

# IPS Anthology of Peace and Security Research Volume 3

Institute for Peace and Security Studies in  
Collaboration with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung,  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



December, 2012



# IPSS

## **Anthology of Peace and Security Research Volume 3**

**Institute for Peace and Security Studies in  
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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**



**FRIEDRICH  
EBERT  
STIFTUNG**

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## Introduction

It has been over two years since the Institute for Peace and Security Studies of Addis Ababa University made the decision to publish five selected theses from each graduating class. There are two objectives for this initiative. First, we aim to disseminate research findings to policy makers and scholars. Second, we want to encourage students to be thorough in their research. To date, the Institute has published two books that have been widely circulated to academics and policymakers in Ethiopia. The publications reward students for their efforts in producing high quality theses. Many of our students are able to meet the demanding requirements of their degrees and also produce high quality theses for publication. This has been a source of encouragement for us to continue with this project. The five selected theses raise relevant policy issues in peace and security. The arguments and findings stated in each of the theses in no way represent the opinion of the Institute and are strictly owned by their writers.

The first thesis in this anthology was written by Abraha Tesfay, who discusses the dynamics of inter-communal conflict in North-East Ethiopia by using the cases of the Wejerat in Tigray and neighboring Afar. The study emphasizes the underlying causes, dynamics and trends of the conflict, recognizing that this requires an understanding of the relationship between the two groups in connection with their historical legacy during times of both peace and instability. The culture of interdependence and symbiotic relations between the two communities known as fukur (close friendship) and gereb (joint institution to solve conflict) have now become problematic. This study illustrates the gravity of the problem by underscoring the importance of timely intervention and grassroots level studies that focus on addressing root causes rather than treating symptoms of already existing problems.

The second paper was written by Alagaw Ababu and titled, “Entrenching the culture of peace in Ethiopia: Challenges and Opportunities”. This study examines the culture of peace across the aspects of democracy, non-violent political struggle, and inter-ethnic and inter-religious tolerance and solidarity in Ethiopia. The paper discusses some of the alleged challenges in building a culture of peace. These constraints include authoritarian political culture, lack of inclusiveness of the democratization process, unfavorable socio-economic conditions and the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). A summary of research findings and key priority areas is then presented.

Haileyesus Muluken wrote the third paper, titled, “Religious Tolerance and Tension between Orthodox Christianity and Islam Religion in Gondar Town, North West Ethiopia”. The findings of this study reveal the existence of various causes and actors in the conflict between Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Gondar town. As a result,

provocative religious propagation, lack of a clear legal regime regarding religious matters, religious extremism, lack of understanding and misapplication of freedom of religion, new identity consciousness, lack of good governance, competition over ritual and burial sites, historical factors, national religious problems, and globalization and external involvement were found to be the causes of religious intolerance between the two communities.

The fourth paper, “Trends and Responses to Terrorism in the Horn of Africa: The Ethiopian Experience” by Muluwork Gebre Gessesse, identifies multiple causes of terrorism for instance the collapse of the Somali state, poverty, ideological differences, and religion as an organizing principle for terrorist activities. Fuelled by sophisticated international networking, financing and technology, fertile ground for the prevalence of terrorism has been created by loosely controlled and porous borders, conflicts among divided communities and firearms. Considering the trends, consequences and means employed to perpetrate these acts, terrorism is a serious threat to the overall well being of the sub-region. Hence, preventive and defensive mechanisms have been recommended as counter terrorism measures.

The fifth paper, written by Yidneckachew Ayele, is titled, “Ethnic Conflict Management and Conflict Transformation: The Case of Derashe and Konso in Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s Region (SNNPR)”. The main objective of this study was to explore transformative peace building in ethnic conflict management in the Light of the recent experiences of the Derashe and Konso ethnic groups in Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s Region (SNNPR). The paper attempts to elucidate the relevance of conflict transformation theory in establishing internal harmony and the co-existence of different ethnic groups. The study discovered the relevance of both constitutional macro-political decisions and micro-level ethnic conflict management processes in exploring and adapting transformative strategies of bottom-up peace building. The study also produced analytical information about the nature of conflict between the Konso and Derashe ethnic groups, the conflict management process and its transformative dimensions.

I hope these selected theses will advance your knowledge on research in the area of peace and security.

**Mulugeta Gebrehiwot Berhe**

Director

Institute for Peace and Security Studies

Addis Ababa University

## Preface

This publication is a collection of five theses submitted to the Institute of Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) of Addis Ababa University.

The realization of this publication was a true partnership between two institutions: the Institute of Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), which share a common interest in education, research, dialogue, and international understanding.

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung is a German political foundation committed to the values of social democracy. It runs various projects in more than 100 countries. The Foundation promotes dialogue on democracy and development broadly-contributing to peace and security and the maintenance of solidarity in a globalized world.

FES Addis Ababa is also a part of a close network of FES offices in Eastern Africa. It works closely with other offices in Nairobi, Kampala, Dar Es Salam and Khartoum. Within this network of Eastern African Offices, FES Addis is specializing in Security Policy Issues. Actually, it is the regional competence center on Security Policy for FES Eastern African regional work

FES would like to extend its gratitude to its partnering organization IPSS for the invitation to support such an initiative. I am also indebted to IPSS Staff and the Staff of FES for organizing the process of this publication. Particularly, my thanks go to those who have contributed to the success of this series: Miriam Mamo, Helen Yosef and Tigist Yeshiwas (IPSS), Selam Abraha and Maria Bramer (FES). Without their thorough collaboration this would not have been possible.

It is our sincere trust and belief that you will find this publication revealing and helpful for policy makers and practitioners in the field of Peace and Security within Ethiopia and the Eastern African Region.

**Arne Schildberg(Mr.)**

Resident Representative, Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung



# Section 1

**Dynamics of Inter-Communal Conflict in  
North-East Ethiopia:**

The Case of Wejerat People and Their  
Neighboring Afar

**Abraha Tesfay**

# Dynamics of Inter-Communal Conflict in North-East Ethiopia: The Case of Wejerat People and Their Neighboring Afar.

Abraha Tesfay

## Abstract

The central theme of this study was to examine the dynamics of inter-communal conflict between the Wejerat and Afar neighbors in north-east Ethiopia. The study gives emphasis to the underlying causes, dynamics and trends of the conflict recognizing that this requires an understanding of the relationship of the two groups in connection with their historical legacy at times of both peace and instability. To this end, both primary and secondary sources were used. Nonetheless, due to the fact that either the recent conflict is less known and much neglected, or literature on Wejerat-Afar conflict is hardly available, secondary data have lesser share making primary data gathered via fieldwork the principal source of information. Data gathering methods included in depth interviews, focus group discussions and personal observations conducted during public reconciliation meetings of both communities at different sites. The research methods employed for this study were descriptive and explanatory qualitative data analysis.

The Wejerat and Afar communities have a long history of socio-economic interaction. Prior to 1991, these people used to live peacefully. Above all, conflicts were resolved via the local joint institution called gereb. But after 1991, their relationships kept worsening while violent conflicts continued to persist. The findings of the study revealed that the causes of the conflict are related to socio-cultural and economic structure at and security-connected variables. Government intervention was too little and usually too late focusing only on treating symptoms of the problem rather than addressing its root causes. The old pasture and water-related combats have shown a paradigm shift with the intention of gaining territorial expansion. This aggravated the situation and hindered sustainable peace in the area. Consequently, the conflict became catastrophic at one time and subsided at another time. This persistent conflict with non-violent or violent behavior, resulted in loss of life, property damage, violation of peoples' fundamental human and constitutional rights, frequent insecurity, and reduced free movement and development efforts in the conflict sites. The culture of interdependence and symbiotic relations between the two communities like fukur

(close friendship) and gereb (joint institution to solve conflict) have now fallen into trouble. This illustrates the gravity of the problem.

Thus, persistent efforts are required to bring about a negotiated and non-confrontational commitment on the part of the two groups.

To this end, this study underscores the importance of timely intervention and grassroots level studies that focus on addressing the root causes rather than treating symptoms of the problem. Above all government officials of Afar and Tigray at all levels should work hand in hand with the local communities and give credit and recognition to the deep-rooted local institution, gereb, so as to strengthen its conflict prevention and management roles necessary to boost peace.

***Keywords:*** *conflict, inter-communal conflict, conflict dynamics, gereb, Wejerat and Afar*

# Chapter One

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background overview

Conflict is a worldwide reality that knocks at the door of developed and developing nations (Jalali and Lipset, 1992). Among other conflicts, ethnic [communal] conflict is one of the susceptible lines of confrontation (Wolf, 2006) to which Africa is one of the vulnerable continents. Inter-state and intra-state conflicts are actual and potential manifestations of Africa. Conflicts in Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the like are some illustrative examples of ethnic conflicts that brought about adverse consequences in the post cold-war era (Hussein, 2003).

The Horn of Africa takes the major share of the violent conflicts. The area is not only socially heterogeneous and politically unstable but also vulnerable to inter-state and intra state conflicts. Conflicts in the region are many and interlocking ones that have internal and external dimensions (Gambari A., 1991). Communal conflict is one dimension of intra-state conflict in Africa. As Lobell (2004) states, the nature and causes of conflicts include, among others, severe economic crises, demographic pressures, deterioration of infrastructures and public services, external pressures, or internal conflicts between actors in line with the legitimacy of existing institutional arrangements. All these can undermine the ability of the state to guarantee security within its territory.

Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic country where diverse people live together (Mellese, 2008; Abeje, 2006). As a multi-ethnic country, it is not an exception to facing ethnic confrontations. Despite differences in degree, extent, causes and actors of communal conflicts, Ethiopia has faced many inter-communal conflicts at different periods. Abeje (2006) claims that although ethnic differentiation in Ethiopia has been taken as one dimension of its cultural and historical treasures, it seems, however, that the internal divisions are more of a curse than a blessing in its development process. The Dizi-Surma conflict (Abeje, 2006), the Afar-Issa conflict (Asnake, 2004; Tadesse and Yonas, 2005), the Afar-Karrayu conflict (Ayalew, 2001), the Guji-Geddo conflict (Hussein, 2002), the pastoral and non-pastoral conflict (Abera, 2009) and the like are some evidences for the recurrence of inter-communal conflicts in Ethiopia.

Patterns of relationships between ethnic groups in Ethiopia have historically been experienced as both obliging and conflicting (Asnake, 2002). Since the 1890s, there have been conflicts between various pastoral communities. Some of the conflicts may be referred to as low intensity while others were more serious and troublesome. These tit-for-tat reactions between pastoral communities were not only occurring within state borders but also across the national borders of countries like Ethiopia and Kenya (Getachew, 2002). The very motives of the then inter-communal conflicts were mainly attributed to traditional competitions of ethnic groups over such common resources as water points or grazing land, social values, economic issues (cattle raiding), and some others like the need for local autonomy in the past decades (Buli, 2001). Actors of the conflict were both communities and local governments. Conflict, therefore, is not a new event. Nevertheless, there is no consensus among scholars about the alleged escalating trends of current inter-group conflicts in agro-pastoral and pastoral areas of Ethiopia and other East African countries (Hussein, 1999).

