

Ethnic Federalism and Conflict in Ethiopia

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Abstract

Ethiopia adopted ethnic federalism and restructured the regions along ethnic lines as soon as the EPRDF took political power by overthrowing the Marxist military government in 1991. EPRDF has advocated ethnic-federalism by stressing that it could empower and equalize the diverse ethnic communities and reduce conflict. However, 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 conflicts. The aim of this article is therefore to examine the prevalence of ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia and to explore the major reasons of the conflicts that existed in the past four years. There are contending views, for and against federalism in Ethiopia. And though it may be accurate to state that the founding principles of federalism have few ideological shortcomings, it may be that technicality issues that hamper the imposed federal system in Ethiopia. Thus, ethnic conflicts prevailing in Ethiopia may be caused by such technicality problems and the ethnic federal arrangement in Ethiopia needs an urgent reconsideration before the case moves to the worst scenario.

Keywords: Conflict, Ethnic, Ethiopia, Federalism

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1. Introduction

Federalism is a normative philosophical thinking that advocates self-rule and shared-rule in government arrangement, and advocates the division of powers and responsibilities through constitution among national government and constituent units, usually called states or provinces. The philosophy of federalism advocates and maintains the idea that local action in matters of local concern, and national action in matters of wider concern. Federation is the actual configuration that sets out objectives, principles, values, unique features and arrangement of governments. All these emanate from historical and current reality existed during the framing of the federation (Watts, 2008:1). From a theoretical stand-point, the importance of a federal system, as shared by all political theories of federalism, is the sharing of power among regional states. This division of power may lead to the extinction of tyrannical regimes.

The other reason why a federal form of government is chosen over a unitary form is to accommodate divergent local interests that cannot bear centralized rule (Alemante, 2003:85). Owing to this, a federal system of government as a solution was high on the agenda during the early phase of post-colonial politics in Africa as a potential way to reconcile unity and diversity. Unfortunately, such attempts ended up being rather short-lived experiments. Those countries which employed federal systems for a short while and then curtailed them were Congo (1960–1965), Kenya (1963–1965), Uganda (1962–1966), Mali (1959), and Cameroon (1961–1972). Federalism's track record as a source of instability and secession might well counsel against choosing this form of government for Sub-Saharan African states (Alemante, 2003:85). Considering the negative experiences, a number of African countries have ignored a federal system of government. This is because the socio-cultural set-up of the African states is so hybrid in terms of identity, language and religion that the existing social realities might not entertain the federal model. The most striking feature of African identities and communities was their fluidity, heterogeneity and hybridity; a social world of multiple, overlapping and alternate identities with significant movement of peoples, intermingling of communities and cultural and linguistic borrowing (Berman, 2010:2).

Notwithstanding such skepticism, three countries in Africa (Ethiopia, South Africa and Nigeria) have chosen a federal form of government so as to accommodate ethnic diversity. But there are significant degrees of difference in the ways ethnic power is allocated and used in the three federal governments of Africa. The Nigerian federal structure is to give legitimacy to territory over ethnicity by distributing the core population of each ethnic group in several states and thus Nigeria's federal structure helps avoid the crystallization of ethnic identity around a particular territory (Alemante, 2003:100). The South African constitution-makers rejected the claims of certain ethnic groups to self-governing status on the basis of their distinctive ethnic identity, whereas the organization of the Ethiopian state is founded upon ethnic federalism, which uses ethnic groups as units of self-government (Alemante, 2003:78).

Seen from the perspectives of South Africa's and Nigeria's federal structures, Ethiopia's federal arrangement is highly ethnocentric. Implementing the federal system of government on the idea of ethno-

nationalism, as shown in Ethiopia, could worsen matters. To put the idea more precisely, ethno nationalism, a belief claiming the distinctiveness of a particular people and their right to self-rule in their homeland will exacerbate community clashes into clashes of tribalism.

