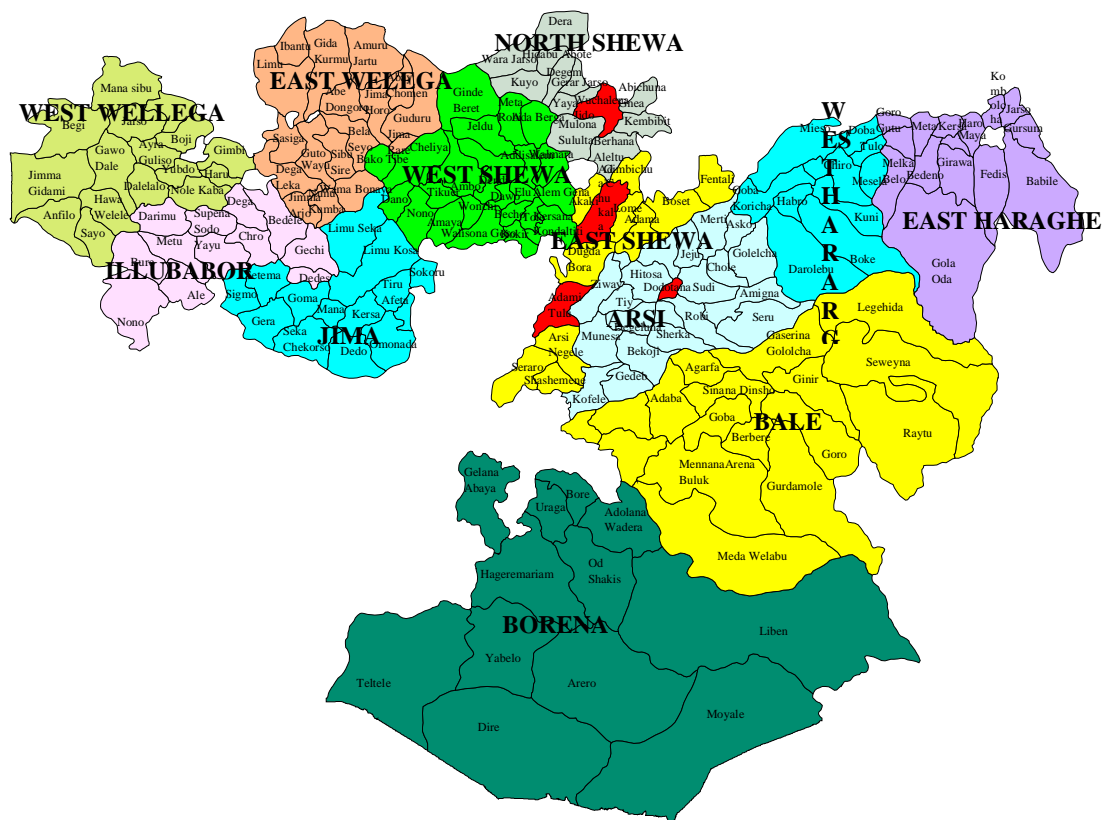
By hoping to discourage ethnocentric demands and divisions, the ruling party in the SNNP regional state, the Southern Ethiopia Peoples Democratic Front (SEPDP) has transformed itself in 2003 into a unified single party by dissolving the 20 ethnic-based political organizations and merging them into the new South Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement, (SEPDM). It was believed that the unification would discourage ethnocentric demands and competition by facilitating integration aiming at the creation of a single political space (A member of the regional executive, Interviewee 37, 2002: 38). But this merger is one more imposed project from the federal and regional government who hope to tackle the on-going ethnic tensions in the SNNP regional state. This may be a face saving strategy by the EPRDF in order to claim that its ethnic rights discourse is creating a voluntary 'unity in diversity'. However, many of the quick fix solutions that have been imposed by the federal as well as the regional governments without genuine consultation and discussion with the regional or local people have not convinced many of the ethnic communities and elites concerning the authenticity of the intention of the TPLF/EPRDF to respect ethnic rights and ethnic equality. As Elazar argues that 'federalism has not proved to be a particularly good device for integrating diverse nationalities into a single political system unless it has accompanied by other factors compelling integration' (Elazar, 1987: 169).

A similar top-down imposition was made in the merging of the five regional states into one regional state in 1994. This evolution can explain the intricacies of ethnic self-administration in the SNNP regional state as well as the inadequacy of the on-going ethnic federal arrangement to manage properly and sincerely the multifaceted problems and requirements of ethnic rights and demands. Furthermore, it is evident that the elites from the various groups are keener to promote their exclusive group demands and interests. As Horowitz (1985) argues that without an

incentive for cooperation, it is always very difficult to create a genuine coalition of elites in divided societies. Particularly, in Ethiopia in which resources are very scarce there may be a little incentive for ethnic elites to make compromise and cooperation with other groups that may bring no reciprocal benefit. Thus, faced with such intricate difficulty the ruling TPLF/EPRDF party has resorted in creating a superficial coalition making strategy through cooption, coercion and deception. Particularly, minority ethnic groups are used as an instrument of divide and rule in order to impose the will of the federal government, which is controlled by the TPLF/EPRDF.

Moreover, a criterion for a territorial concentration is often not relevant to the territorially dispersed mixed groups. For example it is estimated that there are about 300, 000 Amhara people dispersed throughout the regional state, but these ordinary people do not have access to any political representation and protection as citizens, rather they are faced with continued denunciations as part of ‘oppressors’ and ‘neftegna’. In April 2006, it was reported that symptom of ethnic cleansing has been emerging in some urban areas in the SNNP, such as in Dilla, Yerga Cheffe, because of the May 2005 election in which the multiethnic pan-Ethiopian party, the CUD, won significant votes against the EPRDF. Thus the local EPRDF officials interpreted a vote for CUD as a rejection of ethnic self-administration by the ‘non-indigenous’ people such as Amhara and Gurage who voted for CUD. Thus, many families have been terrorized and expelled by cadres of the ruling party (EU-EOM 2006). Thus, ethnic rights discourse has also become detrimental for the democratic transition in Ethiopia. To conclude that ethnic federalism in the SNNP regional state neither has protected the rights of the disparate ethnic groups nor has facilitated for a transition to democratic governance. Both of them- ethnic right and democratic governance- have been severely deficit in the SNNP regional state under the rule of EPRDF/SEPDPF.

## Chapter Seven: The regional State of Oromia



## **7.1 General Background**

Following the 1992 proclamation of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia, the Oromia regional state was established in July 1992. The Oromia regional state can be described as a mirror image of the realities of the Ethiopian people in its vast territories and the diverse population with varied livelihood conditions such as pastoralism, agriculture, and relatively developed and semi-developed urban centres. Moreover, ‘all the problems found in Ethiopia are found in Oromia’ (World Bank 2002: 04). Geographical Oromia is located in a central area and borders all of the regional states except Tigray. Its land area is estimated to reach 359,619 square kilometres, which is about one-third of Ethiopia’s total land area. Although the region contains abundant and suitable agricultural land that accounts 75 percent of the total land area in the region, it also suffers from severe environmental degradation and food shortage.

The population of Oromia is estimated to reach 25 million in 2004 that is about one-third of the total population of the country. It is estimated that 88 percent of the population are living in rural areas and thus only 12 percent in urban areas, which is similar with the overall trend in Ethiopia. Ethnically, it is estimated that about 15 percent of the populations of Oromia are non-Oromo that comprises mainly Amhara, Gurage and other mixed groups. Particularly, the ethnic mixes in urban areas are considerable that contain 55 percent Oromo, 30 percent Amhara, 8 percent Gurage and 7 percent other groups. With regard to religion, 50 percent of the population practice Christian religion (41 percent Orthodox Christian and 9 percent Protestant Christian) and 47 percent practice Islam (The Oromia State Government 2000).

Agriculture is the major economic activity in Oromia that provides a livelihood for 89 percent of the populations and it is largely dominated by subsistence agriculture. Pastoralism is also a dominant economic activity in the low land areas that account 25 percent of the regions land area. Oromia’s agriculture produces vital exportable commodities such as coffee, hides and skins, pulses and oil seeds that comprise a significant share of the Ethiopia’s export earnings. The industrial sector in Oromia is very weak, it provides livelihood for less than 10 percent of the regional population. Although Oromia shows lower poverty incidence than the national average and better than many of the regions, ‘it is

home to the second-largest number of poor people among regions in Ethiopia: almost seven million' (World Bank: 2000: 04)

Historically, the Oromo people have a long period of interaction with the rest of the Ethiopian people, particularly since the 15<sup>th</sup> century's the great expansion of the Oromo people, the contact was characterized with continuous conflicts, expansions and subjugations (Bahiru 1994; Marcus 2002; Messay 1999). However, the Oromo nationalists like Asafa Jalat (1993), Mohammed Hassen (1990 and 1999), Leenco Leta (1999) argue that 'Oromia was conquered by Ethiopian armies in 1890s and the Ethiopian control over Oromia was consolidated by 1900s, after which time Oromia's new rulers systematically dismantled the *Gada*<sup>67</sup> system and imposed a harsh and violent system of overrule' (Forrest 2004: 154). Likewise, Mohammed Hassen (1999: 235) argues that Ethiopian rulers instituted a policy of cultural Amharization in Oromia by banning Oromo language in school and public use. Markakis also argue that the southward expansion of the Ethiopian state in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century resulted in expropriating a major part of the land in Oromo areas and also turning the majority of Oromo peasants into tenants by the expanding state rulers and armies which thus created a mass discontent against the Ethiopian state (1994: 231).

The new rulers of the regional state of Oromia has also claimed that until 1991 *the Oromo people were denied its own traditional system of self-governance known as the **Gada system** due to 'the invasion and cultural domination of the *neftegnas system, which introduced the iron rule of the neftegnas*, that resulted in undermining the culture, language and history of the Oromo people (The Oromia State Government 2004: 1). Nevertheless, since 1992, they claim, that 'the Oromo people, together with other nations and nationalities of the country, are starting a new era of equality, which enabled them to practice the right of self determination and self rule, as per the affirmation of the Transitional Charter of 1991 that issued a proclamation which provided for the establishment of regions, with a power of self government' (Ibid. p. 2). Consequently, the regional state of Oromia was established in 1992 in accordance with the charter that proclaimed 'the rights of nations, nationalities and peoples to administer*

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<sup>67</sup> *Gada* is a generic term applied to the extremely complex and varied systems of generation-set cycles based on eight-year time unit (Baxter 1994: 180). It is a political and social organisation, marked by [male] age-set (8 years), participatory assemblies, advisory council and coordination of military actions through district officials and messengers' (Forrest 2004: 154).



its own affairs within its own defined territory and effectively participate in the central government on the basis of freedom, and fair and proper representation' (Article 2, b, The Transitional Charter 1991).

## 7.2 The Constitution of the Oromia regional state

The first Oromia Constitution was adopted in June 1995 and it was revised in 2001. Most of its provisions are similar with the federal constitution, particularly provisions on Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, and fundamental principles of the Constitutions are completely identical with the federal constitution. The Constitution defines 'the Oromo people' in the same manner as the Federal Constitution that defines 'nations, nationalities and peoples' as a group of people who have or share a large measure of a common culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in a common or related identities, a common psychological make-up, and who inhabit an identifiable, predominately contiguous territory. Even though the Oromia Constitution states that the State Constitution is the supreme law of the regional state, in Article 9 it accepts the primacy of the federal constitution<sup>68</sup>.

There are some important matters that need an investigation in connection with the Oromia's Constitution. **First**, with regard to the regional official language, the Oromia constitution in article 5 declares that the official language of the regional state is Oromiffa (the name of the language of the Oromo people) that uses Latin alphabet. This is in accordance with the federal Constitution Article 5, which states that members of the federation may by law determine their respective working languages. However, no concern was given for the significant non-Oromiffa speaking population of the regional state that estimated to be about 3 million.

**Second**, concerning the rights of citizenship, the Oromia constitution states that every Ethiopian national who reside in the State and can speak the working/official language of the State has the right to be elected and employed in any public or government office (The Constitution of Oromia 2001, Article 33).

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<sup>68</sup> Article 9 of the Federal Constitution declares that the Federal Constitution is the Supreme law of the land and any law, customary practices or a decision of an organ of state or a public official which contravenes the Constitution shall not be of no effect. Article 52 of the federal constitution also declares that the constitute states have a responsibility to protect and defend the Federal Constitution.

This article implies that discrimination based on ethnic category is unconstitutional; therefore a non-Oromo resident who speaks Oromiffa can have equal rights as an Oromo resident. However, putting aside constitutional pledges, the actual practice is very far from such constitutional pledges due to many factors. One, in political and other key bureaucratic appointment, ethnic affiliation is the only criterion. Parental linkage and language proficiency are the major criteria but without parental linkage language proficiency alone does not meet the requirements for political as well as bureaucratic appointments. Except that there is allegation of a notorious practice that has been exercised by the EPRDF/OPDO in adopting Oromo names for non-Oromo individuals, but who speak the Oromo language, in order to claim an Oromo<sup>69</sup> parenthood and to give them key political powers and bureaucratic positions in order to implement the policy and objectives of the TPLF/EPRDF (A representative of the ONC, Interviewee 63, 2002: 21).

Two, many non-Oromo individuals who cannot speak Oromiffa are working in various regional government offices at a position of technical experts and other, but it is very difficult for these professionals to get promotion, scholarship and other benefits even if their service years and contributions have made them to qualify for such promotions and benefits. The preference is always given to the ethnic Oromo personnel regardless of their lower qualification (A leader of the city administration, Interviewee 53, 2002: 5). Open and discernible discriminatory practices have also been observed toward those individuals who can speak very well the State's official language and can meet the criteria to get higher posts and promotions (A representative of AAPO, Interviewee 58, 2002: 13). Three, prejudice based on a political loyalty is also quite prevailing. Significant Oromo individuals who are suspected of harbouring opposition opinion are mistreated and abused. There is a widespread practice by the ruling EPRDF/OPDO party in labelling dissenting Oromo intellectuals as a member or sympathizer of the OLF (A leader of Eder, Interviewee 61, 2002: 16; A representative of ONC, Interviewee 63, 2002: 20).

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<sup>69</sup> For instance, it is alleged that the real name of the ex-president of the Oromia regional state, Kuma Demekessa was (Taye) the current Oromia president Abadula Gameda had also a different name. It has been a common practice among the TPLF and EPRDF officials to change their real names and adopt pseudo names. For instance, the real name of the Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was Legesse Zenawi, the Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin was Ambay Mesfin, Abay Tsehaye was Amha Tsehaye (Aregawi 2003: 579)

Moreover, many qualified Oromo professionals have been mistreated and their constitutional rights curtailed because of their alleged link with the 'illegalised' Oromo liberation front<sup>70</sup> (A representative of ONC, Interviewee 63, 2002: 20). Since 1991 thousands of Oromo individuals and Oromo civil society groups have been constantly harassed and imprisoned by the ruling EPRDF/OPDO party by alleging them for connection with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) (Amnesty International 2005). It is reported that: thousands of members of the Oromo ethnic group (or 'nationality') were detained without charge or trial on suspicion of supporting the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) (Amnesty International 2001). This tendency might have created a tremendous disadvantage situation in denying the Oromo people from adequately exploit the skill and qualification of their learned and educated elite. Generally, putting aside the constitutional commitment, the Oromia regional government massively abuses the rights of both the non-Oromo as well as the Oromo residents in the region in various ways.

**Third**, in connection with the right to secession, the Oromia Constitution in article 39, alike the federal constitution, affirms the unconditional right of the Oromo people to self-administration, including the right to secession by stating similar preconditions as it was stated in the federal constitution for realizing the right to secession. It is just a copy of the federal constitution in many aspects (The Oromia Constitution 2001, Article 39, no. 5).