Contrary to the above idea, some argue that current conflicts differ from the earlier ones in terms of frequency, intensity, causes and actors involved and their effects on the communities (Getachew, 2002). The dynamics of conflicts in Ethiopia may be analyzed in the light of past and ongoing complex process of political liberalization and ethnic federalism-based policies that have been taking place since the early 1990s.

Relating to this, Hagmann and Alemaya, 2008 argue that post-1991 administrative decentralization is a major driving force in struggles over resources between trans human herders in Ethiopia's peripheral regions. The country witnessed a major departure in the arena of national politics since the early 1990s. Ethnic federalism was introduced as a political instrument to end the past conflict-ridden ethnic relations in the country (Asnake, 2002; Getachew, 2002). However, the political changes aimed at rebuilding the Ethiopian state encountered sets of challenges and opportunities in the management of inter-ethnic conflict and tensions (*ibid*). Pastoral and agro-pastoral communities were the most vulnerable groups in such inter-communal conflicts in lowland areas. Some previous studies suggest that violent inter-ethnic conflicts have been increasing in recent years.

Relating to this, Getachew (2002) claims that pastoral communities in the lowland areas of Ethiopia face more threats to their mode of life and survival nowadays than earlier times. In the post-1991 period, several episodes of inter-communal tensions and conflicts over territorial issues have taken place between regional boundaries. To mention a few, inter-ethnic conflicts between the Borena and the

Gerri, the Afar and the Issa, the Guji and the Gedo (Asnake, 2002), the Issa and the Ittu-Kereyu, and the Afar and the Kereyu Oromo (Getachew, 2002) are reflections of the current inter-ethnic conflicts.

All these resulted in deaths of thousands of people and destruction of properties (*ibid*). The lowland areas are now marked by budding insecurity resulting from possessions of firearms by all the pastoral, agro-pastoral, and farming communities (Getachew, 2002).

In contrast to this idea, Yayneshet and Kelemework (2004) argue that the frequency of inter-community conflict involving the Afar and Tigrrian highlanders [in Ethiopia] over resources has declined over the last few decades. Economic interdependence, cross-cultural interactions and emergent power balance between the two communities were cited as reasons that alleviated the conflict. However, various reasons are given for the escalation of inter-communal conflicts in Ethiopia despite the disagreement on their trends among scholars. Competition over scarce resources, diminishing land resources, institutional failure, bad governance, degradation of customary laws in managing resource-oriented conflicts and related issues, political marginalization, and dispersion of small arms throughout the pastoral areas are among those at the forefront. According to Tigist, because of the very weak state presence in pastoral communities and government's inability to ensure security, they habitually arm themselves to prevent cattle rustling and armed attacks. Violent competition over limited resources and cattle rustling fuel the demand for firearms. Undeniably, possessing firearms in a pastoral community is viewed as a necessity for self-defense and as a symbol of supremacy. Pastoral communities in Ethiopia are, thus, tantamount to underdevelopment and armed violence (Tigist, 2010).

Most importantly, it is claimed that the House of Federations, despite its constitutional mandate, is not on the right track to address border-oriented inter-group conflicts among/between regions. Conflicts in the pastoral areas affect not only conflicting regions but also the wider communities in the regions. For instance, the common regional borders between Amhara, Afar, Oromia, and Somali regions have become a safe haven for banditry and movement of rebel groups because of the frequent inter-group conflicts along the border areas (Getachew, 2002). This has a national implication beyond regions. It destabilizes relationships between neighboring administrative regions and ethnic communities, curbs steps forward and invites poverty.

As constituents of the Ethiopian pastoralist and agro-pastoralist setting, the Wejerat-Afar communities in my study are also prone to such a dilemma. Further,

the study areas are the least studied compared to other similar inter-communal conflict sites of Ethiopia.

## 1.2 Overview of Wejerat-Afar Relationship

Since time immemorial, relations of the Wejerat and distant Afar communities have historically been full of hostility. They have long been intertwined in prolonged violent conflict which has been involving a range of causes, motives and actors at different epochs. Alterations in the contexts of conflict have been contributing to the nature and dynamics of the conflict. This resulted in human and material loss on both sides of the communities. Ironically, the neighboring Afar had good relations with Wejerat people via *gereb* institution and the Wejerat also kept the *gereb* door open to include the distant Afar communities. Because of this, like the neighboring Afar communities, the distant Afar could also join the long-established and deep rooted communal institution of *gereb* to address inter-communal problems together. Inclusively, the *gereb* has become a joint institution of the two communities since 1940s as it included not only the nearby neighboring Afar but also the distant communities of the ethnic group.

The institution has for a long period of time remained a central pillar in resolving conflicts, maintaining peace and security, and developing symbiotic relationships between the two ethnic groups. Nonetheless, there have been conflicts at times between the Wejerat and the neighboring Afar. Incidents of inter-ethnic homicide have been common on the Wejerat-Afar border areas. Some empirical studies suggest that the primary cause of contemporary Wejerat-Afar conflict is a problem of access to water and grazing land (Abera, 2009). However, Kelemework (2006) gives more emphasis to the historical legacy of the two ethnic groups as a cause of the current conflict. Moreover, he claims that it is more individual initiated than communal. Though not mutually exclusive from regional and national realities, the Wejerat and Afar conflict puts great focus on local dynamics of particularly the post-1991 periods as the administrative changes at national and local levels have brought about negative relations between the two communities. The changes and protracted social conflicts have negatively affected the smooth running of economic and social relations.

The changing nature of causes of the conflict and its manifestations introduced new elements to hamper the function of historically established joint-institution (*gereb*). Despite attempts made at different times to heal such aloof relationships via local institutions, the smooth relationship between the two ethnic groups is still on and off. Irrespective of the growing research interests in the area of inter-ethnic conflicts in

Ethiopia, the long-running tension between the two groups has not been given any attention by governmental or non-governmental bodies.

Thus, the Wejerat Afar conflict has not been thoroughly researched independently. In the absence of an exhaustive empirical research on the conflict, it is uncertain whether to categorize it more as a conflict of resource competition, individual interest or historical legacy. A solution to the problem requires highly pertinent and sound understanding and interpretation of the conflict circumstances. Hence, this study intends to analyse the changes in the context of conflicts that have contributed to the nature and dynamics of the quarrel between the groups and fill some of the apparent gaps not adequately addressed by previous studies.

The principal objective of this study is to generate evidence-based data about the root causes of the conflict, actors' interests and positions as well as possible remedies tried out in resolving the conflict in view of the dynamics and trends of the conflict across time and space. To this effect, it tries to:

- a. assess the core causes of the conflict and actors involved, their interests, needs and positions;
- b. examine the effects of the conflict on both ethnic groups and their regional security
- c. analyze the dynamics and trends of the conflict in view of social, economic, historical and political transformations, and
- d. describe the various interventions made so far by local conflict resolution institutions and the state in managing the conflict

The research questions designed to guide this study are:

- a. What are the root causes that lead the Wejerat and Afar neighbors into recurrent conflict?
- b. Who are the key actors and what interests, needs and positions motivate them?
- c. How can the dynamics and effects of the conflict be explained in view of the socio-economic, historical and political transformations in Ethiopia?
- d. What approaches are being employed to handle conflicts in the study area?

### 1.3 Research Design and Methodology

The study area covers three *weredas* of Tigray and Afar National Regional States: Hintalo Wejerat *Wereda* of South-East Zone of Tigray, Wejerat *sub-Wereda* in

particular, and Ab'ala and Megale *weredas* of Zone 2 from Afar National Regional State. From the total *kebeles* of both *weredas*, seven were purposively selected for this study because of their direct geographical proximity and close relationship in times of both peace and conflict. Five of them (Sebebera, Gonka, Sen'ale, Adi-keyh and Tsehafty) were from Wejerat *sub-Wereda* while two (Gela'eso and Tonsa) were from Ab'ala and Megale *Weredas*. The study emphasized on the dynamic nature of causes, actors, trends and effects of the conflict and traditional conflict handling mechanisms between the two ethnic groups.

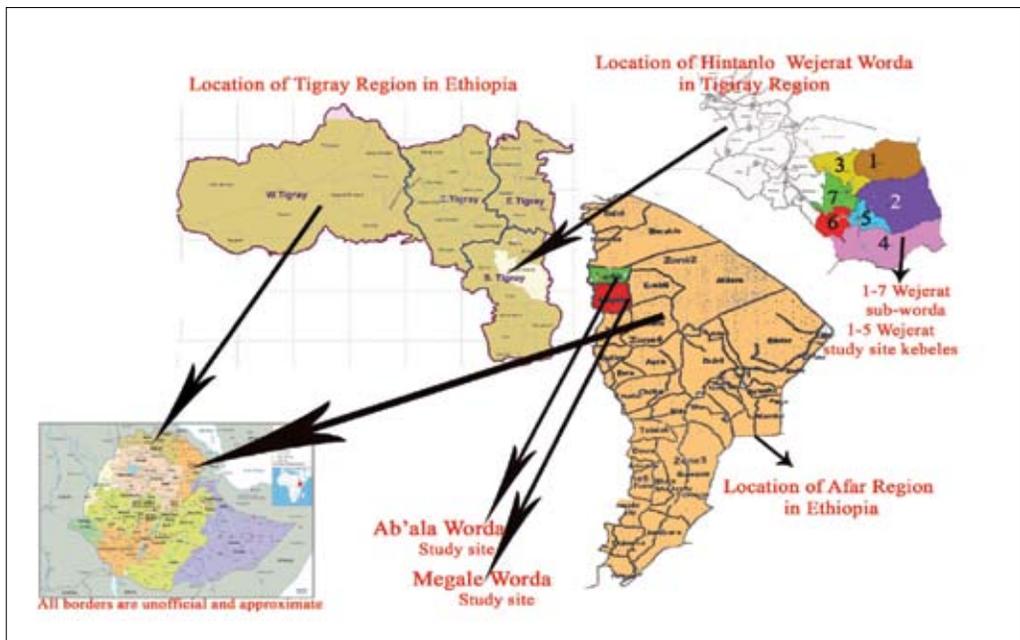


Figure 1: Political Map of the Study Area  
Source: Central Statistical Authority of Ethiopia, 1994.

## 1.4 Methodology and Sources of Data

The methodology employed for this research was a qualitative one. In this case, snowball and purposive sampling methods were respectively applied to generate a chain of information and to get the needed data from predetermined individuals.