Here, it should be noted that federalism is not the factor for ethnic conflicts; rather there are a number of perceptible modalities that should be taken into account along with federalism such as the practical implementation of federalism, the forms of federalism (symmetric or asymmetric/ congruent or incongruent), the socio-cultural set-up of the society, the degree of autonomy (given for sub-national government), the gravity of the regime's totalitarian institutional structures, and the like. Under the banner of federalism, the aforementioned factors are easily manipulated by predatory elites for their own advantage, and in so doing they spoil the ideological foundations of the concept. The politicization of Ethiopian states changed to political ethnicization as ethnic leaders maneuvered to inherit power (Ake, 2003:3). Ethnicity itself (or our natural difference) cannot be a source of conflict. Rather the lack of understanding on the basic philosophy of federal arrangement (mismatch between theory vs. practice), which leads to lack of maintaining balance between self-rule and shared rule coupled with the politicization of tribal identity cause the ethnic conflicts.

In light of this, the main objective of this article is to show the level of ethnic conflicts caused by the politicization of tribal identity in Ethiopia. This article is organized in to four sections. Section one gives a brief description of the historical background and the nature of the current political system in Ethiopia. Section two deals with ethnic conflict in Ethiopia and section three is about conflict-promoting applications of federalism. The last section, presents the conclusion and recommendations. Despite some human rights reports on ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia, no one has made an inventory of ethnic conflicts according to technicality problems of ethnic federal arrangement in Ethiopia. Thus, analyzing such conflicts with more Ethnic federalism and conflict in Ethiopia rigor made available by the social sciences and modern contemporary approaches is necessary. The method used in the study is qualitative and empirical data such as relevant documents produced by the government (EPRDF) and opposition parties, published and unpublished printed documents, reports compiled by human rights defenders and organizations have been used.

2. Understanding Ethnic Federalism

On assuming the leading role in a transitional government following the overthrow of Ethiopia's Marxist-Leninist regime in 1991, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) declared its target to pursue an administrative path of ethnic federalism. 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 led 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. Thus, 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, 2004). Similarly, a staunch TPLF's advocate argues, 'neither the Amharas and Tigrians 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. Thus, in 1991, ethnic federalism was considered as the only option that could save the state collapse.

3. The adoption of Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia

EPRDF itself and advocates of ethnic federalism portray that federalism has been emerged with the aim to transform the empire-state into a democratic state of ethnic federalism (Alem, 2003). Semahegn (2012), additionally strengths this idea by saying that ethnic federalism in Ethiopia transforms ethnic tensions into cooperation though it is also facing serious challenges.

According to the EPRDF government, three decades ago, being the second most diversified nation in Africa, Ethiopia has been integrated with ethno-linguistic federal political arrangements. Dated on 1991, EPRDF has had engineered ethnic federalism as a means for addressing the national question of Ethiopian nations, nationalities and peoples, which could if not otherwise unfavorably prevailed by the former unitary systems of governments. Many scholars debated that ethnic federalism is a means to mitigate most of the problems raised by ethnic and minority nationalist conflicts (Lijphart, 2002). They tried to convince that granting self-rule to these ethnic groups will avoid the threat of existing as a distinctive group by which they can protect and promote their own cultures and values. Furthermore, they argued that it enables them to foster their interests both as a group and as single individuals.

Proponents of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia argued that unless diversified nature of the country is recognized through extending such a like structures, it would be a mere wish to reconstruct a unified and prospers Ethiopia. Granting the right to self-determination up to secession is the only way to sustain Ethiopia as a nation state.

However, ethnic federalism in Ethiopia has had different implications in relation to managing the multi-ethnic conflicts in the country. Therefore, a further detail on whether ethnic federalism intensifies ethnic conflicts or a means to manage it can be analyzed from the following angles.

4. Ethnic Federalism and Ethnic Conflicts in Ethiopia

For decades, ethnic federalism has been prescribed as a recipe for overcoming ethnic conflict and separatism in divided societies. However, debates on ethnic federalism exhibit two broad contending views.

On the one hand, many scholars advocate the use of ethnic federalism as a way of stabilizing multi-ethnic conflicts. Most scholars who supported ethnic federalism argued that federalism is a means for managing ethnic conflicts than triggering the existing conflicts and/or generating the new ones. Agnew (2005), for example, squabbles, ethnic federalism helps to manage intergroup conflicts that might otherwise escalate into violence and lead to the proliferation of mini-states without much viability. Similarly, David and Donald (2008) asserted that ethnic federalism can play a role in managing political conflicts. By enabling local and regional authorities to wield a degree of autonomous power, elites at the political center can promote confidence among local leaders.