At the current context, it is very difficult to satisfy the conditions for secession, as it is observed, that the ruling EPRDF party controls both the federal and regional government exclusively and heavy-handedly. However, the repercussion in the future could be very harmful, especially when the status of the regional states are subordinate to the federal government and when the federal government is accused of serving or favouring the interests of a particular region. Furthermore, it looks unrealistic for the State to secede in such smooth amicable process. There are many complex issues like agreement on boundary, resource division, the rights of non-Oromo people within Oromia, the statues of many of the urban centres, which are predominantly inhabited by non-Oromo people and other relevant critical issues. Hence, it could be better to stress more on bargaining and compromise mechanisms to address grievances and resentments, rather than to make a pretence provision that claim secession can be made amicably and so easily. It could be better to leave for the state or ethnic group what action they want to take if their rights would

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<sup>70</sup> The OLF was illegalised by TPLF/EPRDF because it is waging an armed struggle for self-determination of the Oromo people by claiming that TPLF-led EPRDF is not committed for a genuine federal arrangement.

be abrogated or abridged, rather than to give a promise of secession that would be very difficult to fulfil, but has a very bad implication and undertone in prescribing incentive to demand for secession.

**Fourth**, with regard to the right to property, land ownership and non-eviction, in the same manner with the federal constitution, the Oromia constitution declares that: ‘Land is a common property of the people of the State and shall not be subject to sale or to other means of exchange (The Constitution of Oromia 2001, Article 40). In connection with fixed property in the land, the Oromia constitution states that ‘any person shall have the full right to the immovable property he builds and to the permanent improvements he brings about on the land by his labour or capital. This right shall include the right to sale to bequeath, and, where the right of use expires, to remove his property, transfer his title, or claim compensation for it (Ibid, Article 40, No. 7)

Nevertheless, there may be some controversies between the State and the federal constitution. In the federal constitution, land is the property of the peoples of Ethiopia whereas in the State constitution it is the property of ‘the people of the State’, but not necessarily mean that it belongs to the Oromo people because the State constitution gave the right to ownership not only for Oromo people but for the ‘people of the State’ which includes all who reside in the State. Moreover, the Oromia Constitution in article 40, states that the peasants of the State have the right to obtain land without payment and the protection against eviction from their possession. Yet, regardless of the constitutional guarantee of prohibiting eviction from land, in some cases either there have been misconceptions and errors by some regional or local officials and resident groups or there may be a deliberate breach of constitutional rights of non-Oromo peasants who have faced eviction from their farmland. For instance, in Wellega settlements villages many peasants were evicted or expelled from the settlement area by disallowing them the right to have a land in Oromia or ‘Oromo land’ (Discussion with some of the evicted peasants, Interviewee 73, 2002: 36). Many factors such as ethnic revulsion, revenge and divide and rule tactics of the politicians have also complicated the issue, and still there is widespread misconception regarding the constitutional right of the non-Oromo people in Oromia regional state. Since, the Oromia constitution has included the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it has accepted that any discrimination based on race, ethnicity, language or other factors is unconstitutional, but, despite the constitutional decree, there has been widespread human right abuse of the non-Oromo people by the ruling party in Oromia.

Moreover, there is also a discrepancy between the federal constitution and Oromia constitution with regard to the right of the peasants to obtain a land. In Oromia constitution ‘the peasants of the State’ have the right to obtain land without payment and the protection against eviction from their possession (The Oromia Constitution 2001, Article 40, No. 4). Whereas the federal Constitution states that ‘the Ethiopian peasants have the right to obtain land without payment and the protection against eviction from their possession’ (The FDRE Constitution 1994, Article 40 No. 4). *According to the constitution of Oromia*, it is ‘peasants of the State’, not peasants from other states that have a right to get land without payment, whereas the federal constitution guarantees this right anywhere as far as they are Ethiopians and without any preference to state residence. Based on the federal constitution, it is constitutionally possible to resettle peasants of one state to another state freely, but the Oromia constitution has not recognized such resettlement in Oromia from other state. To make a comparison from a parallel case, one can examine article 41, no. 1 of the Oromia constitution that states: ‘Every resident of the State or other Ethiopians who want to reside in the State has the right to engage freely in economic activity and to pursue a livelihood of his choice’. Analogically, therefore Article 40, no. 4 has not extended free land to the other Ethiopian peasant who may want to resettle in Oromia. Nonetheless, the constitution of Oromia in article 9 accepts the primacy of the federal constitution, therefore constitutionally inter-state resettlement is allowed and Oromia regional government is also answerable to the federal constitution. In future, therefore there could be a resettlement of peasants in Oromia from other states, but still it could be contentious and conflictual<sup>71</sup>. Currently intra-state resettlement is undertaking in Oromia, Amhara, and SNNP regional states.

### **7.3 The State Structure and division of power in Oromia**

Following the 1992 proclamation of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia, the Oromia regional state was established in July 1992, but actually the regional government’s proper administrative function was started in 1994. Initially, the region was divided into 12 zones and 180 weredas. Additional 10 weredas and two special zones for two major urban centres (Nazareth and Jimma cities) were created in 2002:

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<sup>71</sup> In an interview with a top official of the Oromia regional state, it is learned that although there has been an interest by the federal government to resettle peasants to Oromia from other regional state, a resettlement of peasants to Oromia from other states is not acceptable as the state itself has a need to resettle its peasants to a relatively better farmland (Interview 51, 2002: 01).

Nazareth is considered as the capital city of the regional state<sup>72</sup>. The regional State's administrative structures are organized hierarchically into four tiers of administrations, namely the regional government, zonal administration, wereda administration and kebele administration. Political as well as administrative power is highly concentrated at the regional government level, particularly at the mercy of the executive branch that consisted of the regional president (or the chief executive) and head of various bureaus. The legislative branch of the regional government, which is called Oromia Council (or 'Caffee' in Oromiffa language), is constitutionally, the highest political power in the State. The people in a plurality vote system directly elect the 537 members of the Council for a term of five years. Constitutionally, the members of the council are accountable to the people of the State (Article 48). Some of the main activities of the Council (Cheffe) include:

- It elects the State President from members of the Council, and approves members of the State's Administration Council (or the regional cabinet) most of its members are head of various bureaus.
- Establishes audit and inspection organ, and appoints the Auditor General
- Approves the State's social and economic policies, strategies and plans
- Approves the State budget (but it highly depends on the transfer from the federal government)
- Appoints the president and vice president of the State Supreme Court
- Levy State taxes
- Declares state of emergency
- The power to call and question the State President and investigates the conduct of the State Administrative Council

Although it has numerous legislative functions and powers it looks a very nominal Council. It does not have regular and frequent meetings; it meets only twice a year therefore it is very difficult for it to fulfil its key functions of serving as a supreme political authority of the regional state and other essential legislative functions. Three standing committees, each with 14 members elected from the council

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<sup>72</sup> But after the May 2005 election, because the Opposition party, the Coalition and Unity for Democracy (CUD) exclusively won the election for the national parliament and the city administration, EPRDF reversed its decision and allowed Addis Ababa (or Finfine in Oromiffa) to be a capital city of the region. Previously, in 2003, EPRDF ordered the Oromia regional government to leave Addis Ababa and to use Nazareth (Adama) city as its capital city; the decision was firmly resisted by Oromo university students and other Oromo political and civil organisation, but the response of the EPRDF was massive arrest, harassment and suppression.

members by the council, pursue its day-to-day legislative functions. The three standing committees are the Administrative & Legal Affairs Standing Committee, the Economic, Budget & Finance Affairs Standing Committee and the Peoples Organization & Social Affairs Standing Committee. Moreover, the speaker and vice speakers of the council are also expected to follow closely the daily activities of the regional government. Almost 99 percent of members of the Oromia council are drawn from the ruling EPRDF/OPDO party, for instance in 2000 to 2005, out of 537 seats 535 seats which were 99.6 percent were controlled by the ruling OPDO/EPRDF/OPDO party and the remaining 2 seats was controlled by All Amharas People Organisation (AAPO).

As regards to the regional Executive power, constitutionally, the supreme executive power of the State is vested in the President and the State Administrative Council. The State's administrative council (or the regional cabinet) is the highest executive organ of the State (The Oromia Constitution 2001, Article 53). Member of the State Administrative Council consisted of the regional state president, vice president and bureaus heads various bureaus like Agriculture, Education, Health, Water, Finance Planning and others. The State Administrative Council is responsible for the State President and the State Council (Cheffe). Some of the major powers and functions of the Administrative Council include controlling and organizing executive institutions, preparing the State budget, formulating and implementing the State economic and social development policies, strategies and plans. It submits draft laws to the State Council. At the submission of the nominees by the State President it appoints Heads of higher social economic institutions in the State, Head of Bureaux, Zone administrators and vice administrators (Ibid. Article 55).

The chief of the state's executive, the state president is elected for the term of five years by the State council on the submission or proposal of the winner or majority part in the State Council. He is the leader and chair of the State Administrative Council and the highest executive power of the regional states vested on him. Constitutionally, the president is accountable for the State Council, but the State council lacks proper working mechanisms to control him due to its dysfunctional procedure, as it was discussed above with regard to the power and function of the State council. Major power and functions of the State President include to select and submit for approval to the State Council the appointment of the President and Vice President of the State Supreme Court, Auditor General and member of the State

Administrative Council; to lead, co-ordinate and control the State Administrative Council, Administrative Councils of the regional government, Zones, Weredas and Kebeles (Ibid. Article 56).

With regard to the state judicial power, the state's constitution declares that state's judicial power is vested in the State courts that operate independently and free from any interference or influence of any government body, government officials or from any other sources (The Constitution of Oromia 2001, Article 63). The constitution also states that no judge shall be removed from his duties before he reaches the retirement age determined by law except by a decision of the state legislative council due to disciplinary rules or on grounds of incompetence or inefficiency. In appointment of judges, the state council upon the recommendation by the regional state president appoints the President and vice President of the State Supreme Council. Other judges of the State Supreme court and Zone High Court and Wereda judges are appointed by the State Council upon recommendation by the State Judicial Administration that is established by judges appointed by majority vote and the President of the State Supreme Court serves as its leader.

Structurally, the regional state's judicial organ is organised in State Supreme Court, zone higher court, and wereda court. The state Supreme Court is the highest and final judicial power over the State matters, and it has a power of cassation over any final court decision of State courts on State matters which contain a basic error of law. The state's High court, in addition to state jurisdictions, exercises the jurisdiction of federal first-instance court. Decisions rendered by a State High Court exercising the jurisdiction of federal first-instance court are appealable to the State Supreme Court. Decisions rendered by a State Supreme Court (exercising the jurisdiction of federal high court) on federal matters are appealable to the Federal Supreme Court. The wereda court is the lower and the first-instance judicial power in the State. Moreover, religious and customary courts are recognized by the constitution. With the consent of the parties, disputes relating to personal and family laws in accordance with religious or cultural laws can be adjudicated in religious or customary courts (Article 62, Constitution of Oromia, 2001)



## 7.4 Zonal, Wereda and Kebele structures

Zonal administrations in Oromia state are structured as an executive subdivision or like branch offices of the regional government without any legislative power or function. There are eight zonal and two special zonal administrations in the regional state. Uniformly, the zonal administration consisted of a team of heads of line departments and a chief and vice chief administrators of a zone who are appointed by the State Council upon recommendation by the State President. Some of the powers and functions of the zonal administration are to coordinate wereda administrations; support, follow and co-ordinate all departments and institutions in the zone; responsible for law, order, peace and security in the zone and reports overall zonal working activities to the State President. The zonal administration is headed by a chief administrator who is appointed by the State Council upon a recommendation of the State President. The Chief administrator, who is directly accountable to the State President, has a significant power at zonal level in commanding the activities of various regional government's departments and institutions at the zonal level and also responsible for leading and controlling zonal security and police forces.

Nevertheless, there is overlapping between legislative and executive organs in all zones, as some of the members of the zonal administration are also members of the regional legislative council. Moreover, in many cases, the chief administrator is also a chief of the zonal party structure. Therefore, there is a clear concentration of political, legislative and executive functions on an executive body and in the hands of a single individual.

Wereda structure consists of wereda council, wereda administrative council and wereda judiciary. There are about 200 *Wereda* structures in Oromia. *Wereda* council is the legislative body of the wereda structure which is established by the wereda people for five years term through direct popular vote. Constitutionally, members of the Wereda Council are responsible for the people. Some of its constitutional powers and functions include approving the *Wereda's* economic development, social services and administrative activities draft plans and programmes; appointing Wereda administrator from member of the majority party in the council, approving the appointment of vice Wereda Administrator and other appointments upon submission by the Wereda Administrator and ensuring the collection of land use fee (tax), agricultural income tax and other service taxes as determined by the law. (The Oromia Constitution 2001, Article 82). However, most of these functions, to a great extent, are

duties coming from the top officials at the zonal and regional level to be implemented in the woreda area rather than having its real power to make decisions on its own to protect the interest and benefit of its electorate. Moreover, it is also expected to have only four secessions per year and therefore its Speaker performs most of its duties on daily bases by collaborating with the Wereda administrative council and the wereda chief administrator.

The executive functions at the wereda level is the responsibility of the woreda administrative council which consisted of the Wereda Administrator, vice Administrator and head of sector offices organised in the Wereda. It is responsible for the Wereda Administrator and Wereda Council (Ibid. Article 84). Some of its constitutional power and functions include implementing policies, laws, rules, plans and programmes in the wereda; preparing Wereda budget, submits to the Wereda Council and implements upon approval; leading and co-ordinating the wereda security and police force and preparing the wereda social, economic and administrative plans and submit to the Wereda Council (Ibid, Article 85). The Chief Wereda administrator who is appointed by the Wereda council is a leader of the Wereda Administrative council, but he is also responsible for the regional state president. This direct accountability of the chief wereda administrator to the regional president certainly creates a tendency of centralising of power at the regional executive, particularly at the regional president who has enormous power to control and influence all key power centres at all levels of the regional state structure.

The lowest and smallest administrative structure of the regional state is a Kebele administration, which has relatively very close contact with the local people. A Kebele administration has a kebele council, a kebele administrative council and social court. Constitutionally, the kebele council is the highest political authority in the kebele and it is elected by the kebele people for five years term. It has a power to organize the kebele administration council and appoint the kebele administrator, but only upon the recommendation of the majority party, which is OPDO/EPRDF (The Oromia Constitution 2001, Article 97). It is expected to meet once every month. Major functions of the kebele council are limited to implementing the plan and regulations of the wereda council and the wereda administrative council, ensuring law and order in the Kebele and organizing the kebele administration. The council is headed by the speaker and vice speaker who are appointed by the ruling majority party in the Kebele council, which is OPDO/EPRDF.

The kebele executive function is carried out by the kebele administrative council, which is elected by and from the kebele council for the five years term. Some of the key functions include ensuring peace and security in the kebele, carrying out natural resource protection and development activities; and motivating the public for development activities (The Oromia Constitution 2001, Article 96). The Kebele administrative council is headed by a kebele administrator who is appointed by and from the Kebele council upon the recommendation of the majority party in the Kebele Council. The Kebele administrator is accountable for the Kebele Council and wereda administrator. Major powers and functions of the kebele administrator include leading the Kebele Administrative council, ensuring a proper implementation of policies, laws, rules and regulations in the kebele, recommending judges of the kebele social court for the kebele council and executing other functions as ordered by the kebele administrative council, the kebele council, the wereda administrative council. The kebele administration also has a vice kebele administrator who is elected by and from the kebele council and accountable to the kebele administrator. A social court is also established in each kebele administration to adjudicate on trivial neighbourhood social and private cases. Though the kebele administration is very close to the local people, the predominant influence and manoeuvre of the ruling party in its overall operation has hindered the local people from owning and controlling their grassroots kebele structure. As a result kebele administration has become an awful instrument in imposing higher command and control on the local people.

## **7.5 A concentration of power at the regional executive or the regional president**

The multitude and sweeping powers and functions assigned to the chief executive by the constitution have made the state's president to monopolies power at the expense of the state legislative branch. Nonetheless, first of all, it is very difficult for the President to properly fulfil these functions because of the vast and intricate nature of the activities in all these four-tiered levels. Secondly, massive concentrations of power in his hand certainly makes the President too powerful by undermining local administrations and popular participation, and also deprives the local people in controlling their local leaders.