Accordingly people well versed in the history, culture, tradition and knowledge

about current conflict were selected as key informants from their respective group. A total of 86 sample representatives, 40 from Afar and 46 from Wejerat, were taken. Data were analyzed using descriptive and explanatory qualitative methods. Those obtained via interviews and focus group discussions were tape-recorded, transcribed and categorized into themes to construct meanings. Then, the themes were discussed in relation to existing literature and research findings.

Both relevant primary and secondary sources of data were applied to conduct the study. Nonetheless, due to the fact that the recent conflict is either less known, much neglected or both in the study sites, literature on Wejerat-Afar conflict is scanty and constitutes lesser interest in this thesis. Thus, the principal source was primary data gathered via fieldwork. The fieldwork took one solid month and sixteen days (September 29-November 14, 2010). Data were mainly collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews for which key informants were selected purposively. They included local elders, religious leaders, government officials, security and militia heads, former and current members of the joint institution (*gereb*), conflict victims and their families, women and youth of both ethnic groups as well as scholars who have knowledge of the study area and the institution (*gereb*). These informants reflected the views and feelings of their respective groups. A total of 61 people were interviewed from both sites.

Three focus group discussions were held, one each with a group from the two study sites, and one with a combined group from both. Each focus group discussion on average had eight members treated differently on the basis of their culture, religion and age similarity. However, this was not possible with the one that combined members from both ethnic groups. The discussions were conducted separately to particularly avoid frustration, language barrier, and discomfort while discussing with non-group members. Local elders, religious leaders, current and former *abo gerebs*, youth, and others who have encyclopedic knowledge about the problem were included in the focus group discussions. In general a total of 25 people actively participated in the focus group discussions.

Moreover, participatory and non-participatory observations were employed in the study sites to win trust of the people through informal discussions and dig out information that cannot be obtained through interview. The researcher took field notes on the behaviors and activities of individuals in the research sites. Particularly, the common grazing sites and conflict sites (*Meida Kalla* and *Shegli/Gandili*) of the two groups were in focus. More importantly, the researcher attended and observed public reconciliation meetings. A peace process was held

to end the current (August, 2010) violent conflict that took place between the Afar (Gela'eso Kebele) and the Wejerat (Sen'ale Kebele).

Data gathered from the meeting site through observation and pictures taken using digital camera helped the researcher to enrich evidences and gain firsthand insight into the nature of the conflict including trends and effects, and application of local knowledge to address violent conflict through *gereb*. The places for meeting people and gathering a broad range of information via formal and informal means for this study included governmental offices, churches, homes, hospitals, public reconciliation meetings, *gereb* institution, market areas, and conflict sites.

## 1.5 Organization of the Study

The paper has four separate chapters. The first chapter briefly introduces background, objectives and research questions of the study. It describes the research design, methodology and the methods of data collection. The second chapter is devoted to the assessment of the historical contexts of the Wejerat-Afar conflict. The third chapter narrates the contemporary Wejerat-Afar conflict dynamics and interactions. It also relates the interventions, challenges and scenarios thereof. The last chapter presents concluding remarks along with major findings of the research and the way to uphold sympathetic environment for mutual co-existence of the two communities through peaceful means.

## 1.6 Fieldwork Challenges and Opportunities

Primarily reminiscences from my childhood, and dialogue with parents and elders about the symbiotic relationships between Wejerat and Afar in South East Tigray which is currently (with the passage of time) worsening compelled me to undertake this research. The two groups have long historic relationships. They share resources, address problems via *gereb*, and invite each other to wedding ceremonies. Every highlander or lowlander has at least one friend (locally known as *Fukur*) from non-group members starting from earlier times until today. However, with the passage of time, the symbiotic relationship kept diminishing while violent conflicts persisted persisting. The dilemma is a puzzle, particularly why their relationship is deteriorating in this 'democratic era' as opposed to their peaceful relationship in the past.

The opportunities from my field research are part of my fieldwork achievement. The fieldwork helped me to link what I learnt in theory with practical framework on the ground or grassroots level in conflict analysis. I attended four public reconciliation meetings. This was an opportunity for me as I could see the local

people applying their social (local) knowledge in addressing inter-communal conflicts. Attending such conflict resolution cases is really an unforgettable part of the golden opportunities in fieldwork. I also worked with an old friend with whom I used to look after cattle and my former classmate who dropped out early. I also met some who are currently in local government positions. My own life experience as home-grown and native to the area helped me to travel on foot without difficulty to the distant lowland areas. To this effect, it was helpful to trace the relevant stakeholders and sites. Thus, I dare to say that discovering the problems involve in the research without being a naïve of the area would have been less successful.

Nonetheless, the genuine challenges I experienced were: the difficulties encountered in the walk around the study areas, hostile climate, absence of clean potable water, mobile nature of the lowlanders and pastoralists, the current conflict which reduced security in the study sites (mostly in lowlands), and the suspicion and mistrust of affected communities including policemen and government officials.

In some cases, the local communities even took me for a government official. They, thus, requested me to pass on their views to the concerned bodies. Irrespective of all these obstacles, the research undertaken has never been blocked from meeting its objectives.

## Chapter Two

### 2. Nature and Context of the Wejerat-Afar Conflict and Interaction.

#### 2.1. The Pre-Italian Period

The history of conflicts and interactions between Afar and Wejerat dates back to the time of monarchical regimes in Ethiopia. After the Wejerat had developed self-defense experience from different fields of conflict in defending their land in the course of time, they started to raid the Afar that were also viewed as enemy. Such a raid was known as *gaz* or Wejerat military tradition (Markham, 1869). Indeed, the raid could include people of the whole land of Wejerat, Raya-Rayuma, and Enderta (Getachew, 1998) though Markham gives more emphasis to the land of the Wejerat. There is no conclusive evidence when and how the raid started, but it continued until the first Weyane rebellion in 1943 (Abraha, 2005; Hiluf, 2001).

Some writers suggest that the very motive of the raid was economic in the sense that acquisition of cattle in the process was supposed to have economic importance and was also associated with social values. To hold political office, one should demonstrate bravery in the raid (Gebru, 1996). Yet, others argue that the social worth of the raid had more credit than the economic one. The most respected and honorable people were those who actively participated and managed looting the booty of the Afar. In contrast, those who were unable to loot after the raiding and did not participate at all were the laughing stock of the society (Abraha, 2005).

The victorious and successful raiders were those who could roar in any socially held feast. They used to wear the skin of either a lion or a leopard and were entitled *hanta* (hero) as a prize of heroism. They had also the right to grow their hair and to smear butter on it. They enjoyed the right to wear clothes the hemline of which was decorated with various brands as well (Hiluf, 2001). In contrast, those who did not kill, loot, and participate in the raid were considered as cowards and inferior to the successful raiders within their community (Gebru, 1996). The *gaz* was viewed as an academic field of military strategy for the young generation of Wejerat to prove one's courage.

They suggested this would open a tangible way for the people of the area to defend and maintain their political and socio-cultural institutions from any wearisome external pressure (Abraha, 2005). The Afar communities were also engaging in

serious raids at different times against highlanders. According to Kelemework, the Afar communities have shown varied reactions to their conflicts with Tigrians. One reaction was engagement in raids and counter-raids (Kelemework, 2006: 84). The inter communal interaction in this period, thus, revealed consistent violent conflicts against one another.

## 2.2 The Post-Italian Period

In the post-Italian period, the distant Afar communities, like the neighboring ones, joined the long-established and deep-rooted communal institution of Wejerat (*gereb*) to address inter-communal problems together. Inclusively, *gereb* became a joint institution of the two communities in the 1940s. To avert the catastrophic raid and counter-raid of the two communities, *gereb* has remained a central pillar in resolving conflict and maintaining peace and security between the two ethnic groups (Abraha, 2005; Degafi, 2001 E.C; Tarekegn, 2005). Capitalizing this, Kelemework (2006) explains *gereb* as a unique inter-ethnic institution for conflict resolution established by mutual understanding of Afar and Wejerat.

However, some documents show that in the post-Italian period, there were raids between the Wejerat and the Afar. The former were blamed for raiding the latter and looting their cattle and other booty. To discourage this, Fitawrari Kifle Dadi, the then Director General of Tigray, ordered Wejerat to hand over the cattle and the booty that they had looted along with 20-40 thousand *Birr* to the government. The Wejerat were also ordered to pay tax on the basis of the then newly introduced tax rate (Addis Zemen, Ginbot 3, 1988 E.C; Gebru, 1996; Lapiso, 1983 E.C). Even long before that, in 1932, a letter of warning that requested the Wejerat to obey any order of the central government was written to them by Emperor Haileselassie himself. This was later used as a pretext by the agencies of the government to punish the Wejerat. In reality, the basic reason was to undermine the question of political autonomy which used to be frequently raised by the Wejerat (Abraha, 2005). The Wejerat resisted every interventionist attempt of the central government and its agencies that practiced a different system to erode their existing social system. This disappointed the Governors of Tigray who decided that the Wejerat should not have autonomous self-rule different from other parts of Tigray. Thus, the central government, along with its agencies in Tigray, planned to undermine the legitimization of traditional authority as well as the communal way of life and its attendant heritage (Gebru, 1996).

The central government faced serious challenges to maintain its authority. One of the major challenges was the 1943 peasant rebellion of Tigray, historically known as Weyane rebellion. Different authors give different reasons for the

revolt. According to Gebru (1996) and Lapiso (1983), the major causes were punitive taxation, maladministration, and related activities of the bandits. The immediate trigger in the land of Wejerat, however, was the quest for regional autonomy (Abraha, 2005). The Wejerat asked the Emperor's regime to give up exploiting them on the pretext of annual tribute. However, the regime continued to strongly oppose the *Kanchi* system. An expeditionary force organized and led by Dejezmach Abay Kahsay, the then Governor of Enderta Awraja, unexpectedly marched against Wejerat (Addis Zemen, Ginbot 3, 1988 E.C; Gebru, 1996). The Wejerat got organized to defend their land and this led to the harbinger of the Weyane for the first time. On May 22, 1943, this resulted in the battle of *Adi-awona* at a particular site called *Hizati-Feres* (Abraha, 2005). There the Wejerat attained a double victory by capturing the head of the expedition, Dejezmach Abay Kahsay along with several high ranking officials (Gebru, 1996; Lapiso, 1983). The episode proved fatal to the government and the triumph of the Wejerat highly undermined the image of the Tigrian notables cooperating with the government.

Despite disagreement with government officials, the Wejerat took an oath in the post Italian occupation period via their *demer* (general assembly) to avoid *gaz*. Raids that were regarded as important social events in which young men demonstrated their qualities as warriors and potential ceremonial leaders for marriage and political office had been condemned by the *demer*. The *demer* ratified the oath as a rule. It stated, "From now onwards, anyone who loots the property of others and kills a person cannot be considered as a good member of the society" (Degafi, 2001 E.C). As a result, the two ethnic groups got involved in effectively managing the entire patterns of inter-ethnic conflict through their joint institution. Peaceful co-existence and resource sharing were considered as an expression of their symbiotic relationships. It is a common reality to observe joint utilization of resources in the land of the two ethnic groups (Kelemework, 2006). Thus, by avoiding the old-traditional raids and counter-raids, the two groups developed communal management several years ago.