Andreas (2003) concludes that formerly marginalized minority ethnic groups in Ethiopia have been given representation at federal and regional levels. To Horowitz (2005), ethnic Federalism could also be used to reduce inter-ethnic conflicts by the proliferation of points of power which in turn promotes inter-ethnic electoral cooperation, promoting alignments based on interests.

In contrast to the above optimistic views about the role of ethnic federalism in reducing ethnic conflicts, there are scholars who argue that ethnic federalism exacerbates ethnic conflicts (Martinez, 2008). Skepticism about the use of ethnic federalism in managing ethnic conflicts relates in part to the susceptibility of multi-ethnic federations to fragmentation. The USSR, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia, which collapsed after the end of the Cold War, exhibited vulnerability of multi-ethnic federations to conflict and fragmentation. Even some of the existing multi-ethnic federations like Belgium appear in a state of what Graham Smith called ‘perpetual crises’ (Gagnon, 2001).

Since the advent of ethnic federalism that politicized tribal identity, there have been a number of conflicts, cases of ethnic cleansing and unspeakable crimes committed against humanity in the country; and all these have taken place without fair responses from the ‘EPRDF/TPLF government’. Ethnic politics generates hostility amongst Ethiopia’s different ethnic groups that hinders group interaction and entails ethnic conflicts. Due to the policy of the ruling party, mutual suspicion and hostility causing ethnic cleansing and conflict are bound to emerge even at the present time. What then are the conflict-promoting applications of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia? These include:

a) The politicization of tribal identity (Ethnic federalism)

As stated above, ethnic conflict cannot be blamed on ethnicity, but rather on the politicization of ethnic identity by self-seeking politicians. In light of this, of all the modalities of federalism (territorial, multi-national, ethnic, quasi-federal), ethnic federalism, with its politicizing of ethnic identity, is obviously the one that can cause inter-ethnic problems. Research studies also show that if ethnic differences are high and politicized and if ‘federal bargain’ type solutions are difficult to achieve, then decentralization may result in greater ethnic mobilization and may lead to secession. In ethnically polarized countries, ethnic group loyalty induces citizens to vote for their ethnic party, which increases ethnic grievance and the probability of civil war. As can be seen from the table in the attached appendix, there have been a number of ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia since the introduction of ethnic federalism. For instance, due to government-spurred divisiveness, the two tribes (Guji and Borena Oromo) that have historically managed to peacefully alternate control of their own region have clashed due to the fact that the ‘EPRDF government’ has allegedly been inciting leaders of the subgroups. These scholars further state that the current situation in Ethiopia presents dangers that could affect all ethnic groups in the future in Ethiopia. That is, the federal system of government with the politicization of tribal identity could cause deep ethnic division that brings multiple problems such as secessionist movements and a culture of mistrust (Holder et al., 2006:23).

As noted in the foregoing paragraph, the ‘EPRDF’s constitution’ Article 47 (1) classifies the member states of the ‘Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia’ as nine regional states and divided Ethiopians along ethnic lines thus institutionalizing their divisions. Furthermore, the constitution itself has the potential to invite conflict as in the case of self-determinism. Article 39 (1) of the Federal Constitution states: ‘Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has an unconditional right to self-determination, including the right to secession’. Considering article 39 (1), Aalen (2002:59) states that this is clearly a constitutional anomaly, and does not have any parallels in other federal systems today. A government that is concerned with the wellbeing of a nation does

not constitutionally encourage ethnically grouped people to set apart from the whole nation. Taking this article into account, some groups, such as the Oromo People Liberation Front (OLF) and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), have fought against the federal government claiming the right to self-determination up to secession. Amnesty International (2014/15:151) points out that armed opposition groups remained in several parts of the country or in neighboring countries although in most cases with small numbers of fighters and low levels of activity.