Thirdly, dictating the nomination of head of regional bureaus and other powerful regional officials like presidents of the regional Supreme Court and Auditor General certainly make the President very powerful in the face of very weak and quiescent the State's legislative branch. It is very easy for him to create his own 'oligarchy' and clique in the executive. In case of responsible and efficient governance system such massive power may give a president a chance to form a very efficient executive organ, but in case of a patron-client model of governance, massive concentration of power on an executive organ could result in creating an oligarchy. Check and balance controlling systems are weakened because the institutions designed for such controlling functions like the Supreme Court, Judicial Administration Council and Auditor General are directly influenced by the regional president, and their actual operation has also exhibited such subordinated role to the executive branch.

This kind of power construction in the executive body may result in the development of elitism and self-servicing bureaucracies. Major drawback of the ethnic federal structure is its inducement of despotism of ethnic elites. According to the constitutional arrangement, the power of the legislative branch, that is the State Council that is directly elected by the people, looks very insignificant in controlling and involving the administrative and governance process of the State. The State Council is nearly inactive, which only meets very rarely, at least twice a year according to the state's constitution. This situation may be one of the reasons in expansion of inefficient and corrupt bureaucracy, which resulted in mismanagement in the state (A leader of Eder, Interviewee 55, 2002: 09; A leader of Eder, Interviewee 57, 2002: 11; A member of the TPLF, Interviewee 59, 2002: 14; A leader of Eder (an Oromo), Interviewee 61, 2002: 16). The elected representative are very far to monitor and control the activities of the executive, even if constitutionally they are responsible for the State Council, there is no administrative mechanism to implement the constitutional right of the State Council adequately.

The State Council is assumed to be the supreme regional political authority by representing the regional people, but its mode of operation does not give it any significant role to play congruent with the authority entrusted to it. This happens due to various reasons. **First**, the members of the state council have no salary for their membership in the council. Most of them are employed in various regional government institutions at regional, zonal and wereda levels and this make them vulnerable to manipulation, kickbacks, reward or pressure from the executive branch. **Second**, the legislative body has

no regular sessions, meeting twice a year would hardly provide any opportunity to monitor and control the operation of the executive branch.

Furthermore, the state judicial body has also been very weak to check and control the excessive power of the state's executive branch. Some of the challenges of the judiciary branch in Oromia are, **first**, though, the Constitution put provisions to protect judges from interference and unduly removal, it has been very easy for the executive body to remove judges from their appointment as it is very easy to get approval of the State Council as it is made ineffective to challenge the executive power, but has become a rubberstamp of the executive and the dominant ruling party. So it is still very easy to remove judges even by following the constitutional procedures. In many occasions, judges have been removed from their posts (Ethiopian Bar association 2003).

Second, the state judicial structure may not properly help the local people, because they need to travel to zone towns to get higher court decisions, since the wereda court is constitutionally powerless and also usually staffed by non-qualified judges. This adds tremendous cost for the local (mostly poor) people to get justice (An advisor to the regional president, Interviewee 51, 2002: 2). Even in some cases zone higher courts are not efficient and powerful to make decisions, and frequently seek the support of the regional and federal courts. So such kinds of excessive bureaucratic court structure may deter people from exercising their constitutional rights and may breed a situation of lawlessness and local despotism of the executive. Because local courts like wereda courts are powerless they tend to rely on local executive for their functions. In most local areas, it is evident that, the public officials are often those who breach people's constitutional rights. So in such inefficient and powerless local judicial authority, it is very difficult for the court system to protect the rights of the local people (A representative of AAPO, Interviewee 58, 2002: 12; A leader of ANDM/EPRDF in Nazareth, Interviewee 62, 2002: 17).

Finally, the appointment of judges is highly influenced by the state president; above all, he is the one who recommends the President and vice President of the State Supreme Courts. Moreover, the president of the Supreme Court also has an influential position in the State Judicial Administration, which has multitude powers in appointment, promotion, and removal of judges. Generally, the courts are operating under frequent interference from the executive branch at all levels of the regional government and the same is also true at the federal government level. There are substantial amount of cases in which the

police have declined or violated court rulings due to instructions from the executive officials. Many individuals continue to be detained by police despite the court's ruling against their detention<sup>73</sup> (A representative of ONC, Interviewee 63, 2002: 20).

## **7.6 The financial power and the federal subsidy**

In the same manner as other regional state, the Oromia regional state relies heavily on federal transfer. It gets 60 to 80 percent of its regional budget spending from the federal government and this shows high level of vertical imbalance between the regional government and the federal government with regard to financial power. In 1998 and 1999 for example 70 percent of the regional government's total expenditure was covered through federal transfer or federal subsidy<sup>74</sup>. (World Bank, Oromia Public Expenditure Review, 2001: 8) (In accordance with the federal constitution, the Oromia regional state has provided with a right to collect income taxes; taxes from profit and sales taxes on business; agricultural income tax and land use fee; personal income tax from employees of the regional government, royalty from forestry activities. The total collection from these sources accounts less than 30 percent of the regional budget and about 2 percent of the regional GDP<sup>75</sup>).

Actually, such high level of imbalance was created because of the federal government's appropriation of almost all of the lucrative revenue sources throughout the country. It is estimated that the federal government control 87 percent of the national revenue bases and leaving the rest 13 per cent for the nine regional states (Befekadu 1998). In the Oromia, therefore, it is felt by the regional officials that the federal government would have collected far greater than what it is transferring for the regional government in the form of federal subsidy. Actually, a regional official claims that this is not subsidy; it may be just giving back the regional state's revenue (A member of the regional executive, Interviewee

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<sup>73</sup> In Oromia, many cases of illegal detentions were reported despite the order of the court to release the detainees (A representative of ONC, Interview 63, 2002: 20). A parallel practice was practiced in the federal government regarding the famous case of Seye Abrha, the ex-defence minister who was released on bail, but immediately detained by the police when he left the courtroom, and he is still in prison. Many believed the Prime Minister is behind all this naked illegal practice of undermining the court order.

<sup>74</sup> The lowest, 60 percent share of the federal subsidy to the regional budget was recorded in 2000 due to the shrinking of the federal transfer as a result of a boarder war with Eritrea.

<sup>75</sup> MEDaC experts question the accuracy of the regional governments estimation of their GDP due to a weak professional capacity in the regions to compile data.

74, 2002: 38). It is true that Oromia, next to Addis Ababa administration, contains a substantial size of government (federal) owned businesses, industries and big hydropower dams that can generate huge revenue for the federal government. These public properties, however, were constructed in the past by the central state owing to Oromia's pivotal and central location in the country as well as its relative proximity to the capital city, Addis Ababa. The previous centralized state system had accumulated and invested the national wealth in the capital city and in a nearby urban center which most of them are under the ownership of the federal government, though they are territorially located in Oromia state. It could be therefore unfair and unacceptable to leave this national wealth for few regional states. This is one the major difficulties for a shift from a centralized or unitary state structure into a federal system of state restructuring.

Furthermore, Oromia is continuing benefiting more from federally owned enterprises and spending. According to the regional government official that Oromia is benefiting from federally owned enterprises and spending in the region that are injecting a lot of money in the regional economy through employment generating opportunities, disposable incomes of the workforce and other economic opportunities that directly help to nourish and revitalize the regional economy (A chief executive of the Zonal administration, Interviewee 54, 2002: 8). In addition, a large part of Oromia territory is located at the central part of Ethiopia by encompassing the capital city and all major highways that are constructed to connect the region's capital city to the federal capital city by passing through Oromia, as a result Oromia has been benefiting more from such opportunities.

The Regional Finance and Planning Bureau with consultation with the sectoral bureaus prepares budget distribution and the regional executive body approves the final budget, but of course, with 'adaptation' of the regional council. Oromia follows a centralized budget system in which the regional sectoral bureaus distribute the budgets for zonal and wereda offices through their own bureaucratic structures. The centralized budget system has been changed since 2003 by the new 'woreda block grant' system of budget allocation due to the decision of the federal government.

External assistance or aid shares 10-17 percent of the regional budget, for example in the five years period (1995-2000) 1.82 billion birr capital budget was used. From this 1.46 billion (80.2%) was from government budget and the rest 0.36 billion (19.8%) was from external grant and loan (Oromia Finance

Bureau Report 2001). This figure, however, only represented the amount specified as 'external sources' in the federal subsidy to the regional government. External assisted federal projects in the region (like highways) and some other bilateral aid and foreign-funded NGO activities are not clearly included in the regional budget (World Bank, 2001: 11). Likewise, the regional governments are not allowed to borrow or get financial grant directly from external financial institutions; external finance always comes through the federal government as part of the federal transfer as a federal grant. External loan money by the federal government is not transferred as a loan to the regional government, the regions receive only in the form of federal grants, (not loans), but by distinguishing the source of the external finance between grants and loans for the budget specification. No specific rules or procedure is set regarding the role and participation of the regional states in debt repayment responsibilities. The external assistance is surrounded by high unpredictability, complex requirements and difficult reporting procedures, therefore regional states generally prefer federal subsidy rather than external assistance. In addition, the regions are not clear about the way the federal government estimates expected donor assistance to the regions and deduct or 'offsets' such expectation from the federal subsidy to the regional states, but there is frequent disagreement and mistrust concerning the federal government's handling of the external assistance to the region (A member of the regional executive, Interviewee 74, 2002: 38).

The major challenges of the financial sector in Oromia include inadequate resource, constraints in capacity, high centralization at the regional government level in budget allocation and other key budgetary process decisions like budget transfer and shift between items, sectors or sub sectors. Revenue collection capacity is also very weak at zonal and wereda levels, zonal administrations have no power to collect taxes (World Bank 2001; A member of the regional executive, Interviewee 74, 2002: 40). It is believed that the new wereda block grant system that directly allocates budget to the wereda administration could create an opportunity for the local people to have influence in making decision on priorities in budget allocations based on their needs, however, such expectation may not materialize simply because of block budget allocations procedure per se. There are various impediments that hinder local people participation. First, it does not make much difference in Oromia in which about 70 percent of the budget is appropriated by the recurrent expenditure which most goes to pay salary for civil servants. For instance total public expenditure in 1998 was 1.3 billion Birr (which was roughly 8 percent of the regional GDP) or 62 birr per capita (equivalent to USD 186 million or USD 9 per capita). With regard to composition of spending, the typical trend is that recurrent expenditure appropriate the lions'



share, (70 to 80 percent) of the regional spending and from this expenditure the bulk (about 70 percent) goes to salary<sup>76</sup>. Thus, even if the decision would be made at the wereda level, the recurrent budget system has to follow the existed recurrent expenditure framework that is dominated by expenditure on salaries for teachers, agriculture experts, health professional, administrators and the like. The capital budget, which is about 30 percent of the total allocation, can be very small to make an impact in meeting wereda people's immediate priorities<sup>77</sup>.

Second, the centralized state and political structure is not changed, as the state's government and ruling party's mode of operation and the constitution entail that the wereda has remained accountable to the regional executive and local control is still very weak mainly because of a negligible public participation in the local politics, administration as well as decision making process. As it is reported that, 'while the system appears rather decentralized on paper, in practice it is not' (World Bank 2001: 33).

The federal system in Ethiopia is characterized by a centralization of power through the ruling TPLF/EPRDF party. Since 1991, the regional state has been governed by the OPDO, which is a member of the ruling EPRDF party. The OPDO was created in 1989 by the EPRDF in order to mobilize political support in Oromo areas. As I have discussed in chapter three in connection with the birth of the EPRDF, most of the members of the OPDO were from ex-Derg soldiers who were captured in the battlefield. As a result, it is very difficult to claim that OPDO is a true representative of the Oromo people; rather it is imposed on the Oromo people as a ruler by the TPLF-led ruling government in Ethiopia since 1991. The ruling party has controlled all political and local community spaces, it becomes difficult for the local people to establish their own administrative structure without the interference of the ruling party, which is operated in highly centralized and Stalinist manner (Vaughan and Kjetil 2003: 18). As a result, the local leaders are more accountable to the ruling party than their electorate, as it is declared in the constitution that the wereda administrator, the wereda council speaker, the kebele administrator, the kebele council speaker have to be from the majority or the ruling party. This kind of political party

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<sup>76</sup> The figure was calculated based on the trend from 1998 to 2001 (World Bank, 2001).

<sup>77</sup> For illustration, in 2002 Oromia total budget was 1.5 billion birr and roughly 20 percent was appropriated by the regional government, therefore each wereda can get 6 millions in a block grant, from which capital budget could be about 2 million birr (250 000 USD) for more than 100,000 people and it means about 20 birr per capital (2.5USD) per capita, the amount cannot build a medium health facility for about 100,000 people which mostly live in extreme poverty and without access to essential basic services.

domination in local governments (wereda and kebele level) can make the public powerless, and also weaken the role of non-party affiliated community organisations and initiatives in local areas. Party politics usually weaken local people participation in governance and make the local space a battleground for party politics or an arena of party dictatorship rather than a space for social and economic development activities. Moreover, many people are penalized for electing opposition parties such as the ONC, OFDM, CUD.

## **7.7 Summary:**

One of the major challenges of ethnic federalism in Oromia is a mistreatment of non-Oromo residents in the region. In the region there are about 2.7 million urban population that is about 12% of the total population and a large group of people predominately from the Amhara and Gurage ethnic group are living dispersed throughout many of the urban areas. In many of the urban centres, it could be the case that Oromos are outnumbered by non-Oromos as many towns in Oromia are predominately inhabited by the non-Oromo ethnic groups because of the historical reasons that most of the urban centres were established predominately as a center of central administration and trade in the past. Currently, however, there is no administrative mechanism put in place to respect the rights of these mixed groups who have lived in many of the towns for a number of generations. What complicates that matter more was that the wereda administrative boundaries of most of the towns include the surrounding rural areas, which are virtually inhabited by the Oromo people and thus makes the town population minority in the wereda administrative constituency. This arrangement has resulted in hindering the political rights of the non-Oromo people living in many towns and the issue has become one of the major contentious issues in the State. A report prepared by the Oromia Economic Study Project Office affirms that the urban population in Oromia is more heterogeneous, while the populations living in the rural areas of the region are predominately Oromo that account 88.4 percent. According to the report, Oromos, Amharas and Gurages are the three largest ethnic groups that account for 54.4, 28.8 and 8.1 percent, respectively of the 2.7 million urban populations (The Economic Study Project Office 1999: 237). This figure may not necessarily tell ethnic composition in many of the major towns, in which non-Oromo ethnic groups might have been the majority inhabitants. For example in Nazareth town, the non-Oromo population account 74 percent (from which Amhara account 44, percent and Gurage 20) and the Oromo account

only 26 percent of the population of the town. However, the Oromo group predominantly controls the town administration because the town is situated under Oromia regional state.

Although, in the Proclamation no. 26/1999 of the Oromia regional state, residents of many towns at different level have a right to elect councils and executive management committees to administer the towns, the proclamation did not give any specific right for the inhabitants of the towns to decide some crucial issues like representation and working language, rather it is assumed that the towns' administrations would be occupied by the Oromo individuals and use the regional language, Oromiffa, regardless of the population mix and the dominant mother tongue in the towns. For instance, in Nazareth the dominant mother tongue in the city is not Oromiffa, but it is expected to use Oromiffa in its administration and education. So this Proclamation did not answer the basic right of the population to select its working language, so in such case it did not answer the basic rights of the town dwellers.

Nonetheless, the Oromo population in Amhara regional state, which estimated to account 3% of the regional population, have given a special *woreda* status, which was argued because of their concentration in particular areas. Likewise, the 3 million Amhara people residing in Oromia region have not granted such kind of special status. The official reason is that because they are widely dispersed in the region, it has become difficult to give them a self-administrative arrangement like a special *woreda*. However, different kinds of institutional arrangement can be found if there is a genuine concern for the rights of these people, besides, significant Amhara population are living in many towns as a concentrated majority like in Nazareth town, but they are without any significant political rights.