### 2.3 The Military (Derg) Regime (1974 to 1991)

Soon after it came to power, the military regime, compared to its predecessors, tried much harder to suppress the local autonomy of the Wejerat. During the Derg this time, the *demer* was virtually undermined (Kelemework, 2006, Degafi, 2001 E.C). Working hand in hand with TPLF, the people were forced to wage war against the military regime for 17 years to restore self-rule. It is common knowledge that the TPLF had a base within the Wejerat (Kelemework, 2006). Similarly, the Afar communities had fought in line with the ALF against the military regime,

cooperating with other nationalist fronts like the TPLF to build internal freedom and self-rule (Tadesse and Yonas, 2005). During this time, the Afar and Wejerat communities had strong social and market interactions. Close friendship and exchange of commodities, usually in kind, were their daily activities. At times of security problems, due to geographical interaction and resource share, the two communities were loyal to the joint institution. *Abo-gerebs* were real actors of peace and they addressed communal problems of the two communities for a long period of time (Degafi, 2001 E.C). The Wejerat and Afar starved, were wounded, and sacrificed their life together while fighting against the Derg. They had strong interdependence and mutual assistance. Thus, the Afar without the Wejerat and the Wejerat without the Afar were unable to survive. It is thus a paradox as to why persistent conflict exists between them today while they practiced peaceful co-existence during those difficult days (a joint report on public reconciliation meeting in October 2010).

## 2.4 The Post- 1991 Period

The post-1991 period is a landmark in Ethiopian politics. Ethiopia witnessed a major departure in the arena of national politics during this time. As a political instrument, ethnic-based federalism, hoped to improve the conflict ridden ethnic relations across the country, has been introduced by the EPRDF. Nevertheless, there still are violent conflicts and several incidents of inter-ethnic tensions emerging over territorial issues (Asnake, 2002). Asnake further claims that the political changes are changing patterns of relationships between the Ethiopian ethnic groups, the nature of conflicts and their management. Similarly, Getachew, in his work on the Garri and Borana Conflict in Southern Ethiopia, argues that the post-1991 period conflicts differ from the earlier ones in frequency, intensity, causes, and actors involved and their effects on the communities (Getachew, 2002). This is because of several factors among which are poor governance, insecurity, erosion of land rights and resource scarcity. This reality is reflected in all lowlands of Ethiopia and the pastoral areas along the north-eastern to the southern part of the country (*ibid*).

The Wejerat and Afar communities are not exceptions in facing these problems for they inhabit the agro-pastoral and pastoral lowlands of north-eastern Ethiopia. They have market and other social interactions. The two groups have long historic relationships. Starting from earlier times, they have used to share resources, address problems via '*gereb*', invite each other to wedding ceremonies, and have friends (locally known as *Fukur*) from the other group. But from 1991 on, their symbiotic relationships have deteriorated and violent conflicts started persisting. This, as

already remarked, becomes a puzzle (Abraha, 2005; Degafi, 2001E.C). Incidents of inter-ethnic homicide have become common on the Wejerat-Afar border areas (Kelemework 2006).

Some empirical studies suggest that the major cause of the current Wejerat-Afar conflict is the problem of access to water and grazing land (rangeland conflict). This emerged as an issue particularly in 1995 when Ab'ala and Megale *Weredas* that were under Tigray administration have ceded to the Afar without clear border demarcation between Afar and Wejerat in particular, and Tigray and Afar regional states in general (Abera, 2009). However, others give more emphasis to the historical legacy of the two ethnic groups as a cause of the current conflict (Kelemework 2006). This writer claims that the current conflict between the two seems to be a reflection of a shared unhealthy relation in former times.

## 2.5 Traditional Way of Managing Inter-communal Conflict in the Study Areas

*Gereb*, which has a long history in the land of the Wejerat, was one of the most effective institutions for managing inter-ethnic conflict between the Wejerat and the Afar (Degafi, 2001 E.C). Its origin is related to a form of public struggle towards democracy and self-rule from time immemorial. However, the exact time of *gereb* expansion to include neighboring communities is not found in literature. Yet, some studies suggest that the Wejerat *gereb* was established almost a century ago to embody neighboring communities. The very objective of the *gereb* was to resist the then government suppressions. It was a symbol of reaction to the existing undemocratic rule and bad governance (Abera, 2009). Different local communities of the former *weredas* of Wejerat, Enderta, Seharti-Samre and Bora-Slawa met in Hintalo for the first time to develop a common agenda on how to run self-rule and challenge the government. Thereafter, the term *Gereb Arena*, which literally means, "we are equal under the umbrella of *gereb* administration," became a common stand of the participants. The people drafted common articles like women should have equal rights as men; don't consider Emperor Haileselassie and other government officials as God, they are humans like us; stop theft and raid; every adult citizen of our locality should be ready to struggle against any external enemy; the 20 *embas* of Wejerat should be governed by *gereb* Wejerat; and *gereb* is the identity for our next struggle for liberation (ibid).

Through time, *gereb* became a joint institution which functions as an indigenous court run by a council of elders from the Afar and the Wejerat. *Gereb* members are elected by the entire adult male population of the locality and are entrusted with the responsibility of restoring law and order. The *gereb* develops its own rules and regulations which serve

as *sirit* (traditional law) in its localities. When necessary, with full justification of the *gereb* members, the regulations can be modified. In the past, the Wejerat had met with the Afar under the motto of *gaz* for the purpose of both economic and ritual benefits (Gebru, 1996). However, they established the *gereb* institution after the normalization of *gaz* in the 1940s and this institution maintains mutual benefits of the two ethnic groups.

The institution has representatives from the two ethnic groups who the society refers to as *abo-gerebs*. The role of the *abo-gerebs* remains a fundamental affair in resolving inter-ethnic conflicts including homicide between the two groups. They developed a symbiotic relationship to maintain peace and security.

The Wejerat used to send their cattle to the common grazing land of both groups during the rainy season. Basically, every highlander sends his cattle to his *fukur* – a loyal friend in Afar - responsible to look after the cattle but also has full right to consume milk and milk products from the cows of his partner. Besides, the two communities have had a close relationship where the Afar take wheat from the Wejerat during harvest (*kaw'e*) and in turn the Wejerat take goats or sheep from the Afar at Easter or New Year (Abraha, 2005).

The *abo-gerebs* have full power to impose sanctions on offenders in resolving conflict. Usually blood price imposed on wrongdoers is decided by the *abo-gerebs* from the conflicting parties and all decisions are practical and binding. In a nutshell, *abo-gerebs* are active actors in resolving inter-ethnic conflict timely, economically, and effectively. They are real representatives of their respective community and are watchdogs in maintaining social values, norms, and peace via *gereb*. Thus, *gereb* is a necessary remedy to bring about long lasting peace through non-violent means (Abraha, 2005; Tarekegn, 2005). However, compared to the earlier years, it is claimed that the institution has not been properly discharging its responsibilities since 1991. This is due to problems associated with the new structure that resulted in the decline of *gereb* power (Degafi, 2001 E.C).

## Chapter Three

### 3. The Contemporary Wejerat-Afar Conflict Dynamics and Interactions: Data Analysis and Presentation

The 1991 political change in Ethiopia has been a major cause for the current dynamic interaction between the Wejerat and the Afar communities. Prior to 1995, *Ab'ala* and *Megale* were under Tigray. But in 1995 they were merged into Afar region and became *Shiket Wereda* which was renamed as *Ab'ala*. Wejerat also became an independent *wereda* with its 20 *embas* though later it was merged with *Hintalo Wereda*, forming *Hintalo-Wejerat Wereda*. The point is that it is logical to merge *Ab'ala* and *Megale* with Afar region as they speak the same language, but the problem was that no clear and specific border demarcation was made between the Wejerat and the Afar. Land ownership thus started eroding the long-established relationship of the two ethnic groups. Structural rearrangement was also another problem and it seems that the human (socio-cultural) factors were not taken into consideration during the formation of the Afar political map. For instance, the Wejerat people in *Wegaye* were mapped as part of Afar region in the 1991 political map (Information obtained from field Interview held with the residents of Wejerat, October 23/2010 at Adigudom and November 6/2010 at emba Sen'ale). Similarly, the Afar of the study areas claim that, although they administer themselves, there is lack of clear regional border demarcation and that the relation between the two groups has declined because of their need for cultivable land and grazing area (Field interview held with Afar residents of Gela'eso, October 30/2010 at Gela'eso and Ab'ala town).

#### 3.1 The Nature of Wejerat and Afar Interactions: Cordial/Peaceful Interaction

The Wejerat agro-pastoralists and the Afar pastoralists have had a long history of relationship manifested mostly by pleasant coexistence but at times by serious conflict. Although the Wejerat and the Afar preserve their separate ethnic identity, they interact with each other widely in various socio-economic and other security-related concerns. The interaction and cooperation of the two communities served as a ladder to enhance social bond and peaceful co-existence with each other for centuries. Let us have a look at their areas of harmonious relationship to have an understanding of the trends of social dynamics before we deal with the conflicting relations.

## A. Market and Trade Interaction

The symbiotic relationships and mutual interdependence of the two communities are explained in terms of trade exchange. Trade exchange in the study areas is dominated mostly by local markets. Two major markets are found in the Wejerat territory: the *Debub* and *Adi-Keyh* markets. The *Debub* market is located in the high land of the capital of Wejerat - Debub - commonly referred to by the Wejerat as *Bahri-Hatsey*; and *Adi-keyh* market is situated in the lowland of Wejerat at *Adi-keyh emba*. These markets are held on weekly basis and are attended by several communities coming from near and distant lowland and highland areas including members of the Afar community.