Article 39 (1) of the Federal Constitution has the potential to create lasting conflict, distrust and hatred among ethnic groups today. Vestal (1999:165) notes that mistrust and hatred among ethnic groups grow out of the EPRDF's theory of governance. The 'EPRDF government' has sought to govern by playing upon animosities between Ethiopia's different ethnic groups (Vestal, 2009:184). Citing the conflicts between the Dizi and Suri ethnic groups, the Oakland Institute's field research (2014:16) indicates that the Ethiopian government is manipulating existing tensions between and among groups. The Human Rights Council (2015a:7) in its press release states that in every ethnic conflict, the hidden hands of governmental officials have been observed as trying to get political and economic advantages. It was not only the central policy of ethnic federalism that exacerbated tensions and conflicts, but decentralized ethnic-based administrations were also sowing seeds of ethnic awareness and antagonism. In other words, ethnic politics is able to divide the society, and ethnic groups are likely to develop mistrust against one another. In this regard, Turton (2006:14) argues that the federal 'remapping' of Ethiopia along ethnic lines, by imposing a fixed ethno territorial grid on population with a long history of mobility and internal migration, has led to an increase rather than decrease of inter-ethnic conflict.

To get rid of challenges related to ethnicity, countries tend to prohibit discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, to provide individuals with equal rights regardless of their ethnic identity (Alemante 2003:73), and to strictly ban ethnic politics or parties. For example, the multi-national western federations (such as Switzerland and Canada) do not support ethnicity as the chief instrument of state organization. Even in African countries, such as Uganda and Eritrea, tribal or religious parties are discouraged (Mesfin 1999:157). The Ghanaian Constitution, Article 55 (4), prohibits tribal or ethnic-based political parties and it clearly states 'Every political party shall have a national character, and membership shall not be based on ethnic, religious, regional or other sectional divisions'. Contrary to this, the EPRDF Constitution, Article 46 (2), encourages ethnicity and tribal affiliation, and blatantly declares: 'States shall be structured on the basis of settlement patterns, language, identity and consent of the people'. Ethiopia and Ghana are multi-ethnic societies with ethnic inequalities and historical rivalries but in Ethiopia, ethnic politics are the foundation and the lifeline of the TPLF which requires states to be structured as homogeneous tribal homelands, in much the same way as the Bantustans of apartheid South Africa (Alemayehu, 2015). Even during elections, Ghanaian candidates are of the TPLF which requires states to be structured as homogeneous tribal homelands, in much the same way as the Bantustans of apartheid South Africa. Even during elections, Ghanaian candidates are required to get a minimum level of support in all regions of the country (Alemayehu, 2015) but the Ethiopian government has been committed to perpetuating ethnic distinctiveness and political parties organized along ethnic lines. Accordingly, about sixty ethnically organized parties are found in the Ethiopian political landscape.

In view of the above, a non-ethnic, non-tribal multi-party democracy is the only viable option that could guarantee stability, equity and economic development. This can be learnt from comparing Ghana and Ethiopia which are, respectively, democratic and developed, and undemocratic and poor.

b) The design of the federal States

The design of federal units and administrative structures, whether symmetric or asymmetric, may cause problems and conflict. As observed by Aalen (2002:66), as well as Yohannes and others (2005:34), the delimitation of the federal units in Ethiopia has not only created very dissimilar constituent parts and an asymmetrical federal system, but also many regional states with ethnic heterogeneity within their borders, and several states in which the competition between ethnic groups or clans for regional hegemony has led to destabilization and weakening of the regional governments. In symmetric federal arrangements, all federal units have the same powers and the same number of representatives in a second chamber of parliament but in the case of asymmetric federation, all federal units do not have the same powers. For example, Ethiopia and Russia which employ high levels of incongruent and asymmetric federalism, respectively, have experienced moderate to high levels of conflict since adopting their most recent constitutional arrangements (Lancaster, 2012:60). Under symmetric federalism, sub regional states are treated as equals as in the case of the United States but in asymmetric federalism, sub-national governments are treated differently, such as in Russia where each ethnic republic has its own president, whereas the Oblasts and the Krai have appointed governors (Lancaster, 2012:7).