Since 1991, there have been frequent abuses against the non-Oromo residents in the regional state. From 1991 to 1992, the Oromo Liberation Front was accused for inciting and inflicting violence against the non-Oromo residents in Oromia (Alem 1993). Particularly, portraying the Amhara people in general as instruments of past injustice against the Oromo people has igniting violent and brutal revenges that resulted in killings and expulsion of many Amhara and other non-Oromo people, destroying of villages and properties of the non-Oromo people, particularly the Amhara people in Oromia. Some other Oromo political organizations such as the Islamic Oromia Liberation Front (IFLO), Oromo People's Unity Organization, and Oromo Abo Liberation Movement were accused of participating in violence against

non-Oromo people in Oromia region (Alem 1993). Particularly, although many of the Amhara people have lived for generation by mixing with the Oromo population, 'they were branded as '*neftegna*' or colonizer, and murdered or otherwise gravely mistreated. Ethnic cleansing has been reported in the city of Harar itself, Dire Dawa, the Chercher area (Asbe Teferi, Hirna), the Kulubi and Chelenko areas' (Alem 1993). Although the Oromia constitution accepts the UN Universal Human Rights Declaration in its entirety, the wide gap between constitutional commitment and actual performance could be uncovered by the prevailing abuse of human rights and curtailment of political rights of the people living in the regional state. This reveals that constitutional acceptance is one thing and practical implementation is another matter.

## **Chapter Eight: Implications of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia**

This chapter discusses the advantages and disadvantages of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia by analysing the emerging trends in the three regional states. It also aims to determine whether the Ethiopian ethnic federal model is successful in promoting ethnic autonomy and ethnic equality as officially professed. Is it successful in nurturing ethnic cooperation or accelerating ethnic conflict; is it creating ethnic empowerment or widening ethnic dissatisfaction. Is it the empowerment of the ethnic communities or the ascendancy of the ethnic elites? Is the federal arrangement going in a direction of forging a workable polity? Is it a sustainable political arrangement for the people of Ethiopia? As a whole, the chapter attempts to determine the essence of the federal model that is evolving in Ethiopia.

### **8.1 Achievements connected to ethnic federalism in Ethiopia**

#### **8.1.1 Expansion of education possibilities and other development projects**

One of the highly pronounced achievements of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia is its ability in expanding education and other infrastructures in the areas not covered by the previous regimes. In the Benishangul-Gumuz region, for example, since 1991 there has been evidence of an expansion of educational institutions (A civil servant from Berta, Interviewee 12, 2002: 14; (An elder from Berta, Interviewee 13 2002: 18). It is reported that in 2003, there were about 291 primary schools, 11 secondary schools, and 1 college. Before 2002 there was hardly any institution of higher education in the region, but in 2002 one college was established and there is also a plan to open more in few years time. Some projects like road construction, water supply, electricity projects, telephone services, which were inexistent in the past, are undertaken in deep hinterlands like Kamashe town (A member of the regional executive from Gumuz Interviewee 5, 2002:4). In the past, road construction, hospital and other infrastructure expansions were in few areas and only motivated by security and military concerns (A member of the regional executive from Berta, Interviewee 6 2002: 6).

Significant numbers of students and civil servants from indigenous communities are also trained and educated in a special college in order to produce massive educated and qualified personnel from the indigenous ethnic communities. The special college, named the Civil Service College was established in Addis Ababa in 1993 in order to tackle the shortage of skilled and educated manpower in the regional

states, particularly in the relatively disadvantaged ethnic communities like Afar, Somali, Benishangul-Gumuz and Gambella regional states. Though the effort is directed at creating 'surrogates of oppressed masses', rather than genuine representatives of the 'oppressed masses'. However in the long run the indigenous communities would be in an advantageous position in producing skilled manpower and professionals who are socially and culturally very close to the indigenous communities.

The very idea of self-administration has propelled the interest of the indigenous communities to seek better education in order to answer the challenging task of modern administration. As Mesfin (2000) argues education, in the past, was not sufficiently attractive for many indigenous ethnic groups to send their children to schools. For most of these ethnic communities, there was no inducement or rational grounds to send their children to modern education institutions. For them, modern education was an alien phenomenon that could spoil their children's behaviour and encourage them to rebel against their traditions and customs. More importantly, it is a well-known fact that the education system was imposed on the indigenous communities along with the oppressive administrative structures of the central state by ejecting the local and traditional chiefs. Such a pattern certainly would fail to attract the indigenous communities toward the modern education system that came along with the system that has alienated their traditional administrative and legal institutions. However, at present faced with the promise and challenge of self-administration, the indigenous communities are to some extent inclining to recognize the need for modern education, and as a result there has been a rising demand to send their children to schools. According to a Gumuz informant, the prevailing negative attitude of the indigenous community regarding modern education has slowly been changing for the better with growing interests for modern education. Traditionally, a high esteemed achievement for the young men in the community has been to have a gun and wife. Local leaders used to bribe central officials by providing gold to dissuade them from opening schools in the area by fearing that modern education would undermine the traditions of the community, as the Gumuz official laments: 'We bought ignorance by our gold. We never had an individual who had graduated with a high school education among the indigenous community, but now we have BA graduates, Masters and PhD level students within our communities' (A member of the regional executive from Gumuz, Interviewee 5, 2002:4).

It is indisputable that there is improvement in the expansion of primary education in the region; in 2003 there are about 269 primary and 14 secondary schools in the regional state, which has a total of 474

kebeles. It appears that in an average one primary school serves two kebeles, which could be a very positive development in terms of physical access. Nevertheless, firstly, it is important to ask whether the success is only possible because of the ethnic federal framework? Is it not possible to educate young people in a different administrative framework? For instance, by respecting local people's right to have education for their children in their mother tongue, but without making it as an ethnic right, rather as a child right or human right to have education in the mother tongue. Secondly, in terms of equity and quality, the education sector in the region suffers from uneven distribution of schools, high rate of dropouts and low quality of education (BoFED 2003:26). The coverage figures may also not necessarily depict the actual conditions among the indigenous ethnic communities who live in remote and inaccessible villages. For example, in relation to school attendance in Assosa high school 'of 300 students attending the school only 20 were indigenous, mostly Benishangul, and only 3 of these were girls (Young 1999: 341). Thirdly, the teaching language in elementary school is the Amharic language, but a mother tongue for the children from the indigenous communities is not Amharic thus making it also very difficult for the children to understand the teaching.

### **8.1.2 Recognition of the right for self-administration and ethnic identity**

Almost all of my informants from the Oromo, the SNNP's ethnic groups, and Benishangul-Gumuz indigenous groups are keen to have their own self-administration rights, to use their vernacular language in office and schools and to promote their culture and identity. However, most of their complaints were on reduction of their ethnic rights, central interference, budget allocations and internal fragmentation.

More importantly, many believed that self-administration also brings self-confidence for the indigenous community. A Shinasha informant expresses that in the past many of the Shinasha elite including himself were ashamed to give indigenous forename to their kids in order to avoid to be laughed at or to appear uncivilised (A council member from Shinasha, Interviewee 3 2002: 03). Some indigenous communities like the Mao and Komo were previously unheard-of and lived in isolated and inaccessible jungle, but now they become known and recognised as well as provided with a right for self-administration (A member of the regional executive from Berta, Interviewee 6 2002: 6). A Gumuz informant also claims that in the past, we used to be portrayed as a little better than wild animals, but now, 'our sons' are running courts, working in the police force and giving us leadership (A member of

the regional executive from Gumuz Interviewee 5, 2002:5). Another informant also claims that ethnic federalism is advantageous in providing an opportunity for the indigenous communities for self-administration; non-ethnic federal structure could compel us to be ruled by non-indigenous leaders who may have relatively better education. A rule by the indigenous leaders is better and very nearer for the indigenous community (A civil servant from Berta, Interviewee 12, 2002: 14). Outsiders are not able to provide solutions to the problems of our community (A council member from Shinasha, Interviewee 3 2002: 2). Thus the regional, zonal and wereda administrative structures are completely controlled by the elites drawn from the local communities despite the discontent of many groups who are unhappy in ethnic self-administration that often downgrade and attack the self-administration rights of the various ethnic groups (A development agent, Interviewee 22, 2002: 01).

Furthermore, most of the ethnic groups in the SNNP and Benishangul-Gumuz regional states have been considered as marginal minorities. The centralized Ethiopian state structure since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century has imposed its authority on the diverse ethnic communities in Ethiopia. The imposed authority of the centralized state was not tolerant in recognizing and promoting local identities; as a result the culture of these ethnic communities including their languages were marginalized at the national level. Though the 1975 land reform was highly instrumental in abolishing the economic exploitation of the 'southern' people the central ruling elites and their local agents, it did not allow local self-governance and recognition of ethnic rights to self-administration. Since the advent of ethnic restructuring in 1991, however, ethnic identities have become a nodal point for political mobilization and local administrations, and thus newly restructured ethnic administrative constituencies have become a venue for official expressions of ethnic identity and ethnic self-administration by providing at least symbolic importance (Smith 1996) for recognition and dignity of ethnic elites and communities. Moreover, the promotion of local language in local administration and elementary schools can be considered an advantage for the local community because it can facilitate better communication, understanding and learning.



## **8.2 Some Disadvantages of ethnic federalism in regions**

### **8.2.1 The paradox of an ascriptive criterion**

In Benishangul-Gumuz regional state and in most of the ethnic constituencies in SNNP, the local elites control bureaucratic posts and key decision-making positions whereas the so-called ‘outsiders’ provide virtually all professional skills. As Young describes the situation in the Benishangul-Gumuz ‘while indigenous people are favoured in public service appointments, promotions and educational opportunities, only 17 out of 225 recently appointed professionals are indigenous (Young 1999: 338). The EPRDF’s model of ethnic federalism has recognized primordialism- ethnic loyalty and ethnic solidarity- as the most important factor in organizing politics and society in Ethiopia. Whereas excluded by such primordial categorization, the professionals and trained employees from ‘outside’ (or Amharic term *Mette*) are expected to provide highly needed services, thus in conflict with the primordial rules that underpin the logic of ethnic loyalty. But, why should they commit or dedicate themselves to the ethnic constituency and the political framework that categorize them as ‘outsiders,’ ‘*neftegna*’ or ‘oppressors’? The assumption may be that ‘money can buy everything’, but it is very difficult to believe that money can create durable solidarity and commitment. In addition, since these qualified employees are categorized as outsiders, they may have very little incentive to be motivated viewing the fact that the public sector salary in Ethiopia is much lower than the private sector or non-government organizations. A report by the World Bank confirms that the private sector salaries were estimated at 125 percent of comparable public sector salaries and in most occasions, better opportunities are available in the urban areas (World Bank 2001: 33). Thus, it is natural that these qualified individuals may become more motivated for maximizing their personal benefits, rather than to show motivation for achievement and professional integrity. This could be one of the major factors that could explain for the widespread inefficiency and corruption in the regional states.

Although professionals and expertise are severely lacking throughout Ethiopia, the ascriptive criterion of ethnic federalism has exacerbated the problem in the regions. Development projects like micro-dams, medium and small-scale irrigations and, improved agricultural and veterinary services could not be executed or implemented because of lack of skilled manpower. Ethnic federalism has drawn a dichotomy of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’; the ‘insiders’ have no professional skills whereas the ‘outsiders’ are not happy and willing to work in the area which considers them ‘outsiders’. They do so as a last

resort when other opportunities are not available. As a result, without high incentives or change of attitudes or modifying the ethnic philosophy, it is unlikely that the problem could be solved in the near future. As Vaughan and Tronvoll state that ‘there have been widespread complaints that the combined requirements to recruit personnel on the basis of ethnic quotas, *and* political affiliation or loyalty means that the most able and efficient functionaries are continually overlooked’ (Vaughan and Tronvoll 2003: 14). Young also observed that ‘the whole complexes of partially completed government buildings can be seen in Assosa, testimony to corrupt relations between politicians and contractors’ (Young 1999: 336). Thus Young concludes that Benishangul-Gumuz region ‘is not meeting its potential in either agricultural production or industrial development, and again political factors seem to be the major obstacle’ (Young 1999: 336).

Low competence of the political elites and regional administration officials in the regions have resulted in deficit of governance in the regional states’ overall administrative structures. In most of the ethnic constituencies, the administrative and political elites have assumed key leadership roles straight away without making any preparations or training as how to carry out the new responsibility assigned to them in running the state institutions entrusted to them. Particularly, in Benishangul-Gumuz and SNNP regional states, absence of experience in politics and modern administration among the local elites has created difficulties to build an accommodative political framework through compromise that could facilitate inter-ethnic cooperation and efficient administration. Instead, the political frameworks at the regional, zonal and wereda levels have become an arena of zero-sum politics in which the elites from the various ethnic groups mistrust each other and egoistically fight one another<sup>78</sup>. Furthermore, most regional politicians and officials are not also happy to use experts and professionals from the so-called ‘outsiders’ in leadership positions claiming that the principle of self-administration could suffer. This is partly in line with the EPRDF’s principle that recognizes the precedence of ethnic attachment, and partly, could serve as a pretext to neutralize potential contenders for power and offices.

Moreover, the highly exaggerated dichotomy between ‘indigenous’ and ‘non-indigenous’, ‘natives’ and ‘outsiders’ or ‘oppressed’ and ‘oppressors’ has spread fear and suspicion among ordinary people. The ethnic federal arrangement cadres have made a severe mistake in associating past oppressive rulers’ policies and actions with ethnic labelling such as *neftegna* Amhara and ‘outsiders’ as oppressors. Thus,

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<sup>78</sup> In most of the interviews, many of the informants accused and label negatively the elites from other ethnic groups

such dichotomised labelling by ethnic demagogies has fashioned a categorization of ordinary people across the board as belonging to either to oppressor or oppressed group. Particularly, in Benishangul-Gumuz, despite its potentials for investment, the region could not attract significant amount of private capital. In the region, people who do not belong to the so-called indigenous ethnic communities are often portrayed as ‘subversive’, ‘part of the past oppressive rules’ ‘chauvinists’ and others offensive remarks. Such environment would not encourage bringing more needed investors to the region from other parts of the country. Yet, those businessmen who are operating in the regional state are not even inclined to expand their investment because of the de-motivating behaviour, intention and action of the exaggerated ethnic dichotomy. A businessman argues before investing capital in more extended activities; they want to be sure that the prospect is favourable to recover their money, but at the moment they do not see an encouraging sign from the regional officials. ‘We often hear discouraging and hate speech such as labelling us as ‘outsiders’ by the political groupings’ (A leader of Eder, Interviewee 10 2002: 13). This is can be seen as evidence of the lack of ‘political incentives for economic security’ (Sen 1999: 246).

### **8.2.2 Inhibits population movements between regions and within multiethnic regions**

Ethnic federalism has enforced ethnic entitlement of land and other local resources in the delimited ethnic constituencies or ethnic homelands; thereby becoming an obstacle for intra-regional and inter-regional people’s movement. For instance, there is a high density or over-crowdedness in some parts of the SNNP regional state and less population density in others; alleviating this situation may require migration of people from overcrowded areas to the sparsely populated areas. This has been part of the history of Ethiopia and other human societies. The current ethnic restructuring, however, has made such solution difficult and conflictual. Particularly, in the SNNP regional state, population and agriculture densities are very high in the highland areas that contain 80 percent of the regional population on 40 per cent of the regional territory, in contrast population and agriculture densities are very low in the lowland areas that are inhabited by 20 per cent of the regional population covering 60 of the regional state territory. In highland areas like in the Gedeo, Sidama, Kembata and Timbaro, Hadiya and Guraghe zones, population density reaches between 400 to 500 persons/sq. km and agriculture density is between 197-394 persons/sq. km. In lowland areas like in the South Omo, Bench-Maji and Keffa zones, population density is between 15 to 50 persons/sq. km and agricultural density is between 15 to 16

persons/sq. km. However, in accordance with the current ethnic homeland administrative delimitation, resettlement of people from the highland to the lowland areas could be illegitimate.

### **8.2.3 The ascendancy of elites or elitism**

The ethnic empowerment ideology in the regional states is more concerned in appointing elites from ethnic groups in political and administrative offices, but without due focus on their ability and skill to carry out the responsibility entrusted upon them. As a result of the ethnic empowerment philosophy, the elites ascendancy to power in the regions has become an end by itself; it has opened possibilities for the ethnic elites to access the state's rewarding capacity in resources and political power based on their exclusive rights to occupy all regional, zonal and wereda administrative structures.

It is evident that the new ethnic constituencies have not brought any major improvement to the lives of the majority of the local people; rather they changed the personal of local power holders by replacing 'elites from the center' with 'elites from the local', with both have been promoting the interests of power holder at the center. The former were evidently an extension of the central power at the local areas, whereas the latter are integrated into the system as member of the coalition of the co-opted elites of the 'oppressed'. In this manner the ascendancy of ethnic elites to state power and their access to state coffer and privileges are equated with the satisfaction of ethnic communities' demands for recognition and self-administration.