The Afar communities have access to these local markets and they used to exchange commodities. Livestock and livestock products from Megale and Ab'ala are sold in these markets. Various agricultural products such as grain, fruits, pulses, spices (from highlands), cattle, goat, sheep, and livestock products (from both lowland and highland areas) as well as modern and local industrial products such as clothes, shoes, and other commodities are displayed for sale. Bartering is still functional for some items from the Afar communities. For instance, an Afar can exchange a piece of rope for coffee, sugar, candle, needle, and the like. This interdependence and essential market network has played a great role in consolidating social bonds between the Wejerat and the Afar. Most of my informants from Wejerat stated this fact as follows:

*We [Wejerat] and they [Afar Hurto] had a very close interaction and sympathy for each other many years ago. The only market we had for both of us during the imperial period was Debub - Bahri-Hatsey. The markets of Adi-keyh in Wejerat, Mokeni in Raya-Azebo, and Ab'ala and Megale as well as Repti in Afar are newly established markets. Thus, we were exchanging commodities in the old markets of Wejerat. When the market value of the Afar livestock declines due to inadvertent drought, they were able to borrow grain from the Wejerat and returned in kind (goat or sheep) when the season is favorable. Our relationship in the past was like this (my translation from Tigrigna) (Information obtained from Wejerat elders during fieldwork at the various public reconciliation meetings held from October 18-November 6/2010).*

Similarly, the Wejerat have access to Afar markets of Ab'ala, Repti and Megale at the moment. Particularly, *Ab'ala* and *Repti* are the common markets of Afar visited regularly by the Wejerat. They supply honey, sugar, and other items to the Afar markets. According to my Wejerat informants, the Afar have relatively good access to food aid today. Thus, when there is excess aid in Afar, the Wejerat are their active trade partners. The Wejerat buy wheat and oil at a relatively cheap price and take it to the highland market on camels and donkeys to sell it at a profitable price. However, some informants from Wejerat claim that when the Wejerat go to *Repti* market to exchange commodities

and return home, some armed Afar ambush them on their way and rob them. They sometimes ask them for money beyond the price of the item they bought. If they fail to pay, the Afar take all the items and send them home empty-handed. This resulted in hostility and ruined their relationships (ibid).

This view is shared by some of the Afar elders who state that the Afar have a good memory of mutual respect and are sympathetic with the Wejerat. Nevertheless, there are some malicious people who exercise such an unethical and shameful act, but they cannot represent the entire Afar who believe that the Wejerat are their brothers and they do not like anyone harming them and vice-versa (Information obtained from Afar elder during fieldwork in the third reconciliation process between Sen'ale and Gela'eso at Gela'eso kebele, October 30/2010 and from residents of Tonsa kebele on November 13/2010 at Adi-keyh market place). Generally, one may understand from the informants the amazing periods of friendliness and alliance they had with each other through market interactions.

## B. Inter-group Resource Sharing

The other essential manifestation of amplified relationship between the Wejerat and the Afar is resources sharing. The two ethnic groups have been living in peace for a long time. They were commonly using water and grazing land for their livestock. Participants in focus group discussions and most of the Wejerat and the Afar informants revealed that both groups have several common grazing sites and water points like *Galicoma, Adogubi, Haisoli, Laedora, Gandili, Shegli, Kalla, Dima, Kisad da'ero, Gimrida, Assebe'a, Goli, Hirum, Degerha, Wegare, Saso, Adu, Megale*, and distant lowland areas such as *Bahri*. The Wejerat used to live with the Afar in these lowland areas without any problems. Similarly, in the dry season, the Afar herders used to move with their herds to Wejerat highland areas where there is better grazing and water points and deep into *Hintalo* areas.

According to the same informants, these interactions have a social meaning that go further than just sharing resources. Cultural exchanges, learning each other's language, and adaptation of common tradition (*gereb*) to address inter-communal problems are outcomes of their genuine relations (Data obtained from FGD participants from Wejerat and Afar in Ab'ala and Gela'eso, October 16 and 30/2010 respectively. The personal interview held in different sites of peace assemblies with Afar and Wejerat). One of the Wejerat elders expressed their peaceful co-existence of the past decades in the following way:

*I am from Wejerat. Although I was born there, I spent more than half of my life with Afar communities in 'Bahri' lowland areas looking after my cattle. In history, we hear that there*

*were raids and counter-raids (gaz) particularly with distant Afar. But this was four to five generations ago. After the gaz tradition was over, we have shared resources and had good relationships for centuries. Herders from both sides used to look after their cattle together. We used to drink from one kordo (Local term of the Wejerat that refers to a wooden container used to milk cows and drink from), sleep in one place, and grow together. There was no serious conflict as such. If it occurred, gereb was employed to solve it in time. However, our life these days is not a reflection of our past thought. I wonder when I now see the on and off relationship of the two groups. You know, what we think creates our future (my translation from Tigrigna) (Interview with elder (emba Sen'ale) and former abo-gereb of Wejerat on 6 November 2010 at emba Sen'ale).*

Likewise, one of the Afar informants claimed that the old close relationships are fading away. This outlines a compelling relationship of reciprocity between the Afar and the Wejerat, locally known as *fukur*, in sharing ideas and resources at times of luck and misfortune (natural or man-made). *Fukur* has its origin in the daily interaction of the two groups, common understanding as well as geographic proximity. This reciprocal linkage is lifelong and can be consolidated and transferred from fathers to sons. There are even families that give their son the same name as that of their *fukur*'s son and this implies the trust and love they have for each other. Further, the same informant asserted that the two communities had give and take relationship whereby the Afar who do not practice farming take wheat (*kaw'e*) from the Wejerat during harvest time and give them goat or sheep at Easter or New Year (Interview with an Afar from Gela'eso kebele who has close relations with residents in Wejerat Sen'ale on 6 November 2010). Almost all of my Wejerat informants reflected the same idea.

### C. Marriage Interaction

Inter-ethnic marriage is uncommon between Wejerat and Afar due to religious and cultural differences. Marriage among the Afar is mostly cross-cousin (*Absuma*) but among the Wejerat (Christians) it goes beyond the seventh generation. However, some informants from both sides confirm that there are some Afars or Wejerats who by accident happened to have blood ties with each other. Ab'ala and Megale *Weredas* of Zone Two have some Wejerats related to Afars by blood. With regard to this, one of my Afar informants said:

*I am from the Afar community. But I have blood relationship with Wejerat people. I am in the 5<sup>th</sup> line with the clan of Zekunay Kahsay, a Christian whose origin is from Gonka (Wejerat) emba. Zekunay Kahsay had seven children and Meyramo, his daughter, forced by her parents, got married at early age to a priest of Gonka. She later wanted to divorce him, but this was opposed by her parents. Soon she escaped to Ab'ala and got married to an Afar named Sere Ali from the Damohoita clan and then had four children. Members of the*

*clan are now spread across Gela'eso, Hardan, Gandili, Tonsa, Ab'ala, Mekelle, and other places. Likewise, the families of Meyramo are found across the embas of Wejerat (Gonka, Sen'ale, Sebebera, Adi-keyh). Thus, we are brothers, the only difference we have is religion (translated from Afarigna) (Interviews with Zone Two of Ab'ala Wereda Administration official, October 23/2010 at Adigudom).*

He further claims that the blood ties play a key role in recovering partnership relations at times of inter-communal or inter-group conflicts. The Wejerat who have blood relations with the Afar are invited by both Wejerat and Afar to mediate between the two groups. So, the ties serve as a bridge and pave the way to restore peace. However, the current relation of the Wejerat and the Afar (particularly those in Gela'eso and Tonsa *kebeles*) is deteriorating from time to time. Recurrent conflicts overshadow the historical relationships of the two groups. As forthcoming discussions reveal, these conflicts are attributed to various factors that spoil the intimate socio-economic ties that existed before 1991.

## 3.2 Underlying Structural Causes of the Conflict and Tendency Analysis

Based on the information obtained from my respondents, the major causes of the conflict are presented below. It is an undeniable fact that conflict is a multifaceted and dynamic societal process. The nature of the causes are related to socio-economic and structural factors. This implies that causes of conflict are so diversified and intertwined that they cannot be reduced to a single factor. The core causes of conflict in the study areas are classified as underlying and triggering (proximate). Underlying causes are factors necessary but not sufficient for the recurrence of violent inter-group conflict whereas triggering causes are factors that have immediate potential to escalate inter-group conflict. The two factors are inseparable entities, though not always, in that proximate causes cannot exist independently and underlying causes are not self-sufficient to escalate violent conflicts.

### 3.2.1 Economic Issues: Competition over Scarce Natural Resources

Conflicts are usually associated with shortage of needed or reserved resources. These factors might happen due to intertwined dynamics like population pressure, poverty, environmental (rangeland) degradation, and decline of local resource management. Ayalew (2009), in his study in the upper Awash-valley, argues that inter-communal clashes are associated with scarcity of pastoral resources and the decline of environmental space. Likewise, in the proximate areas of Wejerat agro-pastoralist and pastoral Afar, competition over scarce grazing lands and reserved resources bring them into recurrent clash to the extent of bloodshed. According to informants from both sides, the Wejerat

and the Afar have several common grazing lands in the lowland sites among which are *Kalla*, *Shegli*, and *Gandili*. These sites are the main sources of livestock feed and fresh water. Thus, during pasture-scarce season, they compete for the same resource and get into dispute. Based on the information secured from focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informants, conflicts due to competition for grazing land and land ownership in border areas are common incidents between the two groups. This is particularly due to the weakening of local rules of the game (land tenure systems) on how to utilize these resources. Indeed, there is also competition for other natural resources like forests (firewood and construction materials) claimed by some informants to be a source of conflict. Nevertheless, the major cause of conflict repeatedly and intrepidly explained by the informants is tough competition over grazing and farming lands (Data obtained from FGD participants and local people of both Afar and Wejerat in various study sites).

### A. Grazing Land

Access to grazing land is a major cause of conflict raised in the discussion held with FGD participants and some key informants. Inter-ethnic conflict often occurs along the border areas. Unless such conflicts are analytically addressed, they would escalate into destructive upshot on the security status of the two groups in particular and the two regions in general. On how grazing land causes conflict, FGD participants and individual informants from the two groups blame each other. They agree that grazing land causes conflict but on who ignites the conflict, they have different and incompatible views. According to informants from the Wejerat group, they say their communities have rules related to grazing land management. The grazing lands in the lowland areas are divided into two: *fichih* (common grazing) and *hizaeti* (reserved grazing). In fact, this holds true even in the highland farming areas. Traditionally, the grazing land of the lowland is divided into east and west separated by historic traditional road locally called *mengedi negadey* (merchant's route) which was used as trade route to Raya-Azebo and lowland Wejerat to obtain salt from *Arho* by camels. The area on the west of the center line of the merchant's route is *hizaeti* reserved until a certain point in time and can only be grazed by oxen. The Wejerat benefit more from this area as the Afar do not possess oxen for they do not practice farming. Further, oxen give more service in farming and are not kept away in distant places, as is the case with cows. This means that the Afars do not benefit out of such land.

The second grazing land, located on the east of the center line of the trade route, is *fichih* or *edega lahmi* (common grazing land). This area stretches up to the lowland area called *Bahri* which is used as common grazing land for both Afar and Wejerat (Information obtained from abo-gerebs' FGD participants at Adigudom, October 23/2010 and Interviews with the former abo-gerebs and local people of both groups at the four public reconciliation meetings). To manage the grazing lands, there are sets of rules. Rule one,

if a livestock of an Afar, no matter how many, gets into the reserved grazing land of the Wejerat, the owner would pay a penalty (usually five *Birr*) to the local prosecutor locally called *agati/kasasi* assigned by the local people (*hager*) to conserve the grazing land. Rule two, if a livestock of a Wejerat gets into the reserved grazing land of the Wejerat, what the owner pays depends on money spent on the feast (*hurud*) prepared for implementing the rule of protection. Rule three, in case individuals refuse to pay the penalty, it would be communicated to their respective *abo-gerebs* who force them to obey.