A completely congruent system is one in which no federal subunit has a distinct social or cultural identity. For example, Australia would be a case in hand for a completely congruent federation, despite the fact that the Northern Territory has the highest proportion of indigenous Australians in any Australian state; on the other hand, the Ethiopian and Belgian examples represent nearly completely incongruent federalism, with the boundaries for those states drawn up on ethno-linguistic lines (Lancaster, 2012:24). The principles behind

asymmetric federalism's potential to mitigate civil conflict in a state are similar to those of incongruent federalism (Lancaster, 2012:22). Ethiopia and Russia are somewhat similar in their designs of provincial units with Ethiopia a nearly incongruent federation featuring ethnically based subunits while Russia has extensive asymmetry with a nontrivial amount of subunits given special status in relation to the other federal subjects and the central government. On the other hand Brazil demonstrates completely congruent and symmetric federalism.

Along with their forms of federation, Ethiopia and Russia have experienced civil conflicts at various junctures but Brazil has so far been a peaceful and stable federal state. Citing the quantitative sections of the study, Lancaster (2012:41) has shown that both incongruence and asymmetry have statistically significant effects on increasing the likelihood of conflict onset and the severity of conflicts. Groups that are not recognized under incongruent or asymmetric federations may organize protests to try to gain a greater level of recognition constitutionally (Lancaster, 2012:60). A case in point is the Sidama ethnic groups in Ethiopia having three million people and failing to get the status of a regional state whereas the Harari whose overall population is 185 000 has been accorded a regional state. In the 2006–07 Ethiopian fiscal years, the Harari region received approximately 90 million Ethiopian birr (ETB) (Lancaster, 2012:46) but the Sidama Regional Zone got less since it did not have the regional status level. Inequitable distribution of wealth and poor fiscal management are said to cause problems in federalism. The troubles that these particular ethnic groups display show that incongruent and ethnic federalism can be a recipe for grievance and potentially for conflict if an ethnic group is not recognized as important enough by the federal government (Lancaster, 2012:46).

Ethnic federalism in Ethiopia does not consider the existing social reality of a society so intertwined that it is hard to draw a line between or among the various ethnic groups. In the Ethiopian context, most ethnic groups could not inhabit territorially defined geographical areas. Pointing out the limitations of the federal system in Ethiopia, Assefa (2006:135) argues that a significant number of Ethiopians do not live in the places where the majority of the members of their ethnic group are to be found; they have moved, either voluntarily, in search of better opportunities, or by force, due to the Dergue's resettlement and villagisation.

c) Fiscal federalism

Another important issue that needs much attention is the way in which money is distributed from the federal government to various regional states. In federation, central governments distribute funds to sub-national governments and there is a need to have effective systems of revenue sharing between the central and regional governments that could increase the effectiveness of the federal system. In distributing funds to sub-national governments, the central government could use a variety of fiscal federal criteria such as: population size, level of poverty and revenue generation capacity (Lancaster, 2012:45). In Ethiopia, the powers of sub-national states are constitutionally protected, but in reality the forms of decentralization are quite limited by fiscal, political and administrative centralism. Due to the subjectivity of the parameters and the autocratic nature of the federal government, the fiscal federal funds are not distributed to the sub-regional governments in a genuinely fair way. The management of the national resources does not serve the national objectives of realizing genuine development, reducing poverty and increasing the standard of living. In the absence of an effective, transparent and accountable system, the federal government dominates the process of fiscal distribution, which creates a sense of discontent among the various ethnic groups.

For the structures of fiscal federalism to function properly, there needs to be a fair and equitable distribution of financial resources between the central government and the states (regions). Where this does not happen, there will obviously be a strong potential for conflict. For instance, a great deal of dissatisfaction in the federal-provincial relationship in Pakistan has been observed around the distribution of financial resources. In the Ethiopian context, regional states have a weak fiscal autonomy and they have to depend on the federal government's allocation of funds, which is quite unbalanced (Lancaster, 2012:45).

d) Dominant-party governance

In a similar vein, dominant-party control along with an undemocratic nature of a given state could be another factor that could create conflict among ethnic groups. Both the EPRDF in Ethiopia and the ANC in South Africa have dominated elections since the advent of federalism in the 1990s, but South Africa is relatively democratic and Ethiopia authoritarian; South Africa has a relatively advanced economy, but Ethiopia does not (Dickovick, 2014). When the less secure People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Nigeria is also taken into account, it may be said that dominant-party governance holds across the range of regime types from a relatively democratic South Africa through the flawed democracy in Nigeria to the exclusionary authoritarian system in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian federal structure appears to be that of one-party state governance, which is characterized by highly concentrated and centralized powers maintained by totalitarian institutions such as the military, other security organs and state-controlled mass media.