Particularly, in regional states such as Benishangul-Gumuz and other peripheral areas, the new ethnic state structure, which was imposed on the people, neglected the local tradition of power control and exercise. Furthermore, it has pressured the local people to fit into its mould and aphorism. The indigenous ethnic communities in these areas did not have experiences of running modern state structures, but they were expected to fit in the new arrangement. The underlying assumption of the framers of the ethnic federal project is that local communities and indigenous groups would be provided rights that should be exercised within the political structures and arrangements that are prescribed and controlled from the center. Neither have the indigenous communities in the regional state been asked to identify what kind of administrative structures they would prefer, nor have detailed studies been made to identify and incorporate the existing traditional administrative and legal institutions.

Rather, the regional state formation procedures and setting up of administrative structures were carried out in a very swift way through superficial agreement with the regional elites who happened to be comrade-in-arms in fighting the previous military government. In the process others elites from other indigenous groups have also joined the process through co-option, manipulation and indoctrination without having an appropriate mandate from their communities. The indigenous elites have manoeuvred their communities by propagating the EPRDF's fabricated and exaggerated claims of past oppression and promises of instantaneous ethnic freedom and future prosperity in order to get authentication of their self-assumed positions as spokespersons and representatives of the indigenous communities. Most of the elections that have been carried out in the indigenous communities are tailored to give 'democratic' credential to the self-appointed indigenous elites who have been nominated and favoured by the EPRDF. As a result, the indigenous elites are made highly susceptible to the interest of the ruling party and they are used in serving the interests of the center, rather than their community. The indigenous elites have become instrument of extending central control in the local area, which is similar to the traditional pattern of Ethiopian statehood. The difference, however, is that in the current prototype the rights of ethnic self-administration discourse have been invoked constantly and vociferously in co-opting and capturing the indigenous elites. Consequently, the indigenous communities have no control over regional politics and regional administration, as their leaders are more accountable to the center than to their constituencies.

Despite the claims of the EPRDF, as well as a scholar like John Young (Young 1999: 321) who argues that local political power is in the hands of indigenous leaders, the EPRDF has in fact introduced a patrimonial rule by raising local elites to position of prominence without local legitimacy, in order to make them loyal and entirely dependent on the central rule. This may be a deliberate policy on the part of the EPRDF to alienate local leaders from their own constituencies in order to turn them into devoted supporter to the EPRDF as they become easily susceptible to the EPRDF's manipulation and coercion. However, the ethnic federal structure in Ethiopia is creating tensions between the emerging political elites and their traditional networks and leaders as the new state structures do not have a space for the traditional administrative and legal systems. For example, in Benishangul-Gumuz regional state, in some *wereda* areas in Oromia, such as *Borena and Guji* and, in many ethnic constituencies of the SNNP, such as in most of the special *wereda* constituencies, the traditional leaders and systems have been left out from the political and administrative bodies because the new state structures demand a minimum ability

to read and write while most of the traditional leaders are illiterate. For instance appointment to the *wereda* administration offices requires completion of elementary school. Nonetheless, traditional leaders and elders are still active in the traditional institutions like the traditional courts and mediation practices at their localities. The newly imposed and centrally inclined modern administrative structures have excluded local legal and administrative mechanisms and thus alienated local communities who have neither the required experience nor preparation to run the new state institutions. Thus, the elites' personal promotion goals intertwined with ethnic loyalty and ethnic identification have facilitated the ascendancy of elitism at the expense of the local community.

An illustration for the development of elitism can be gleaned from the operation of the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state. It is evident that the people of the regional state have faced with a severe shortage of essential services that could improve their living conditions, whereas budget spending in the regional state is characterized by constructing luxuries offices, purchasing expensive vehicles and yearning for higher salaries. For instance, the construction of a hundred million birr budget asphalt road in Assosa town is an extravagance in the regional state wherein 90 percent of the inhabitants are living in the impoverished and inaccessible rural villages in which animal diseases (such as *gendi*) are gravely reducing the livestock resources of the community due to lack of proper veterinary services. The huge money spent on the asphalt construction could have been used to expand veterinary services in rural areas to save the livestock and to improve the economic capacity of the regional state through an expanded production and income potential for the people as well as for the regional government.

#### **8.2.4 Increase of ethnic tensions and rivalries**

The regional governments, particularly in the SNNP and Benishangul Gumuz regions, have become an arena of ethnic hostilities and elites rivalries. Inter-ethnic relations are full of unyielding competitions and destructive hostilities, intra-ethnic frictions are rife, settlers-indigenous tensions are endemic, religion and cultural variations are used to exaggerate differences. In the Benishangul-Gumuz region, for instance, rivalries between the Benishangul and Gumuz political elites for key political power, splits within the Benishangul elites due to provincialism and external factors, disagreements and anxieties in distribution of funds, projects, bureaucratic posts and other deputies have become detrimental for effective operation of the regional government. Its effectiveness has been thwarted and its legitimacy has been put into question on several occasions. In Southern Ethiopia there has been age-old conflicts

over control of agricultural or pasturelands between neighbouring communities like Gedeo and Guji. However with the introduction of ethnic restructuring the controversies concerning local resources are inflated into inter-ethnic contradictions by being projected as matters of collective interests of the ethnic group communities that needing ethnic solidarity. Conflict on land and petty quarrels are turned into ethnic tensions and take on ethnic dimensions due to politicised ethnicity and ethnicised politics<sup>79</sup>. As John Markakis (1998) claims many hostilities in the Horn Africa have occurred because of the scarcity of resources; but since 1991 due to ethnic entitlement, resource disputes easily flare up into bloody ethnic conflicts. The bloody conflicts between the Gedeo and Guji, Gerri and Borena communities can be cited as recent examples.

### **8.2.5 Federal interference in the regions facilitates the hegemony of the TPLF**

Intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic tensions within the regional government have opened a good opportunity for the TPLF to divide and rule in order to ascertain its hegemony. Weak and internally divided regional governments could be an advantage for a central government, dominated by a minority ethnic group from Tigray. The TPLF, in order to counterbalance pressures and threats from the major ethnic groups--Oromo and Amhara, which represent about 60 percent of the total population of the country--, badly needs the collaboration from various minority groups in the regional states. As a result, it actively operates in all regional states as EPRDF and as 'advisory'. An informant makes the accusation that the TPLF representative in the region is well known in muddling between the indigenous elites by exaggerating tensions (A member of zonal executive from Berta, Interviewee 8 2002: 11).

Inter-ethnic cooperations have been damaged in establishing genuine coalition governance structures because of the absence of negotiated and fair procedures and arrangement among many of the ethnic group in the SNNP and Benishangul-Gumuz regional states. Stiff competitions are endemic between the elites of various ethnic groups for political power, bureaucratic positions, budget allocations and other interests. This reinforced the EPRDF's claim that the regional governments need federal support and federal interference, thus giving the federal government a good opportunity for interfering in the day-to-day operation of the regional governments through 'advisory', direct intervention in political and administrative decisions, appointment and dismissal of officials and overall running of the regional

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<sup>79</sup> For instance, debate in the council on project allocations in particular area always brings ethnic tensions and antagonisms, because an individual opposition easily translate into opposition to an ethnic group that would be considered as a potential beneficiaries of the proposed project (A member of the Sidama zonal legislative (also member of the ruling party), Interviewee 30, 2002: 18).

states behind the back of the regional leaders. This makes the regional states a trust territory of the TPLF/EPRDF cadres that can install and dismiss officials based on their interests.

Particularly, in the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state, there is a unique federal ‘support’ structure in which the regional state is almost directly managed and followed by the federal government from the center. Similar practices have been observed in other similar regional states like the Afar, Somali and Gambella wherein the federal government has been directly and closely involved in the regional states overall operations. Though some scholars (John 1999: 345; Kinfu 1994) interpret the federal government’s direct involvement in these disadvantaged and relatively undeveloped regional states as the ‘only viable course at this time, many observers question the motives and actions of the TPLF/EPRDF as insincere and self-serving (Vestal 1999; Merera 2003; Ottawi 1995; Siegfried 2003). Many local informants are also very unhappy concerning the way the federal government is controlling the regional states. Observing the modus operandi of the ruling party, the TPLF/EPRDF, in the federal government, one can doubt the sincerity of its motives. The TPLF/EPRDF has always been keen to shape the political arrangement in the regions in the way that suits its interest and objective. In Benishangul-Gumuz, the federal government has been involved in shaping the political power in the region since the inception of the regional government in 1991 by installing its favourite ethnic elites; eventually, in mid-1990s replacing them by another group that was supposed to fulfil its interest better at the point in time. In this regard, the action of the federal government reveals the intention of the TPLF, which is more interested in promoting ‘the surrogate of oppressed masses’ than in nurturing genuine representatives of the local communities. (Vestal 1999: 121). Many accuse the TPLF in playing a conspiracy to keep other regions in a state of crisis and limbo in order to accelerate development in Tigray by diverting resources and budget (Vestal 1999; Assefa 1996; An Elder from Berta, Interviewee 7 2002: 8; A member of the federal legislative from the opposition (from the SNNP), Interviewee 43, 2002: 52; An elder from Berta, Interviewee 13 2002).

Initially, the Tigrian political elites received some support from many of the ethnic communities in the SNNP and Benishangul-Gumuz because of their denunciation of the past ruling groups as brutal and chauvinistic toward minority ethnic communities. But in fact the TPLF is exploiting tensions among ethnic groups for its self-serving interference and hegemonic ambitions. It exaggerates past wounds to create ethnic mistrust and vengefulness. The original support dissipated as the intention of the Tigrayan



elites has become clearer; that is to become a hegemonic power through co-option and surrogate mechanisms that resembles the 'Tigrayanisation' of the regional power structures in Ethiopia. The TPLF may have assumed that because it defeated the military regime and introduced ethnic federalism that it should get a reward by becoming the hegemonic power in Ethiopia; but it is very difficult for the majority of Ethiopians to accept willingly the replacement of an old dictatorship by a new dictatorship. As Tehodore Vestal put it 'meanwhile, Ethiopia, having completed its transition from one Marxist-Leninist regime to another, limps on, wearing the thick boot of authoritarianism at the end of one leg, and the iron of ethnic hatred on the other' (Vestal 1999: 207).

Although the discourse of ethnic autonomy is paramount, in most cases it is a façade. It has been proved advantageous for the TPLF to ascertain its hegemonic ambitions by easily influencing the regional elites who are easily susceptible to the demands of the federal government. The extreme dependence on the federal budget transfers has made the regional politicians highly vulnerable to the central demands and interests. Without adequate regional financial power to finance regional spending, it is unlikely to expect effective regional self-administration exercise in the regional state. In addition, inexperience of regional officials in state administration has opened an opportunity for the federal government for playing an active and key role in regional politics and administration. For example, the Benishangul-Gumuz region is under direct control of the office of the Prime Minister from Addis Ababa. The disadvantageous conditions of the region in facing critical shortage of manpower and finance have given the federal government an opportunity for to take direct control of the region by appointing an 'advisor' directly from the Prime Minister's office. The advisor has a considerable power in influencing decision in key political and administrative matters in the regional state.

In the SNNP as well, the interference of the federal government is paramount from the beginning. The existence of diverse ethnic groups in SNNP is not a problem in itself; the major source of the problem is the imposition of policies or decisions favoured by the ruling party from the centre in compacting the diverse ethnic groups into a single regional state. According to many officials from the regional government,<sup>80</sup> there had been no open negotiation or discussion either with the wider Southern elites or southern community groups to determine the appropriate nature and type of state structure in the region.

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<sup>80</sup> In the interview, almost all regional officials interviewed confirm that there was no public decision undertaken to unite the five southern states into one state, but most of them, except some, particularly from the Sidama and Gurage group, believe that the merger was a right decision. However, opposition groups such as the SLM and SEPDC oppose the process and the merger itself.

Discussion was held only within the EPRDF party and they decided to combine the previous five regional states into a single regional state structure without adequate study or convincing arguments (A regional council member from Sidama, Interviewee 23, 2002: 02). The imposed unity was openly opposed by the opposition groups as well as internally, within the ruling party coalition itself (An ex-Minister in the federal government, Interviewee 31, 2002: 20).

An informant, a member of the EPRDF party, confirms that his party is highly interested in the unification of every ethnic groups in a single administrative entity in order to prepare a foundation for creating a single social, political and economic society in the SNNP, rather than carving out an ethnic homeland for every community by following the demand and interest of ethnic elites and ethnic parties (A member of the regional ruling party from Sheka, Interviewee 40, 2002: 45). It seems that EPRDF is worried by the difficulty in satisfying the demand that can arise from the numerous ethnic groups on the SNNP, which have been promised, ideologically and constitutionally, in establishing their own self-administration. However, owing to the reckless inconsistency of the ethnic federal structure that has granted a regional state capacity for a very small ethnic group, like the Harari with a populations of 20, 000, it is unlikely to convince some of the SNNP region's ethnic groups which contain hundreds thousands to millions of people.

Even if one accepts at face value the proclaimed intention that the ruling party is interested to promote unity and regional strength, the matter has to be decided through discussion and debate in an open and genuine manner among the various ethnic groups and others living in the SNNP regional state in order to hammer out a compromised and negotiated solutions that can fairly answer and satisfy the demands of various disparate communities. The imposed decision, however, contrary to creating a unified socio-political space, has created a destructive pattern by pitting ethnic groups against each other. The two major ethnic groups in the regional state, Sidama and Wolaita elites are caught in a strife to control key powers in the regional government and this intense friction among the elites at the top, as discussed above, developed into tensions and hostility at the community level. The Siltie and Gurage communities, which used to identify their ethnic identity within a broader common Gurage ethnic community, are now split by a referendum as distinct communities. The split has created an antagonistic and hostile attitude in which many Gurage feels that Siltie elites are very opportunistic and divisive. The Gamo and Gofa are not cooperative in their single administrative constituency, the minority Gofa elites have demanded

their own separate constituency, but their demand was not approved by the regional government and thus have remained in the zone without their consent. The 2001 fierce violence in Sheko-Mejenger, that resulted in the death of about 100 people, the displacement of 5000 people and destruction of more than 2000 houses, occurred because of a demand arising out of opposition to the existing territorial and political arrangement.

The Wolaita and Gamo groups have also inflicted heavy damages to each other in mass killings and ethnic cleansing in 2001 due to the failed *Wegagoda* project. The *Wegagoda* fiasco was another illustration of an imposed scheme that was intended to promote integration through political force and administrative fix. It failed devastatingly by causing massive social, economic and political debacle. In addition to the loss of human lives and 40 million birr text book destruction, the *Wegagoda* fiasco destroyed the evolutionary integration process of the four ethnic groups who are in a process of developing a common single language, culture and psychological make-up because of substantial intermix and close communication for generations between these neighbouring ethnic communities. Their language is almost becoming identical, the majority of the people share the same religion and they also identify themselves with the common Omotic language family (An ex-official of the regional government, Interviewee 36, 2002: 33). Contrary to this evolution, the *Wegagoda* scheme has created conflict and hostility among these close ethnic groups that can certainly have an impact for the foreseeable future; the reciprocated killings and ethnic cleansing carnage committed by both Wolaita and Gamo groups against each other will not be forgotten so easily. Evolutionary integration process was forcefully and hurriedly pushed by administrative and political measures; the result of such hasty strategy culminated in disasters that would have long-term consequences. Ostensibly designed, the quick fix integration project of *Wegagoda* has terribly failed and instead promoted fractures and disintegrations that are contrary to its alleged intentions. *Wegagoda* can be explained as an administrative fix that was intended to change culture for administrative expediency, but it ended up in creating administrative inexpediencies by splitting one zone into three zones and one special Wereda, which resulted into four administrative constituencies.