The Wejerat informants claim that these rules have governed both groups for centuries and that the *abo-gerebs* have enforced them for they were part of the set up process. However, the Afar now violate these rules and by force get into the areas protected for oxen. When the *agati* (local prosecutor) asks them to pay penalty, they refuse. The following is what a Wejerat had to say.

*When the agati tries to drive out the cattle from the protected area, the Afar youth with automatic guns have no hesitation to shoot him. This was exactly what happened in 2009/2010. The Afar youth fired at the local prosecutors (ageti) of emba Gonka (in Kalla border grazing land), Sen'ale (Hadale in Shegli border grazing land) and Tsehafty (in Shegli border grazing land). The prosecutor of Tsehafty passed away and the other two wounded severely. To the dismay of the Wejerat, however, no government body brought these criminals to justice (my translation from Tigrigna) (Data generated from local people and key informants of Sen'ale (Hadale and Genti gots), Tsehafty and abo-gerebs of the Wejerat side on October 21 and November 13 /2010).*

According to the informants, an appeal was made to the federal government (particularly the case of the deceased), but there was no response. Later, the *gereb* had to intervene and until this data was collected, the cases were in the process to reconcile the parties. In general, the main causes of the conflicts are decline in local land management system, ineffective government intervention, and erosion of land rights.

On the contrary, Afar informants argue that the Wejerat controlled the grazing land predominantly. The land on the West of the trade route is *hizaeti bieray* (reserved grazing land for oxen) claimed by the Wejerat to have been used for centuries only for oxen. However, according to my Afar respondents, the Wejerat in dry season, use it for other cattle for themselves but prohibit the Afar from doing so. As a riposte and to confront the dry season, the Afar also keep some sort of reserved grazing land (*locally called desso*) for their calves, lambs, goats, and camels to the east of the trade route. This is usually because of scarcity of grazing land. This area is traditionally a common grazing land of both the Wejerat and the Afar. Thus, the Wejerat claim that the area is a common grazing land based on the former local rule (*Sirit*) and it is illegal to protect it. This dynamic

dilemma, unfortunately, is changed into conflict when the cattle graze in the protected grazing land of either side (Interview with an Afar local people of Gela'eso in the fourth reconciliation meeting at emba Sen'ale on November 6/2010).

## **B. Land Farming Practice**

Lowland areas are often viewed as infertile regions with no potential for agriculture. However, this view is more or less always inaccurate. In many pastoralist areas, livestock rearing co-exists with farming and cultivating crops is one of the practices. (Degefa and Baudouin, 2004). In the highland (Wejerat) area, there are a number of youth without land for farming. While landlessness is increasing, arable land in highland areas is getting scarce. The landless groups are more vulnerable to poverty than those with a plot of land. An elder from *emba Sen'ale* expressed his grief as follows:

*Today, there are many people without any farmland. The situation is aggravated by escalating population pressure. The lucky survive through sharecropping while the unlucky migrate to Humera leaving their homeland for bread. Yet, there are some landless who are assisted by their parents, given a plot of land, particularly, when they get married. As luck would have it, the aged parents in turn become dependent on their young ones. Due to recurrent drought and declining grazing land, livestock and livestock products are found almost nowhere these days. Thus, the Wejerat face the demand and tendency to cultivate lowland grazing areas. On the other hand, the cattle of pastoralist Afar neighbors are decreasing in number from time to time due to recurrent drought and famine. This means that they have to engage in sedentary agriculture and change their mode of life. As a result, since the border area is not demarcated, both of them claim ownership of the same site and repeatedly clash. But no sound government intervention has been made so far while we have murdered each other for the last 15 years (my translation from Tigrigna) (Field interview with one of the Wejerat (emba Sen'ale) elders on October 21/2010).*

Some of the key informants from Afar further said that their pastoralists these days practice cultivation as the Wejerat. This is due to rapid degradation of rangeland in many areas which has pushed pastoralists to look for other means of livelihood (for example, farming practice) rather than searching for additional grazing land with more competition that ultimately results in inter-communal conflict. Nevertheless, this land farming practice of the Afar in the common grazing land has led to conflict with the Wejerat. Some of the Gela'eso Afar informants describe how land-farming practices of the two groups brought about conflict:

*At this time, we (Afar) live a relatively better life than we were. We are trying to change our livelihood from pastoral to agro-pastoral. Our neighboring brothers (Wejerat) have the skill and experience of agriculture that they inherited from their ancestors, but we lack that skill.*

*We asked them to cultivate the lowland (Kalla) areas on the basis of equal crop-sharing as they have the labor and the skill but they would not accept. Instead, they claim ownership of the land and we made the same claim. The first conflict occurred in 2004 when we tried to cultivate the land. We sowed teff and sorghum, but unfortunately the Wejerat (Sen'ale) emba burned up the teff and destroyed the sorghum. We took the case to Mekelle, but got no solution. From that time onwards, the government forbade the cultivation of that land and that has materialized. Thus, it has a remained potential land for conflict. The overall complaint we have is not against the Wejerat but against both regional governments for they could not address the recurrent problem. (translated from Afarigna) (Interview with key informants from Gela'eso local people on November 6/2010 at emba Sen'ale in the final (4th) arbitration meeting).*

The above testaments clearly depict the dynamic condition of demand on land and land-related issues. Pastureland is declining due to land degradation, increasing aridity and desertification in the lowland areas. Afar pastoralists need to shift their mode of life to agro-pastoralism but there is already landless population pressure among the agro-pastoralists (Wejerat). However, existing needs force both groups to claim farming activities in the lowland common traditional grazing areas. The relations between resource demand (scarcity) and inter-communal conflict between the two groups basically lies in the relative importance of the socio-economic dimension and the vague interface of how to share these resources. This is evident in Hussein (1999) who claims that the key cause of conflict is escalation of human population and land scarcity in the face of mounting environmental degradation. Conflicts over extensive common potential arable lands, wetlands, and grazing have aggravated the mismanagement of resources. Thus, conflicts between pastoralists and agro-pastoralists arise throughout border areas. Yet institutional failure, its decline, competing with institutional setting, and dynamics of livelihoods can be taken as fundamental causes.

### 3.2.2 Socio-Cultural Factors

#### 3.2.2.1 The Decline of Local Traditional Institutions

The Wejerat and the Afar used to pass essential decisions related to communal conflicts in their respective areas through their elders. Most importantly, the communities were responsible for maintaining security, peace, and order via their joint institution called *gereb*. This institution has, for centuries, been a typical model in addressing inter-communal conflicts related to resource management and homicide between members of the two communities (FGD with *abo-gerebs* of the two groups on one table in the second round arbitration at Adigudom on October 23/2010). This implies that the *gereb* members (*abo-gerebs*), as peace actors, have wide-ranging political and socio-economic roles. It is a common assumption that aged people have full-fledged knowledge to

perform public reconciliation in times of conflict and they can pass wise decisions (Lipson, 1981). According to one of the *gereb* members, however, these days, traditional governance institutions are fading away mainly due to the failure of the government in recognizing their function of resolving intra-and inter-communal conflict at the grassroots level and partly due to the decline in moral values to pursue customary laws. The *gereb* is not inclusive. For example, it does not include the Gela'eso people of the Afar. So, when they commit wrongdoing, they are not willing to hand over the perpetrator. Most of the current persistent conflicts are with this clan/*kebele*.

Thus, the function of the *gereb* and *abo-gerebs* as a social institution that manages conflicts has deteriorated from time to time. So, nowadays, these home-grown institutions are hardly noteworthy devices for resource management (particularly land) on account of the rise of self-centered approach to possess land that was earlier governed by common customary rules of the Afar and the Wejerat (Information obtained from well experienced *abo-gereb* who has been serving for more than 20 years in *gereb* representing the Wejerat, October 6/2010).

### 3.2.2.2 Culture and Traditional Violence

The long-standing cultures of revenge/vendetta have a destructive upshot and prolonged conflict cycles in Ethiopia. These customs of traditional violence have for long been a root cause for inter-communal conflicts in the area under study. It holds true even to take revenge against a member of own ethnic group. These deep-rooted cultural and traditional values are ascribed to social prestige. As Tigist precisely states, in some parts of Ethiopia, there is a very old culture of vengeance whereby murder of a family member, relative, or a loved one is often retaliated at any cost to restore family honor (Tigist, 2010). This also holds true in the study areas. Informants insist that retaliation for harm done is common in the study sites. For example, if one of the communities (Afar or Wejerat) damages any resource of the other group, the victimized group would take revenge either by damaging property, killing a member, or looting livestock from the other side. The reason behind this is that individuals or groups who retaliate to restore family honor are considered the most respected and honored. In contrast, those who are unable to take revenge become the laughing stock of the society (Information obtained from Afar and Wejerat elders during fieldwork, particularly from the public reconciliation meetings held from October 16-November 6/ 2010 in different sites.) Thus, it seems, the social worth of retaliation is high. However, this ultimately drags the general public into the conflict.

According to informants from both groups, prior to the 1940s, such acts of vengeance were common among the Afar and the Wejerat. *Gaz* was a communal raid by the Wejerat in the lowland areas to loot anything they find. The Afar were also engaged in serious

raids at different times against the highlanders. Both groups were involved in raids and counter-raids (Kelemework, 2006: 84).

The inter-communal raids these days, however, are revealed in an unexpected attack made usually by the youth group and thieves who do not hesitate to kill in order to snatch something. Yet, some Wejerat informants claim that revenge is possible among Afar of today who believe they had, half a century ago, been influenced by the Wejerat. The informants further added that they are still practicing revenge and have only change a little in behavior (Field Interview with Wejerat youth, Sen'ale, 21 October 2010). Generally, the feeling of dishonor and the successive retaliatory actions are by and large seen as shared duties of the communities in focus. Thus, retaliatory acts receive positive reaction and are often rewarded by the community even today.

### 3.2.3 Security Related Causes

#### 3.2.3.1 Contested Borders

The border line between Afar and Wejerat is not evidently hitherto defined. When Ab'ala and Megale districts, which were under Tigray region, had been merged into Afar region, had not been an exact border demarcation made between the two regions (particularly Afar and Wejerat). Thus, there was a feeling by both communities that a dispute is inevitable unless a clear demarcation is made to separate two of the Afar region districts, Ab'ala and Megale, from Hintalo-Wejerat district of Tigray region, particularly from Wejerat (Interview with former abo-gerebs of Wejerat on 23 October 2010 and Ab'ala government official and Gela'eso people, 30 October 2010). The response given by both regional governments to the question of border demarcation was that the issue was not their business but that of the Federal government (Abera, 2009). This hazy demarcation is a fertile ground for conflict between these neighbors.