Despite the fact that the EPRDF has had a federal-like system in theory, the centralized power coupled with authoritarianism and undemocratic nature of the regime equates the government with the communist party of USSR. The collapse of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia created a situation in which the effectiveness of constitutional federal structures has been questioned. Some scholars have argued that democratic

deficits in communist countries as well as federal systems, which were organized around national groups, promoted nationalist movements to their eventual fall as federations (Bunce, 2004).

One of the most significant reasons for the formation of a federal government has been to combat tyrant regimes by decentralizing the powers of the government. But an attempt to mix Marxist ideology of one-party rule with federalism is believed to create contradictory scenarios. The former indoctrinates centralization of political power while the latter teaches decentralization of power. As it is quite evident today in Ethiopia, the blending of two contradictory ideologies coupled with the modalities of the federal structures (such as ethnic federalism, asymmetric and incongruent forms of federalism, dominant-party governance) provide valid reasons for the prevailing ethnic conflict in Ethiopia.

An attempt has been made here above to give an overview of federalism, mainly focusing on its forms and types. In a nutshell, in a multi-national and multi-cultural country, federalism might be an effective method of bringing about political stability and order. However, inappropriate application of the principle in a specific context, such as that of an authoritarian and undemocratic government, may yield just the opposite results, which may contribute to ethnic clashes and conflicts, and to disintegration of national unity.

5. Conclusion Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

The Ethiopian government/EPRDF/ introduced ethnic federalism to address the national questions because in the pre-federation of Ethiopia there was ethnic inequalities, civil wars and ethno-nationalist call for self-determination including secession. The core justification behind the current Ethiopian ethnic based federal arrangement is to facilitate a fertile ground for the various nations and nationalities to have a say in their own affairs with little control from the center or any other dominant group.

Ethnic federalism has failed to solve ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia. Conflicts have become very common between ethnic groups. These conflicts have led to the death of many innocent people, the destruction of property, and the dislocation of many people. Universities have also become the center for ethnic conflicts and are frequently closed due to ethnic clashes. Moreover, due to ethnic conflicts ethnic minorities are being expelled from various regions.

Ethnic conflict is caused by the politicization of ethnic/tribal identity by self-seeking politicians. The predatory elites are applying ethnicity as a fuel of ethnic stratification based on identity as a major criterion. They have diverted the viable and vibrant multicultural federal project to Con-federal arrangement that is the central government is weak than its members and failed to manage and coordinate the common areas of interest among the states.

5.2. Recommendations

Ethnic federalism in Ethiopia enables to recognize the diversity of distinct ethnic groups specially by granting them an opportunity to speak by their own languages. However, it also led to ethnic conflicts by which different ethnic groups mistrust each other and, as a result, endangered the sense of nationalism. Thus, it is highly recommended that the recognition of diversity should not go at the expense of national ideal.

The federal structures in Ethiopia should adopt a mixed federal system that guarantees ethnic groups' self-government with high inducements for integration and inter-ethnic collaboration so as to maintain the unity and integrity of Ethiopia. Quite number of studies pinpoints that one of the courses in conflict prevailing in Ethiopia is the disparity in sharing, distribution, and shaping of power and wealth among the peoples of the country. Therefore, consociation governance or structural and functional power sharing based on the principle of 'equity and law' should be introduced. More specifically, this study recommends that proportionality in civil service equipment, a higher degree of autonomy for each segment to run their internal affairs and constitutional vetoes for minorities have had a paramount importance for Ethiopia.

The secession right granted by the 1995 FDRE constitution must be repealed and then replace by consensual secession which is negotiated secession that happens when the constitution does not say anything about secession. This typology of secession does not consider secession as of a right or as a best alternative of managing diversity rather it considers secession as a last resort.

Ethiopia has to create a "national public" to overcome conflicts caused by recent constitution and historical claims of various groups. This article recommends that it is better to re-arrange the ethno-linguistic borders delineated by the constitution, which should be the first step towards depoliticizing ethnicity.

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