Similarly, forced unification was carried out again in September 2003 by abolishing the 20 ethnic parties in Southern Ethiopia by changing the coalition South Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Front (SEPDF) into a single party structure with the name of South Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Movement (SEPDM)

(Ethiopian Press Agency, 16 September 2003). Though the ruling party claimed that the merger was a demonstration of 'the strong commitment and resolve of the Southern people for unity and integration', the merger aimed in suppressing the increasing demands of the ethnic groups for resources, separate administrative constituency and other sectional rights. Similarly, the merger was a result of a decision by the ruling elites that did not get the opinion or approval of the communities of the various ethnic communities.

## **Chapter Nine: Conclusion**

This concluding part is divided into three sections. The first section pinpoints the major empirical evidence that is directly related to answering the main research question of the dissertation, i.e. how effective is the ethnic federalism arrangement in fulfilling the demands of the various ethnic groups for self-administration and equal representation within the context of a viable Ethiopian state? It also aims to determine how successful ethnic federalism is in promoting self-rule and shared rule simultaneously? In general, in this section the dissertation focuses in identifying the empirical flaws in the implementation of the ethnic federal arrangement. The second section identifies the conceptual shortcomings and immense challenges of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia. The third section will conclude by presenting the contribution or significance of the PhD dissertation, and a recommendation.

### **9.1 Empirical flaws behind ethnic federalism in Ethiopia**

As revealed in the empirical findings of the preceding chapters, the TPLF/EPRDF has not kept its promises in providing genuine self-administration for the various ethnic groups at the local level and equal representation at the federal level. Although many of the ethnic groups find satisfaction in the ideological commitment behind the promise to recognize their identity, language and political rights, in most cases, however, they are disappointed with the actual implementation, which is devoid of genuine self-administration. In addition, at the national level, the federal government has not been organized as a coalition government of the various ethnic groups that constitute the Ethiopian state. Disproportionate to its share and contribution, the TPLF, largely dominates the federal government in a style of imposing its pre-eminence at the federal as well as regional levels by using the EPRDF as a cover to hide its hegemonic position in the Ethiopian state.

More importantly, the ethnic federal arrangement has been faced with a severe predicament that may not be easily resolved due to the inherent weakness of the sole protagonist of the ethnic federal arrangement. As argued in Chapter three, the TPLF has been the major force behind the conceptualisation and implementation of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia. The paradox, however, is that the TPLF could have been the main loser of a genuine implementation of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia. The TPLF, which claims to represent the province of Tigray, would have been at a disadvantage in satisfying the twin criteria of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia: ethnic entitlement and federation. Firstly, in terms of ethnic entitlement, the Tigrayan ethnic group accounts for 6 percent of the total population of Ethiopia,

therefore its share in the federal government, in accordance with the ideology of the ethnic federal formula, should have been proportional to its population share as foreseen by the ethnic entitlement formula. In practice, with the current federal arrangement, the Tigrayan elite and the TPLF have a dominant and leading role in the federal government. Secondly, the Tigray province has been a comparatively highly impoverished and environmentally degraded region without any significant natural resource in comparison to most of the other regions in Ethiopia. Consequently, a genuine federation would mean that the social and economic development in Tigray would be greatly dependent on resource transfers from sources beyond the province of Tigray; this could be very difficult, in view of the fact that almost all of the regions suffer from endemic poverty and scarcity of resources as well. Without the hegemonic role of the TPLF, the disproportional benefit enjoyed by the Tigrayan elite and the Tigray province could not have been possible.

Consequently, the hegemonic role of the Tigrayan elite or the TPLF has been the main factor in derailing the ethnic federal arrangement in Ethiopia. As discussed in the empirical chapter, the TPLF/EPRDF single-handedly carried out and dominated the constitutional drafting process and setting of procedures and arrangements for establishing an elected government that replaced the transition government. In such a situation it is not difficult to comprehend the motives and agenda of TPLF/EPRDF, although it claimed commitment to a genuine ethnic federal arrangement. As its actual performance tells, the TPLF is more interested to protect its hegemonic position at the expense of a genuine ethnic federal restructuring. Here, the most important point to understand is that the TPLF/EPRDF has not been an honest force in implementing a genuine ethnic federalism. Contrary to critics who argue that the TPLF has been excessively empowering ethnic groups, the real practice is that the TPLF is co-opting elites from the various ethnic groups who are accept the dominance of the Tigrayan elite in the Ethiopian state. Hence, the TPLF/EPRDF is not giving power to ethnic groups, but to elites from various ethnic communities in order to stretch its influence and rule. Since the EPRDF has been orchestrated by the TPLF and the TPLF has remained the supreme core member of the EPRDF the implication is that the ethnic federal arrangement has been used by the TPLF in order to extend its authority beyond its own territory. It appears that the TPLF is using the ethnic federal arrangement to install itself in the dominant position of the Ethiopian political space through the support of surrogates and ethnic entrepreneurs who have been rewarded and benefited more than the ethnic community they claim to represent.

Although the TPLF claims that it has been, first and foremost, struggling for the rights of the Tigrayan people for self-determination, its legitimacy in Tigray has not been tested democratically. Nevertheless, it is evident that the TPLF has been able to secure immense moral and political support from the people of Tigray because of its commitment for the assertion and promotion of Tigrayan nationalism. Thus, the ethnic federal arrangement in Ethiopia has been used by the TPLF to establish the hegemony of the Tigray nationalism over other nationalisms, including Ethiopian nationalism. Though it is difficult to know whether the Tigrean people as a whole support or benefit from the strategy of the TPLF, there is ample evidence that the Tigrayan elites are benefiting and have assumed a dominant position in the federal structures disproportionate to their share.

According to the principles of its own ideology of fair and equal representation of ethnic groups, the TPLF, which represents the Tigray province with 6 percent of the Ethiopian population, should have assumed a minority role, if its intention has not been an ethnic hegemony via ethnic federalism. But, because it has operated contrary to the rule of its own game, the TPLF and EPRDF are behaving like an instrument of coercion and domination rather than equality and freedom. As a result, the ethnic federal arrangement in Ethiopia has been characterised by the suppression and oppression. In a nutshell, the ethnic federal project in Ethiopia has become a device for the implementation and protection of the hegemonic position of the Tigrayan elite that has its origin in a minority ethnic group. The TPLF uses a system of patron-client relationship by co-opting of elites from various ethnic communities and regions to serve the extension of its dominant power in order to have dominant control of the resources the Ethiopian state.

By alienating the major section of Ethiopian society and setting the foundation for the unpopular and lonesome journey, the TPLF/EPRDF has been ruling Ethiopia by relying heavily on its military strength. Nevertheless, there has been a lot of resistance from different sources and directions. Since 1991, the TPLF/EPRDF has faced strong opposition from the two major ethnic groups- Oromo and Amhara- that account for nearly 60 percent of the total population of Ethiopia. As discussed in chapter 3, section 3.2, most intellectuals have been unhappy with the TPLF/EPRDF's ethnic agenda; many Amhara intellectuals are hostile to the ANDM, which was formed by the EPRDF to represent Amhara. Similarly, Oromo intellectuals and a significant portion of the Oromo population have showed stronger sympathy

toward the OLF than the OPDO; it has been very difficult for the OPDO to attract faithful members. Since 1991, the Oromia regional state has been experiencing political turmoil, frequent manifestations of resistance from Oromo students in universities and high schools, defections of individuals from the top leadership<sup>81</sup> of the regional government, massive arrests and harassment of civil society groups in the region. In the SNNP, the various ethnic groups in the region who have resisted the dominance of the TPLF/EPRDF in the region formed a coalition party. This political grouping has been a challenge to the ruling SEPDF that was orchestrated and installed to power by the TPLF. As confirmed by international election observers' teams in 1995, 2000 and 2005, the oppositions' coalition could have been successful in controlling the SNNP regional government, if the ruling party had truly been committed to free and fair elections. There are numerous credible reports that the ruling party has been constantly intimidating and imprisoning members of the opposition in the region. The Oromia, Amhara and the SNNP regional states, which are the core regions of the federal Ethiopia and account for 75 percent of the total population of the country, are not genuine allies of the TPLF. The TPLF uses its coercion and cooption strategy to dominate the regions by operating in the name of the EPRDF, which is acting as 'a monopolistic holding company' for the advancement of its sectional interests. In other regions, such as the Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz and Somali regional states, the trend and the resistance have been the same. However, the TPLF/EPRDF, which is determined to protect its hegemony, continues to show its defiance of all resistances and utterly dominates the ethnic federal structure in a centralized manner.

As discussed in chapter four, five and six of the empirical part of this dissertation, the TPLF's co-option strategy has also promoted inexperienced, less educated, submissive and non-popular individuals in the regions. These were calculatingly picked by the TPLF in order to facilitate its ambition of dominating the overall political space in the country. Prominent, better-educated and self-confident individuals are deliberately pushed aside by the TPLF/EPRDF cadres because it is realized that these people might not have been submissive and faithful followers of the TPLF's hegemonic project. Generally, the ethnic federal formula in Ethiopia is empirically flawed; it has been simply used as a device to 'legitimise' the domination of a tiny minority ethnic group over the majority and other ethnic groups. The next section likewise discusses the conceptual weaknesses of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia.

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<sup>81</sup> The defections of the Vice President of Oromia, Hassen Ali to the US in 1999, Almaz Meko, a speaker of the Upper Chamber of the Parliament in 2001, Yonathan Dibissa a founder and one of the leaders of the OPDO in 2000.



## 9. 2 Conceptual flaws behind ethnic federalism in Ethiopia

It is conceptually wrong to introduce ethnic restructuring and ethnic entitlement in a country like Ethiopia. **Firstly**, it is evident that with more than 80 ethnolinguistic groups, it is a gigantic task in Ethiopia to satisfy the rights of all these groups for ‘a full measure of self-government which includes the right to establish institutions of government in the territory that [they inhabit] and to equitable representation in the State and Federal governments’ (Article 39, the 1994 Ethiopian Constitution). It is also a very challenging to select some and to omit others in providing a right for self-government at the local level and equal representation at the national level as this involves a difficulty of establishing a criterion that respects the rights of some groups while at the same time neglecting those of others. Especially, since, the ethnic entitlement and ethnic restructuring policy in Ethiopia has aroused expectations that could not be so easily and modestly satisfied. Although ethnic cleavages have existed in Ethiopia, with the exception of very few groups that had demanded political rights for their group, for the majority ethnic groups there had been no significant political demands along ethnic group lines. Nevertheless, it is the introduction of ethnic federalism that has produced an increasing demand for political involvement and political organisation along ethnic lines. Thus, the projects of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia has further exacerbated the growth of ethnic consciousness and ethnic classification around which a political life should be organised and also giving ethnicity a political significance- ‘ethnicising politics and politicising ethnicity’. Although as argued by some, a highly heterogeneous society may need to have a powerful centre (Horowitz 1985: 620) or electorally and culturally dominant ethnic group or *Staatsvolk* (O’Leary 2001), in order to hold the nation together in a stable federal framework, in the case of Ethiopia wherein the centre is dominated by a minority ethnic group, force and intimidation have become a norm in dissuading ethnic groups from demanding their constitutional rights for unconditional local autonomy and self-government that have promised them. However, the powerful centre dominated by the tiny minority Tigrayan elite, which is more interested and determined to protect its hegemony in whatever way required, is not willing to respect such constitutional promises.

Secondly, since favouritism and prejudices are the hallmarks of ethnic entitlement, it is very difficult to sustain the ideology of ethnic entitlement in the context of Ethiopia which has experienced a long period of intermix and interaction between the various groups. The introduction of ethnic entitlement has

resulted in gross violation of rights of the minority and other groups in many local areas. Many states' officials and local leaders are implicated in ethnic cleansing and massive human rights violations. In October 2002, the Ethiopian Prime Minister<sup>82</sup> admitted that his party and state official were responsible for the 'abuse of the constitutional rights in many places in Southern Ethiopia and he acknowledged that members of the ruling party are using the emblem of the EPRDF as a masquerade to violate constitutional rights. The SEPDF/EPRDF demoted and dismissed one-third of the ruling party central committee members and dismissed more than half of its politburo members by accusing them of various charges like 'engaging in pitting people against each other, squandering public money, creating cliquish working relationships, engaging in acts of parasitism and the advancement of self interest, corruption and anti democratic activities, and creating their own ethnic islands that helped them to abuse their authorities for their own personal gains'<sup>83</sup>. Though, the ethnic entitlement ideology in Ethiopia has presupposed that providing power for the ethnic groups would resolve conflicts in the country once-for-all, it is evident that the creation of more power-exercising centres have been associated with the rise of more power abusing centres as well. As a result, ethnic preferences have become an open policy of discrimination and abuses.

**Thirdly**, ethnic entitlement has created a situation in which the distribution of resources would be scrutinized in terms of a zero-sum politics. It was believed that many of the ethnic groups in the SNNP and Benishangul-Gumuz regions have traditionally shared various common traits in culture, historical experience, religion and psychological make-up. However when it came to the distribution of resources and benefits, every group revealed itself to be uncompromising and fierce in its sectarian demands. In situations where resources are scarce and destitution is chronic and widespread, the incentive for sharing and compromise can be very minimal. By its very nature, ethnic entitlement is exclusivist and egocentric. As a consequence of the recent ethnic entitlement discourse, assertive and exclusionist ethnic consciousness is on the rise. However, the on-going arrangement is not strong enough to answer or deal with the demands arising from some of assertive and exclusivist ethnic interests. As it becomes difficult to create institutions for toleration and concession, this accelerates ferocious competition and hostile

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<sup>82</sup> Reported in Addis Tribune: <http://www.addistribune.com/Archives/2002/10/11-10-02/Meles.htm>, though many opposition groups doubted on the sincerity of the Prime Minister in taking basic changes in this regard, as the main source of the problem, ethnic entitlement, has not been addressed.

<sup>83</sup> Reported in government's news agency, Walta information Center on October 12, 2002, ([www.waltainfo.com/EnNews/2002/Oct/12Oct02/Oct12e5.htm](http://www.waltainfo.com/EnNews/2002/Oct/12Oct02/Oct12e5.htm))

ethnic relations. Thus, the institutional weakness to tackle the emerging factional and sectarian demands of ethnic groups has reproduced more resentment and strife that may only be calmed down through tougher government intervention and punitive power involving widespread intimidations, purges, incriminations and liquidations. Such punitive and coercive measures have resulted in more resentment and resistance, which manifest itself in the form of ethnic clashes, revengeful killings of civilians, ethnic cleansing, resignations and other measures that in turn heighten further ethnic resentment. Consequently, ethnic entitlement in Ethiopia has resulted in vertical and horizontal conflicts. Vertically, the ruling group has been frequently using military force to quell demands from various groups for more rights. Horizontally, the ethnic restructuring has generated more inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic hostilities and conflicts than voluntary and sustainable cooperation. Ethnic tensions and violence in Nazareth, Ambo, Assosa, Awssa, Teppi, Kembata-Alaba, Wolaita, Arbaminche, Gamo-Gofa, Gurage-Siltie, Sidama-Wolaita, Wolaita-Gamo, BenchiMajji, Gedeo-Gujji have been examples of horizontal ethnic violence.

**Fourthly**, ethnic entitlement or preference is more geared to satisfy the interests and privileges of the elites (Horowitz 1985: 677). The elites, which claim exclusive rights in representing an ethnic group, can easily be enticed to exaggerate differences and exclusionism for self-seeking benefits. Secessionism or demands for more autonomy in many areas have been initiated and spearheaded by the elites regardless of the opinion, interests and benefits of the respective ethnic communities. A separate and new administrative structure requires more bureaucratic budget expenditures and resources that can deprive resources allocation for social service programmes and other development projects for the local communities. Moreover, local elites can also benefit from more autonomy or secession because they can satisfy their interests better with the elimination of any accountability to the higher body. It can be difficult for the central elite to convince and shape local attitudes where local elites have a monopoly. The situation becomes worse, as the local elites identify themselves ethnically with the local community, which is the undesirable factor behind ethnic entitlement and ethnic criteria. In a different scenario, local elites can also become an instrument for centralisation through co-option and patron-client relationships with the centre by intertwining central and local despotism.