The Afar and Wejerat land is demarcated by artifact boundary locally called *mengedi negaday* (trade route). In fact, this demarcation was effectively functional when it comes to managing pasture as common and reserved resource. The route divides the grazing land into two: west and east. From this the center line towards the west is called *hizaetibieray* which serves only for grazing oxen (for Wejerat). The site below the foot path to the east is called *Bahri* which is used as common grazing land for both Wejerat and Afar (see under 3.2.1 A. Grazing Land). The North and South direction to the historical object (trade route) stretches up to the border areas of Wejerat with Ab'ala and Raya-Azebo respectively. The Wejerat and Afar had been following the steps of merchant route in managing resources. Each *emba* in Wejerat has its own communal grazing site to be administered by the local people themselves. However, in the case of severe drought, the local people have the moral liability to share with non-members the resource at hand based on the mutual consent of the local public. The

intra-group (Wejerat) and the inter-group (Wejerat-Afar) resource sharing in the border sites of Ab'ala and Megale *Weredas* is the dominant feature of livelihood. This land administration and tenure remained intact for centuries (Interview with ex-and present abo-gerebs of Wejerat, 23 October, 2010 at Adigudom).

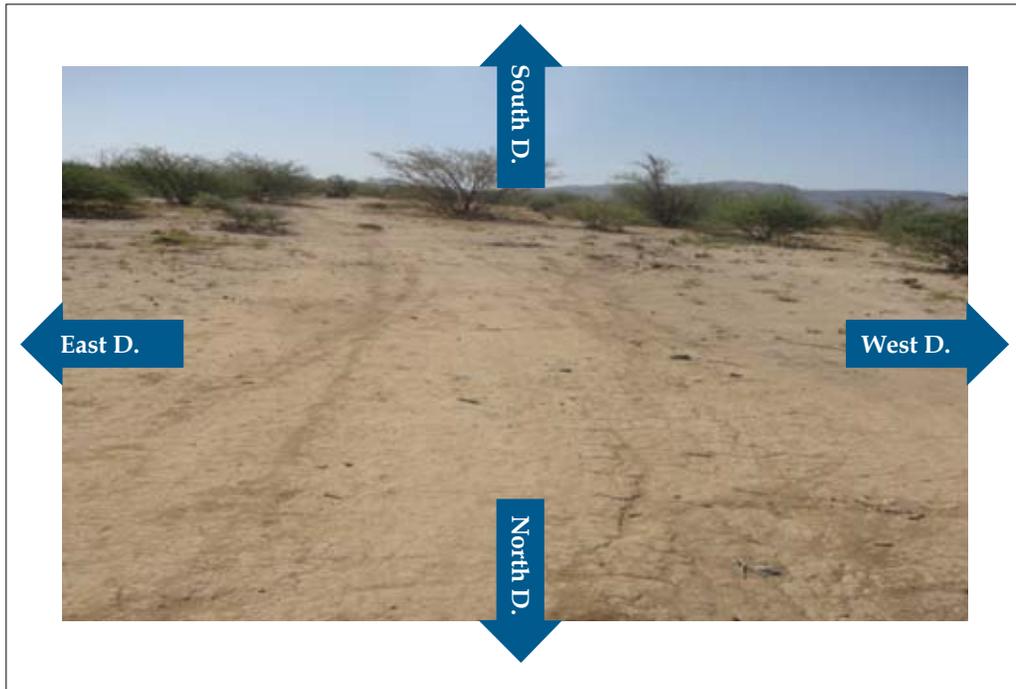


Figure 5: The Merchant Route that Divides the Grazing Land into two: East-West Direction (Photo by the Researcher from the Field in the Study Site Kalla, November30/2010)

They had been governed through this *sirit* (local law) for centuries. *Sirit* is a local law that governs intra-Wejerat issues and the relation between Wejerat and Afar neighbors. Nonetheless, post-1991, based on the regional demarcation by EPRDF, the Afar claim that the grazing lands of *Kalla* and *Shegli* are theirs. Anyone from highland who wants to live there should produce permanent residence certificate or a letter from his respective *wereda* because the two communities are in different regions (Interview with Afar Gela'eso residents, 6 November 2010, Sen'ale emba.) The Wejerat informants alternately argue that the pastoral way of life is characterized by mobility from one place to another in time of scarcity. They stay in one place for sometime albeit the area is not part of their particular land. Thus, the Afar neighbors, on the pretext of the principle of effective

control over a certain territory, strive to claim and control the area that they lived in for a short time as if permanently their own. In the name of temporary residence in some sites for some months, they ignite a conflict that ultimately causes boundary dispute. The Wejerat claim that though they separated regionally, there is no agreement with regard to their specific border that clearly separates the land of the Wejerat and the Afar.

As a result, the question of land ownership, for the first time, grew into a conflict in 1995. From that time onwards, there has been a conflict. Particularly, the Gela'eso *kebele* of Ab'ala *Wereda* is often in frequent conflict with the Wejerat (Sen'ale and Gonka) than the Tonsa *kebele* of Megale *Wereda* (Information obtained from Wejerat elders during fieldwork, October 23 and 6 November 2010, Adigudom and Sen'ale respectively).

### 3.2.3.2 Availability of Illegal Small Arms and Light Weapons

The easy accessibility and proliferation of firearms in the pastoral study areas is the other security concern in addition to contested borders. The abundance of illegal Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) is akin to adding fuel to the fire. According to Tigist, following the collapse of the Derg in 1991, lots of SALWs left behind by the armed forces of the defeated regime got into the hands of civilians, criminals, and others (Tigist, 2010). Similarly, the informants from communities and justice system as well as government security bodies of the study sites argue that military automatic weapons/guns from the Derg soldiers were marketed freely during the downfall of the Derg regime. Using this as a chance, the Afar adult and those from more or less wealthy groups have become owners of 1-4 guns per household. Many guns were sold to anyone who wanted to buy in different black markets of the Afar region. Thus, they got the opportunity to possess automatic weapons. The Wejerat people had this opportunity too, but later they were disarmed by the EPRDF. As a result, the Afar youth are equipped with modern automatic weapons that shift the power balance and greatly aggravate disputes. Having these weapons as a common tool in the Afar pastoral community had its own impact on stability and mutual tolerance of the communities (Interviews with Hintalo-Wejerat wereda administration officials, justice and security government bodies as well as local people of Wejerat, October 23 and November 6/ 2010, Adigudom and Sen'ale respectively).



Figure 6: Automatic Modern Weapons Temporarily Disarmed from Afar Youth (Gela'eso) by Abogerebs in the Final (4<sup>th</sup>) Reconciliation in Sen'ale (Photo by the Researcher, November 6/2010)

One of the informants from Wejerat elders said:

*Having a gun is considered as a symbol of power to self-protection and wealth in Afar culture. This also used to hold true for the Wejerat in the past, but today there is no more demand for guns partly due to behavioral change and largely owing to government control. However, adults and youth of Afar, including those who are under fifteen years of age, possess large number of automatic rifles like M-fourteen, Kalashnikov, etc. privately and illegally due to weak government control. Thus, when a simple quarrel takes place with non-own group (Wejerat) in grazing, the immature Afar youth with rifles automatically run to fire the gun against the empty-handed Wejerat youth. Thus, homicide persists. This in turn leads to inter-communal retaliation (my translation from Tigrigna) (Interview with a Wejerat elder, Sen'ale, 21 October 2010).*

As most informants from Wejerat persistently stated, that this variation in possessing arms has made them vulnerable whereas it favored the well-armed enabling them to kill on ostensible grounds. This is a frequent reality. The conflict that occurred in August 2010 is glaring evidence in which an Afar youth (Gela'eso) killed a young man from Wejerat (Sen'ale/Hadale got). As a result of this, the conflict escalated into inter-communal dispute which brought about such adverse effects as human loss and material destruction for both groups. This agrees with the work of Tigest on SALWs.

She claims that arms acquisition is now both a cause and consequence of insecurity and conflict in the dynamics of pastoralist dissension. These conflicts, traditionally fought with bows and arrows, are now fought with high caliber automatic weapons and bombs. The situation of pastoralist conflict is worsening as these communities are increasingly militarized with little oversight (Tigist, 2010:22).

On the other hand, though the Afar informants agree that they possess automatic firearms, they say they did not want it but they had it. The rationale stated behind owning firearms, according to some of the Afar informants is:

*We had the chance to buy guns from local dealers during the downfall of the Derg regime. We did this by selling our camels. This was and is necessary for us because we are living wild lives. Thus, we possess arms to protect our livestock from bandits or thieves and wild animals. Besides, we feel that we are not secure due to failure of the State to ensure security. So, to defend ourselves from any influence, we need to have it (translated from Afarigna) (Information obtained from Afar Gela'eso residents, November 6/2010 at the 4th public reconciliation meeting at Emba Sen'ale).*

The gravity of the problem, however, is generally evident from the damage that availability of small arms is causing in localized inter-communal conflicts that are internal in nature in the study sites. The deep-rooted cultural practices that are common in pastoralist communities fuel the demand for arms in these areas and become the sources of insecurity. That is why Tigist argues that in pastoralist areas “arms acquired for self-defense are often used for offence” (Tigist, 2010: 22).

### 3.2.4 Political Factors

#### 3.2.4.1 Poor Governance: Weak Law Enforcement and Justice System

Problems related to governance, law enforcement, and justice systems are other issues identified as key factors that stimulate conflict in the study sites. Informants from both Afar and Wejerat disclosed that political authorities at regional and local levels do not give recognition to the existing conflict between the two communities. Lack of good governance is one of the flash points for spreading conflict and ill-feeling among the people. They argue that the problem is an obvious fact for which no proper and urgent remedy has been tried. The justice organs and other concerned bodies in the study sites hardly provide justice or take appropriate measures against criminals. The gap between the national constitution and actual practice at grassroots (*zone* and *wereda*) level gives courage to the offenders. They attribute this to the weakness of the law enforcement and justice organs that illegally favor offenders on their respective side rather than the side of the victim group (Information obtained from the Afar and the Wejerat people during fieldwork in the four public reconciliation meetings, 16 October to 6 November 2010 at different sites).