**Fifthly**, ethnic entitlement produces a weak leadership structure, as it uphold ascriptive requirement rather than criterion based on achievements and merits. Ethnic restructuring in Ethiopia has resulted in the appointment of incompetent individuals in leadership and administrative positions in the ethnic

constituencies. In the Benishangul-Gumuz region, in many areas of the SNNP and Oromia regional states, the elites in power severely lack adequate capacities and proper qualifications to run administrative and political offices; but the ethnic restructuring policy requires that regardless of their abilities the elites should assume leadership in administrative structures. In such an injudicious arrangement, neither the local community nor the regional people benefit. Steps to replace the elites with qualified and ‘non-indigenous’ experts have been met with stiff resistance and resentment. It is unacceptable for local elites to easily give up their benefits, which have constitutional and ideological legitimacy deriving from the policy of ethnic entitlement. There are numerous disadvantaged and minority groups in Ethiopia, which never had access to modern education and did not have a chance to acquire appropriate skills in running state structures and bureaucracies. However, with the advent of the ethnic entitlement policy, many ethnically-based administrative units have been created that are controlled and run by the local elites. Despite their lack of adequate skills and education in running the new alien (modern) state structures, the local elites have assumed leadership and managerial positions in the administrative and political organs.

In the Benishangul-Gumuz region, for instance, the five indigenous ethnic groups were marginal to the process of the state formation. In most cases, the existing social services and other infrastructures like health facilities, schools and roads are largely out of reach for the indigenous communities who live in scattered and inaccessible villages. Under the given circumstances, ethnic federalism is not moving in the direction of closing the ‘gap’, rather it widens or exacerbates it by negatively affecting socio-economic progress through the promotion of a self-defeating development policy based on untrained or unskilled manpower. As presented in chapter five, the bulk of the budget subsidies from the center allocated to the regional state has disappeared in corruption, inefficiency and under-utilisation.

**Sixthly**, ethnic entitlement has become inimical to democratic governance. Particularly, in many of the urban areas, which are inhabited by multiethnic communities, ethnic restructuring has denied the majority of the residents the right to participate in local politics and administration, as ethnic identification has been the criteria for assigning political and administrative responsibilities. In addition, voting for other multiethnic parties in elections is considered by local political elites as a rejection or opposition to the rights of the ethnic communities for self-administration; in some cases this has resulted in massive killing, harassment and expulsion of the civilian population in many urban areas. In

numerous cases from the federal level to local areas, especially in most urban areas, the Ethiopian federal arrangement has become an oligarchic system wherein the few have a right to rule over the majority.

At the federal level, the ethnic coalition formation strategy has taken the shape of a patron-client arrangement, mainly based on personal reward and advancement. The pattern is similar at the lower levels of the federal structure in wereda and kebele levels. In fact, the federal arrangement established through the consent of few elites or groups would be ineffective in controlling or castigating power abuse; this is because the allegiance of the elites or ethnic leaders is built in the survival and keeping the political system intact. Thus, mismanagement and human rights abuse by regional as well as local leaders have been used as a bargaining mechanism for the ruling TPLF/EPRDF to secure the allegiance of the regional and local elites. The result has been the creation of an oligarchy in which the few rule over the majority in a tyrannical manner that neglects the rule of law. Generally speaking, the ethnic federal structures have been accompanied by frequent flare-ups of violence, human rights abuses, ethnic strife and conflicts, misuse of power, inefficiency and corruption. It has become antithetical to its own discourse and promise of respect for ethnic self-administration and ethnic empowerment. As the empirical and conceptual flaws reveal, the ethnic federal arrangement in Ethiopia has been faced by two major obstacles: first the agenda of the minority, the TPLF and the Tigrayan elite to install themselves in a dominant position through the ethnic federal arrangement; the second difficulty is associated with the challenge of providing a self-government rights for the 80 ethnolinguistic groups in Ethiopia.

### **9.3 Contribution and recommendations**

The writing of this PhD dissertation has not only been an academic endeavourer for me. As an Ethiopian, the process has also been a dutiful journey to search for a political solution for a polity that has been suffering from internal conflicts arising from secessionist and regional autonomy demands since 1950s. It is in this spirit that I offer the following remarks summarizing the results of my findings and some suggestions as to the way to indicate the difficult situation facing the Ethiopian society. In this context, I have arrived at the conclusion that a strategy of encouraging ethnic criteria and ethnic entitlement for political organization and political rights is not a viable policy. Thus, it is advisable to discourage ethnic criterion or ethnic entitlement for political organization and political rights as much as possible. Ethnic demands are very difficult to satisfy and also very difficult to suppress. Ethnic

entitlement often creates more demands than the original claims, as its demonstration effect is so strong as to incite more expectations which are difficult to fulfil. Particularly, in poor societies where resources are severely scarce, ethnic restructuring can contribute to the breeding of mistrust and deadly conflicts around the question of resource appropriation. Constructing walls, erecting ethnic pillars are very destructive in the long run due to the narrow and egocentric nature of ethnic demands. Moreover, it is always difficult to dismantle ethnic entitlement once it has been introduced; it can grow into permanent cleavages as the elites harvest more benefits and privileges in the bifurcation. It is thus, preferable and advisable to emphasize incentives for political integration, rather than to encourage cleavage by crystallizing distinctiveness and differences. Seen in the light, however, force is neither the means to bring integration nor to suppress down ethnic demands.

Consequently, in multi-ethnic societies it is preferable to facilitate mobility and integration, simultaneously with recognition and respect of ethnic groups and their legitimate claims. Although ethnic rights and demands are difficult to satisfy, it is important to recognize these in a manner that do not exacerbate ethnic division and ethnic hostilities. More emphasis needs to be given to political arrangements that spur ethnic accommodation such as introduction of election procedure that can encourage inter-ethnic cooperation and ethnic coalition parties. It can also be helpful to produce a more accurate and encompassing national history by treating issues that could trigger ethnic hostility and mistrust very sensitively. A national history must reflect the virtue and achievements of all groups in a respectful manner. It may be worthwhile to refrain from associating rulers and kings with the ordinary people because of ethnic classification. Furthermore, it is important to create a hybrid model that can respect ethnic groups, encourage inter-ethnic cooperation by suppressing hubris and upholding humility; by engineering a political interaction that promotes respect and trust while undermining and dissuading vengeance and arrogant behaviours and activities. A political system that recognises and respects identities, upholds achievements and merits in place of ascriptive requirements and nepotism can lead to the creation of a desirable system based on trust and tolerance among ethnic groups.

Nonetheless, it is not easy to completely discard the ethnic federal arrangement in Ethiopia, as shown by the constant and severe challenges of two major opposing and contending groups. The first group is composed by those who claim more ethnic autonomy and the second group is those who demand the precedence of individual rights over group rights. Although both groups seem to have irreconcilable

positions, it is advisable to consider both demands in order to map out a hybrid federal model that can tone down the major predicaments of the ethnic federal. First, the federal model in Ethiopia needs to consider multiple criteria such as geography, socio-economic factors, settlement patterns, population mix and other essential factors in delimiting the regional states. For instance, most of the urban areas of the country are inhabited by synchronized multiethnic communities where ethnic identities are so diluted and less significant making ethnolinguistic criterion inappropriate and inapplicable. Thus, the ethnolinguistic criterion should be discarded in establishing political and administrative structures in the urban areas. The rural areas are, in most cases, inhabited by a concentration of a specific ethnic community in a distinct territory, raising the need for some kind of structure that could recognize such a concentration. More importantly, the federal arrangement in Ethiopia should facilitate the creation of a genuine multiethnic coalition freely by means of incentives and political frameworks in rewarding multiethnic parties. The federal project should reward ethnic fluidity and intermix by politically discouraging exclusive arrangements and fragmentations.

Second, the federal structures in Ethiopia should adopt a hybrid model that can institutionalise a genuine ethnic coalition through **a bi-ethnic hegemonic and majoritarian system**. The two major ethnic groups, the Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups represent about 60 percent of the population, the lion's share of the intellectual and trained manpower, and a significant territory with paramount contribution in the Ethiopian state. The coalition of the Oromo and Amhara group can make a decisive majority as they are demographically and electorally dominant. Although not an effective dominant group as a single '*Staatsvolk*', or a national/ ethnic people, they can become a bi-hegemonic core and majoritarian to lead the federal project and to nurture a stable and cohesive political community. In addition, the coalition of the other ethnic groups can serve as a check-and-balance arrangement to persuade and require the majority groups to behave in a moderate manner by valuing interethnic bargaining and concession.

In the current arrangement, the TPLF that represents the Tigray province, which accounts for about 6 percent of the total population of Ethiopia, holds a dominant position in the political structure. This has to be changed and the TPLF should assume an influence that matches its share and capabilities. It is totally unfeasible and unsustainable for a small minority ethnic group to assume an hegemonic and leadership position in a context where the consciousness of the people as well as of the ethnic groups is sufficiently mature to distinguish between what is appropriate and what is not. Military force and other

deceptive strategies such as co-option of elites and divide and rule may work for some time, but such strategies can not create a genuine framework that can nurture a workable political system in a sustainable way. It is evident that the willingness of the people to accept the rule of the TPLF/EPRDF has been weakening. In the May 2005 Ethiopia's election, the TPLF/EPRDF forcefully changed the outcome of the election's result (as reported by the European Union's Election observers mission and by virtually all the civil society groups in Ethiopia). The election is a clear message to the TPLF/EPRDF that the Ethiopian people are ready for a democratic change.



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## Appendix

### 1. Checklist of the qualitative interview and list of Interviewees or informants

These questions are used as a checklist for the qualitative interview. The interview process did not necessarily follow the sequence, and also not limited to these questions. These questions served as guide in directing the interview process.

#### **Political participation of the people**

How do the people elect their representatives in regional, zonal, and other political offices?

Do the opposition parties and groups have rights to participate in the elections? How?

Do they support the policies of the ruling party or the oppositions? Why?

What is their views regarding the relationships between the people and the local leaders?

What do they expect and demand from each level of government?

Do they feel that local administrations have adequate power? How?

#### **Ethnic rights and ethnic relations**

What are the benefit or shortcomings of ethnic entitlement?

What benefit (or difficulty) have you accrued because of ethnic entitlement?

How is the relationship between various ethnic groups in local area?

What are the rights of ‘non-natives’ and minority groups in their area?

What are the implications (positive and negative) of redrawing of internal boundaries in linguistic and ethnic lines?

What are the major causes of tensions in their area?

#### **Resource allocation**

What are the procedures of resource allocations at federal, regional and local levels?

Do they feel it is transparent? How?

Do they have confidence in the modalities of financial resource allocation, management and utilisation? How?

How does ethnic federalism affect economic relations?

### **Representation**

Do they feel that they are represented at the different level of governance structures-federal, regional and local levels? How?

Do they feel that their respective ethnic groups are capable of representing the people? How?

Do they consider that all ethnic groups are fairly represented in local, regional and federal structures? How?

### **Anticipation**

What is their anticipation regarding the ethnic federal arrangement?

What are their anticipation concerning the local, regional and federal administrations?

What would they like to see changed? Why and How?

### **List of Interviewees Benishangul Gumuz regional state**

1. A regional official from Gumuz, Interviewee 1
2. A council member from Berta, Interviewee 2
3. A council member from Shinasha, Interviewee 3
4. A member of the regional executive from Gumuz, Interviewee 4
5. A member of the regional executive from Gumuz, Interviewee 5
6. A member of the regional executive from Berta, Interviewee 6
7. An Elder from Berta, Interviewee 7
8. A member of zonal executive from Berta, Interviewee 8
9. A member of regional council from Berta, Interviewee 9
10. A leader of Eder, Interviewee 10
11. A leader of Eder, Interviewee 11
12. A civil servant from Berta, Interviewee 12
13. An elder from Berta, Interviewee 13
14. A civil servant, Interviewee 14, 2002

### **List of interviewees In the SNNP regional state**

1. A member of the TPLF, Interviewee 21
2. A development agent, Interviewee 22
3. A regional council member from Sidama, Interviewee 23
4. A civil servant, Interviewee 24
5. A *Kebele* leader, Interviewee 25
6. A leader of Eder, Interviewee 26
7. A leader of Eder, Interviewee 27
8. A leader of Eder, Interviewee 28
9. A leader of Zonal executive, Interviewee 29
10. A member of the Sidama zonal legislative and member of the ruling party, Interviewee 30
11. An ex-Minister in the federal government, Interviewee 31
  
12. A member of the opposition party, Interviewee 32
13. A member of the regional executive, Interviewee 33
14. A development agent, Interviewee 34
15. An elder from Sidama, Interviewee 35
16. An ex-official of the regional government, Interviewee 36
17. A member of the regional executive, Interviewee 37
18. A member of the regional ruling party from Kembata, Interviewee 38
19. A member of the regional ruling party from Keffa, Interviewee 39
20. A member of the regional ruling party from Sheka, Interviewee 40
21. A wereda administrator, Interviewee 41
22. A member of the regional ruling party from Alaba, Interviewee 42
23. A member of the federal legislative from the opposition party, Interviewee 43

#### List of Interviewees In the Oromia regional state

1. An advisor to the regional president, Interviewee 51
2. member of the regional executive body, Interviewee 52
3. A leader of the city administration, Interviewee 53
4. A chief executive of the Zonal administration, Interviewee 54
5. A leader of Eder, Interviewee 55
6. A leader of the Kebele administration, Interviewee 56
7. A leader of Eder, Interviewee 57
8. A representative of AAPPO, Interviewee 58
9. A member of the TPLF, Interviewee 59
10. An expert from an NGO, Interviewee 60
11. A leader of Eder, Interviewee 61
12. A leader of ANDM in Nazareth, Interviewee 62
13. A representative of ONC, Interviewee 63
14. A civil servant, Interviewee 64
15. A school principal, Interviewee 65
6. A representative of ANDM, Interviewee 66
7. A leader of zonal administration, Interviewee 67
  
8. A representative of ONC, Interviewee 68
9. A representative of the Zonal youth association, Interviewee 69
10. A leader of Eder, Interviewee 70
11. A leaders of Eder, Interviewee 71
12. A leader of Eder, Interviewee 72
13. Discussion with some of the evicted peasants, Interviewee 73
14. A member of the regional executive, Interviewee 74
25. A legal expert, Interviewee 75
26. A civil servant, Interview 76
- 27 J. An expert in a NGO, Interview 77

64 total interviewees

30 interviewees of government officials

27 interviewees of non politicians: mainly elders, *Eder* leaders, experts, civil servants school director, teachers, field workers,

7 interviewees from opposition groups

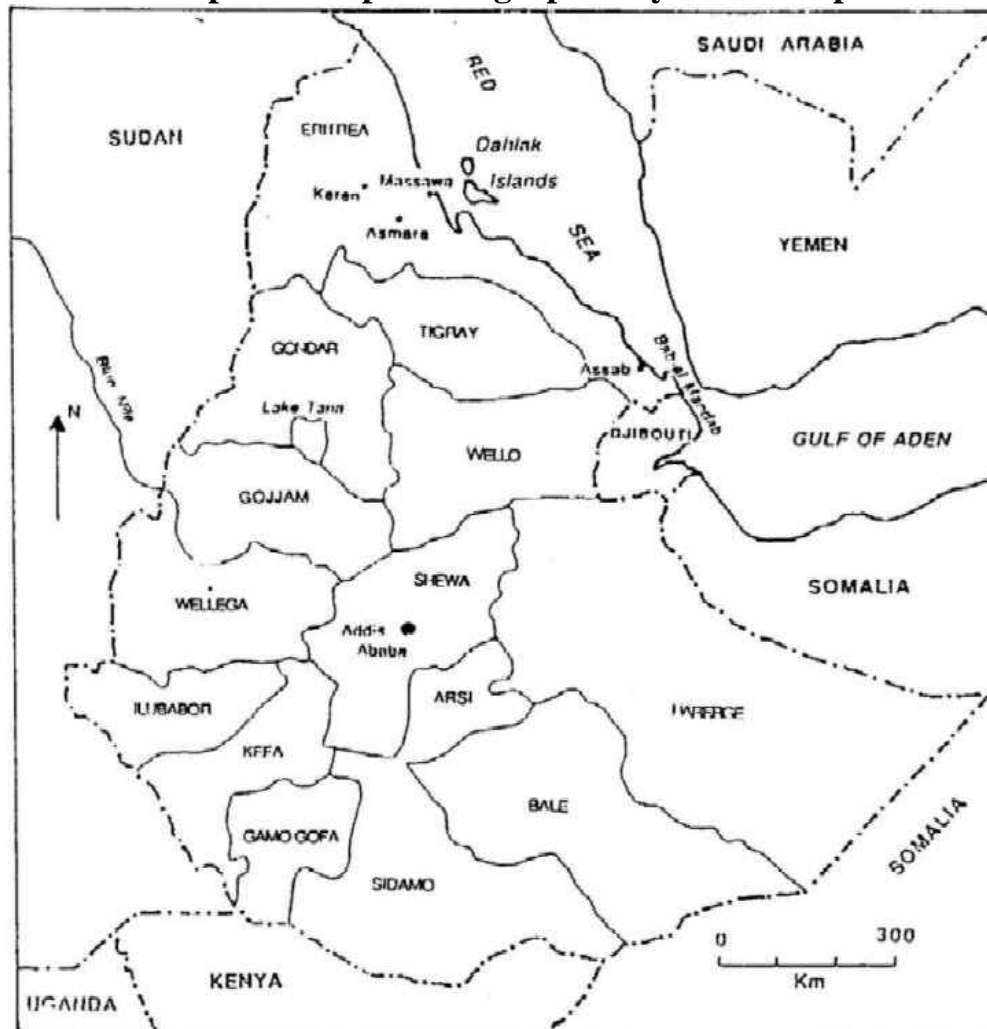
Regional Distribution of interviewees

14 interviewees in the Benishangul Gumuz regional state

23 interviewees in the SNNP regional state

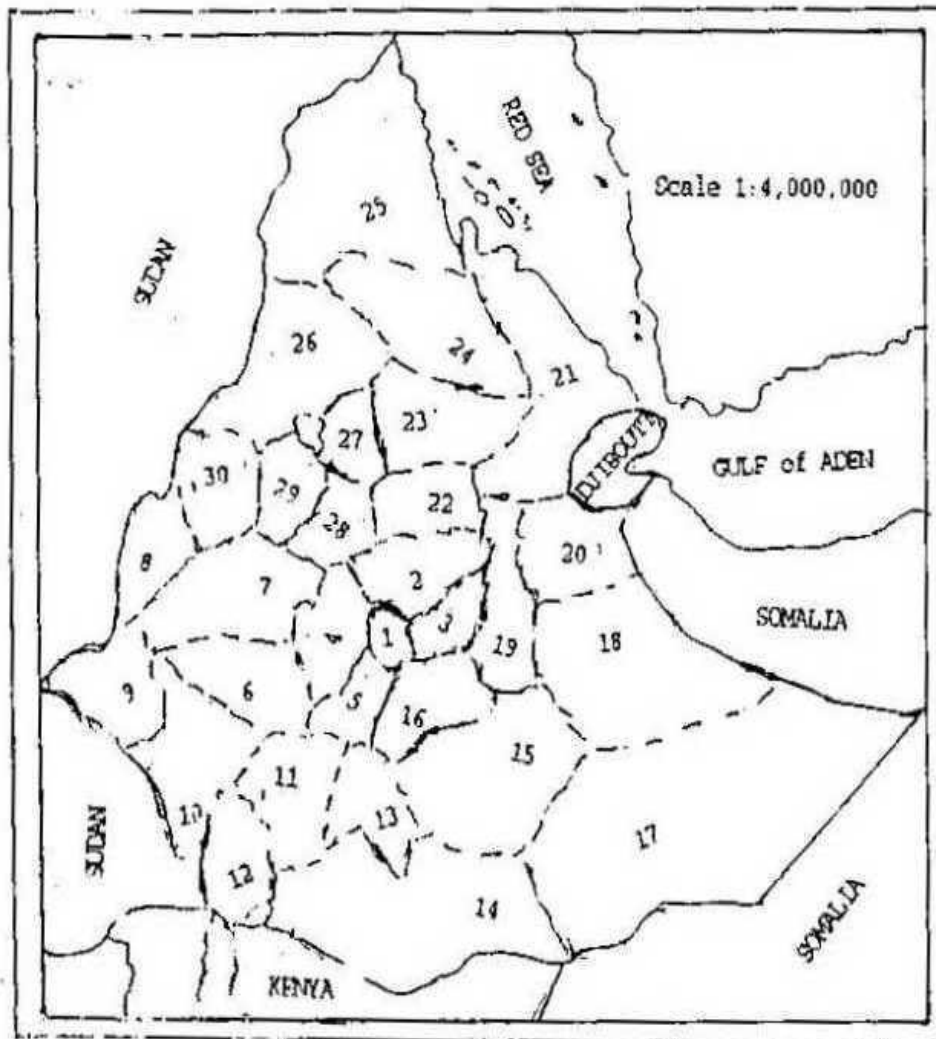
27 Interviewees in Oromia regional state

### Pre-1988 Map of Ethiopia: Geographically delimited provinces





**The 1998-1991 Derg's Map, Regional administration and autonomous regions**

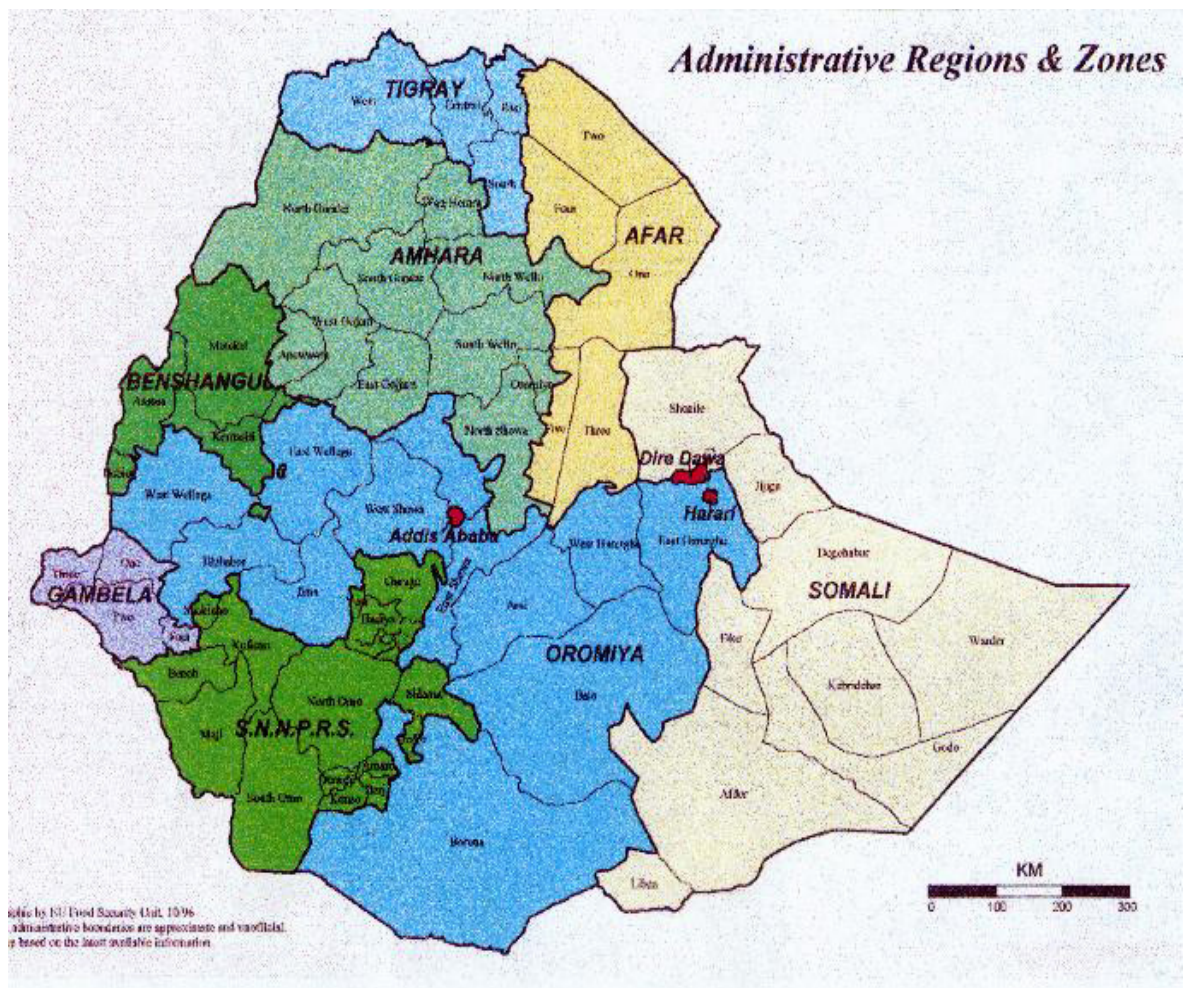


**LEGEND**

- |                  |                    |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1 Addis Ababa    | 11 Northern Omo    | 21 Aseb            |
| 2 Northern Shewa | 12 Southern Omo    | 22 Northern Wollo  |
| 3 Eastern Shewa  | 13 Sidamo          | 23 Southern Wollo  |
| 4 Southern Shewa | 14 Borena          | 24 Tigray          |
| 5 Western Shewa  | 15 Bale            | 25 Eritrea         |
| 6 Illubaor       | 16 Arsi            | 26 Northern Gonder |
| 7 Wellega        | 17 Ogaden          | 27 Southern Gonder |
| 8 Assosa         | 18 Eastern Hararge | 28 Eastern Gojjam  |
| 9 Gambella       | 19 Western Hararge | 29 Western Gojjam  |
| 10 Keffa         | 20 Dire Dawa       | 30 Metekele        |

- — International Boundary
- — Regional Boundary

### Post-1991 Map- Ethno-linguistically delimited regional states



### 3. Ethiopian Languages and mother tongue speakers

#### Ethiopian Languages (with over 500,000 mother-tongue speakers)

Language	Mother-Tongue Speakers	Proportion of Ethiopian Population	Substantial Population in Neighboring Countries
Amharic	17,372,913	29.0%	
Oromifa	17,080,000	28.5%	Kenya: 152,000
Borana-Arsi-	3,634,000		
Guji	4,526,000		
Eastern	8,920,000		
Western			
Tigrinya	3,224,875	5.4%	Eritrea: 1,900,000
Somali	3,187,053	5.3%	Somalia: 5,400,000-6,700,000 Kenya: 312,339 Djibouti: 181,420
Gurage	1,881,574	3.1%	
East Gurage	827,764		
West Gurage	798,202		
Sidamo	1,876,329	3.1%	
Gamo-Gofa-Dawro	1,236,637	2.1%	
Wolaytta	1,231,673	2.1%	
Afar	979,367	1.6%	Djibouti: 300,000 Eritrea: 300,000
Hadiyya	923,958	1.5%	
Gedeo	637,082	1.1%	
Kambaata	606,241	1.0%	
Kaficho	569,626	1.0%	

Source: Grimes, Barbara F., ed. (2000). *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 14<sup>th</sup> ed.

### Selected Ethiopian Ethnic Groups and Mother-Tongue Languages

Ethnic Group	Population	Mother-Tongue Speakers	% Ethnic Group Speaking Mother Tongue
Amhara	16,007,933	17,372,913	100.0
Tigrinya	3,284,568	3,224,875	98.2
Somali	3,160,540	3,187,053	100.0
Sidamo	1,842,314	1,876,329	100.0
Wolaytta	1,269,216	1,231,673	97.0
Afar	979,367	979,367	100.0
Hadiyya	927,933	923,958	99.6
Gamo	719,847	690,069	95.9
Gedeo	639,905	637,082	99.6
Kaficho	599,188	569,626	95.1
Kambaata	499,825	487,655	97.6

Source: Grimes, Barbara F., ed. (2000). *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 14<sup>th</sup> ed.

#### 4. List of some of the TPLF's Companies in Tigray, Investment Projects in regions and TPLF's leadership family ties

List of some of the TPLF's Companies established between the years 1992-1997 EC.

Company Name	Established	Capital	Headquarter
Almedan Garment Factory	1995	660,000,000	Mekele
Addis Engineering Consultancy	1995	10,000,000	Addis Ababa
Addis Pharmaceuticals Production	1995	53,000,000	Addis Ababa
Africa Insurance	1995	30,000,000	Addis Ababa
Almeda Textile Factory	1995	180,000,000	Mekele
Mesob Cement Factory	1995	240,000,000	Mekele
Mesfin Industrial Company	1995	500,000,000	Mekele
Sur Construction	1995	150,000,000	Addis Ababa
Trans Ethiopia	1995	100,000,000	Mekele
Tesfa Livestock	1995	20,000,000	Mekele
Star Pharmaceuticals	1995	25,000,000	Mekele
Selam Bisline	1995	10,000,000	Mekele
Sheba Tannery Factory	1995	40,000,000	Wukro
Segel Construction	1995	10,000,000	Mekele
Rahwa Export	1995	25,000,000	Mekele
Meskerem Investment	1995	40,000,000	Axum
Mega Net Corporation	1993	10,000,000	Mekele
Hiwot Agriculture Mechanization	1995	25,000,000	Mekele
Hitech Park Share Co.	1996	10,000,000	Mekele
Tana Trading House Share Co.	1994	50,000,000	Addis Ababa
Global Auto Spareparts	1992	26,000,000	Addis Ababa
Fana Democracy plc.	1995	6,000,000	Addis Ababa
Ezana Mining Development	1995	55,000,000	Addis Ababa
Express Transit	1995	10,000,000	Addis Ababa
Experience Ethiopia Travel	1995	26,000,000	Mekele
Ethio Rental Share Co.	1995	10,000,000	Mekele

Dedebit Saving & Loan	1997	60,000,000	Mekele
Dilate Brewery	1995	15,000,000	Mekele
Dessalegn Caterinary	1995	15,000,000	Mekele
Berhe Chemical	1995	25,000,000	Mekele
Addis Consultancy House	1995	10,000,000	Mekele
Birhane Building Construction	1995	10,000,000	Addis Ababa

Distribution, Per Capita, of Investment Projects (July 1992 – March 1996)

Region	Percentage of Total Projects	Percentage of Total Capital	Per Capita (birr)
Tigray	14.6	18.3	899
Afar	1.8	5.8	955
Amara	8.6	5.9	77
Oromiya	20.6	14.2	145
Somali	0	0.6	43
Binshangul-Gumuz	1.1	1.6	302
SNNP	4.9	4.2	65
Gambela	0.1	0.1	213
Hareri	2.4	1.8	1556
Addis Ababa	45.2	47.2	3886
Dir Dawa	0.8	0.3	92
Total	100.1	100	748.45

Source: Hansson 1997 Hansson, Göte (1997). *Ethiopia 1996: Government Legitimacy, Aid and Sustainable Development* (Stockholm: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency).

Some of family ties of the TPLF's leadership (as reported in press and also some it confirmed by the author through personal connection)

1. Prime Minister Melse Zenawi – A Chairman of the TPLF and Ethiopian Prime Minister
2. Sebhat Nega – TPLF's politburo and President Meles Zenawi's advisor
3. Kidusan Nega, Sebhat Nega's sister, TPLF central committee member and she was mayor of Mekele for many years
4. Tsegay Berhe (Kidusan Nega's husband) – Tigray province president and TPLF politburo member
5. Aberash Nega (Sebhat Negas's sister) - run for Addis Abeba city council in May 2005 election but not elected.
7. Sebhat Nega's sister is Eritrea's defence Minister Sebhat Efphrem's wife
8. Arekebe Ekubay's sister - the wife of Adis Alem Balema who is the TPLF central committee member, he was ambassador in China . Arekebe Ekubay was a mayor of Addis Ababa (2000 to 2005).
9. Arekebe Ekubay's wife, Nigist Gebre Kirstos, is the sister of Berhane Gebre Kirstos who is TPLF's central committee member and former Ambassador to the USA and current Ambassador to EU in Brussels.
10. Abay Woldu's wife, Turufat Kidane Mariam, is Meles Zenawi's security chief, and TPLF's central committee member. Abay Woldu is a TPLF politburo member
11. Mulugeta Alemseged, who is Meles Zenawi's nearest family member - Meles zenawi's security chief and personal bodyguard
12. General Birhane Negas - Meles Zenawi's Palace security chief and a godfather of Meles Zenawi's daughter.





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