The law enforcement agencies at all levels lack the capacity and, in fact, the will to examine, thoughtfully follow, capture, and bring criminals to the court. In this case, FGD participants and key informants of the Wejerat complaint against their respective officials working in the area of justice, security, and administration at regional, zonal and local levels. They explain the scenario as follows:

*The Wereda and Zonal administrative bodies do not feel our pain. Their families, brothers, and sisters are not here and they do not share the pain. Who cares about us? Nobody! They only think about accumulating their personal wealth while we are suffering from poor governance and weak justice system. We know all this is the result of lack of local self-administration, particularly, at wereda level because the administrators are non-native to the society (my translation from Tigrigna) (Information obtained from Wejerat key elder informants and FGD participants during the fieldwork, October 16/2010 at the 1st public reconciliation meeting, Ab'ala).*

The heads of militia and local people in Wejerat claim that there is unequal and partial treatment between the two regions (Afar neighbors and Wejerat) while they are under one federal system. The statement they made reads as:

*We are suffering more while offenders (Afar Gela'eso and Tonsa kebeles particularly) are allowed to proceed with impunity. The Ab'ala district justice does not impose proportional penalty on individuals who trigger and participate in the conflict. In contrast, the Hintalo-Wejerat Wereda takes serious measures against any militias who are suspected of offense. Such a partial measure is one additional cause for conflict escalation between the two communities. When they (Afar) kill us, our leaders have one common saying, "They are nomads, tolerate them". This act is unbearable to us. When would low level of awareness on the Afar side cease to be a reason for their continued perpetration of homicide? Then, the victims' families will continue to retaliate because they feel that the treatment is unfair in a lawful state (my translation from Tigrigna) (Interview with Wejerat local people and militia during fieldwork, November 6-7/2010 at Sen'ale).*

Besides, they express their anger against the Afar officials and other members of the justice system who they think are more loyal to their ethnic group than to the law. Such mistrust erodes the belief that the Wejerat people have in the justice organ. They justify this saying that when they appeal to the concerned bodies, their charge will not reach the court; even if it does, the verdict will not be enforced due to various factors. For instance, administrative authorities, the police, and justice system try to hide whatever wrong their respective community members do. In addition, the clan structure is more dominant and powerful than the state structure. The state structure is rather a tool for the clan structure.(ibid)

Similarly, the Afar informants claim that both the Afar and Tigray regional governments do not give attention to conflicts and punish criminals according to the law. They are not accountable and transparent, and expose the fact to federal government. They rather try to hide the fact because they know it is their weakness (Information obtained from Afar-Gela'eso and Tonsa kebeles- informants during fieldwork, October 30 ,and November13/2010 at Gela'eso and Adi-keyh market day). Officials from the Wejerat side, however, claim that the regional government has tried its best, but still no decision is made so far about the contested border and the situation in Wejerat is more closely followed up than what the Afar officials are doing in the Gela'eso and Tonsa kebeles (Interview with Hintalo-Wejerat wereda and South-Eastern zonal administration officials, October 16/2010 Ab'ala). It seems that the two regions try to focus only on their locality and they seem to be biased by the information they get from their respective communities.

As a result of poor governance and weak law enforcement, the two groups prefer to take their case to *abo-gerebs* than to the justice system. Unfortunately, the famous and commonly used cultural institutions in peace building are now weakened and could not be effective alternative conflict resolution mechanisms. This, in one way or another, is attributed to the failure of the state. It is neither able to give recognition to the established practice of indigenous institutions nor provide impartial justice in modern courts. This implies that the state intervention is too weak. Its interference is not to support the already recognized age-old social institution but rather to abolish it. Thus, irresponsiveness to the public problem and the prevalence of recurrent conflict on both Afar and Wejerat sides are clear manifestations of poor governance. Further, an administrative structure that is partial and unable to identify community problems and provide timely solutions continues to be a source of conflict. This in turn widens the gap between the communities and the administration and aggravates inter-communal conflict in the study sites (Information obtained from the current and ex-*abo-gerebs* of the two communities, October 23/2010, Adigudom).

It is obvious that people will take their own measures to maintain their security if the government is unable to protect them from any illegal threat. This goes with Lobell's argument that the weakening of state institutional structures will create insecurities on the part of vulnerable ethnic groups. Thus, groups become fearful for their survival. Under such conditions, each ethnic group will look into their own devices for protection against others (Lobell, 2004).

## 3.3 Triggers of the Conflict (Proximate Causes)

### 3.3.1. Theft and Homicide Acts

Theft and homicide acts are the triggering factors in the study sites. These are mentioned as the main causes of inter-communal conflict. From the perspective of the Afar and the Wejerat, theft takes place at individual level and sometimes in groups which looks like robbery. This pattern is becoming usual among some members of the two communities for the purpose of short-run economic benefit and, in fact, for cultural prestige. However, theft cannot be a core ground to bring about conflict compared to homicide acts. It relatively activates the conflict. Individual conflicts that result in homicide sporadically extend to inter-communal conflict. When either of the two groups kills a person or steals property, the victimized group is motivated to take the same action or a more serious one. This will lead to adverse effects on the communities resulting in retaliation after retaliation. The current conflict between Gela'eso and Sen'ale is concrete evidence. An Afar youth from Gela'eso *kebele* killed a young man from Sen'ale (Hadale got) on August 15/2010 and the community of Wejerat (Sen'ale *emba*) took the action that brought about human and material loss on both groups. The event was narrated by the Wejerat informants as:

*Before the death of the youth from the Wejerat side on August 15/2010, there were many provoking acts from the side of some Afar (Gela'eso and Tonsa) armed groups in Kalla and Shegli grazing lands. They took away the clothes of seven youngsters who looked after cattle from Sen'ale and burned them down into ash. We tolerated it and did not react, but when they killed one innocent youth among them mercilessly in the following days, the conflict directly escalated to inter-communal level that brought human and material loss for both communities (my translation from Tigrigna) (Interview with Wejerat youth and elders during fieldwork, October 6/2010, Sen'ale).*

The Afar informants share the point that homicide is a sensitive breach and is a triggering factor that grows from individual or group disputes to involving the whole community at large. They refer to the current conflict as follows:

*The Afar and Wejerat youth met at the grazing land of Kalla. Unfortunately, they exchanged undesirable words. The root cause of the disagreement was pasture. That developed into combat which claimed a life. The deceased was from the Wejerat (Sen'ale) group. Then, the Wejerat (Sen'ale) came and killed us and destroyed our properties in revenge (my translation from Afarigna) (Interview with Afar (Gela'eso) youth and elders during fieldwork, October 30/2010, Gela'eso).*

The above statements of the two communities obviously imply that an incident of killing a member from the other group is a commonly acknowledged source of conflict

and tension between the two groups and that it must be condemned. There were heightened tensions before homicide was committed. The conflict was in its latent stage. However, following the homicide, the violence escalated to the level of involving both communities. This shows how homicide could be a proximate cause. Because everyone engages in killing as part of fulfilling the cultural imperative of his respective society, conflict becomes a vicious circle in the region. To restore family honor and escape cultural humiliation. Otherwise, they will be considered as cowards and worthless.

### 3.3.2. Drought

The other triggering factor is drought in the study sites. In fact, drought is a relative term that does not have universal meaning for scholars from different schools of thoughts or professions. However, in the framework of pastoral settings, drought occurs in two or more successive years when rainfall is less than 75% of the long-term average (Coppock as cited in Kelemework, 2004). The usual occurrence of this reality happens to be a driving force for searching additional grazing land and water points within and outside one's proper territories. Pastoralist way of life is characterized by mobility in drought period to search for better pasture for their livestock. According to Kelemework (2004), seasonal movement to regular pasturing areas is logical for Afar pastoral groups in Ethiopia to practice some form of transhumance.

In the context of Wejerat and Afar, this incident has been a cause of conflict in most of the disputes that occurred between them during the last ten years. As stated earlier, the agro-pastoral Wejerat communities have better reserved (*hizaeti*) grazing land that is used in times of feed shortage. In contrast, among the Afar, livestock mobility to better pasture is traditionally practiced as the core approach to combating drought no matter whether it is theirs or not. Accordingly, the Afar move to the protected sites of the Wejerat community in times of drought but they are denied access by the latter. This usually leads to dispute between the two groups.

Most of the informants from the Wejerat side verify that violent conflicts usually occur during dry season but is slightly less frequent in the rainy season. Some conflicts are latent during dry season. When the Afar, in the dry season, are denied using the pasture reserved for oxen, they hide grievance in their heart and react in the rainy season. The common grazing lands (*Kalla and Shegli*) become sites of revenge. When the Wejerat claim these sites in the rainy season, the Afar claim that some parts of these sites and reserved for their young stock. However, this is only a pretext because they know these areas are common for both groups. The reality is that they want to retaliate for the earlier grievance of the dry season and this goes to the extent of homicide (Information obtained from the young herders of the Wejerat, October 6/2010, Sen'ale).

In the same vein, the Afar informants endorse that their mobility emanates from the fact that they believe any natural resource is a God given asset. Thus, when resource scarcity happens in their own grazing land to supply livestock, particularly during drought, they move around to any close resource sites albeit they recognize the resource sites are not theirs. They claim that Afar livestock are not allowed to graze in resource sites of the Wejerat during dry season. But, when the Afar reserve some sites for young stock in the grazing land near the residence, the Wejerat claim that they are common grazing land and reject the request to keep their cattle away. Consequently, conflict to the level of homicide occurs between the groups (Interview with Afar young herders and local elders, October 16 and 30/2010, Ab'ala and Gela'eso).

The way they blame each other, no matter who ignites the conflict, implies drought is a driving force that worsens the existing relation of the two groups. One of the sound justifications is that during drought, the demand for grazing land increases and mobility of the pastoralists to a nearby grazing land owned by others becomes a norm and livestock will be concentrated in one site where resource is relatively available. However, the host communities feel that the site cannot feed huge livestock and, therefore, try to reject the 'outsiders'. Then a conflict is likely to occur. This reflects the usual perspective that herd mobility, for whatever reason, is one of the most imperative root causes of conflict between the two ethnic groups. The augmented frequency and intensity of drought in the past decades and the decline in local resource management is believed to have caused incidents of inter-ethnic conflict that usually end up in homicide.

Nevertheless, there is clear evidence from the perspectives of informants on both sides that violent conflict arises even in rainy season as much as it does in the dry season. Accordingly, though the explicit cause of conflict seems to be drought, the implicit one is related to territory claim and land tenure system. One vivid evidence is the current violent conflict which occurred on August 15/2010 in the rainy season in an area where grazing is available. This is related to Maxey's argument about the interaction between highland agro-pastoralist and lowland pastoralist that says in "highland mixed farming system and the lowland pastoral system, conflicts of interests exist related to the question of land tenure as a major source of conflict" (Maxey, n.d: 15).

### **3.4 Analysis of Conflict Actors and Their Interests**

This part endeavors to present the decisive actors or groups that are directly or indirectly engaged in or affected by the conflict in the study sites. A conflict cannot happen in a vacuum. Actors may have visible and/or invisible interests to get into conflict. Actors in a certain incident of conflict can be identified as primary and secondary actors. Primary actors are those who involve in a conflict directly or visibly whereas secondary

actors are those whose involvement may not be observable but who undeniably have some stake in the conflict. The different levels of analysis that should be considered when explaining ethnic conflicts are individuals (leaders and followers), groups (as direct and indirect factors: groups act on their own and influence the state's actions), the state (which can be a party to the conflict and/or a mediator between warring groups), and the regional context (state and non-state actors interacting in processes of escalation and de-escalation) (Wolf,2006:96). In the context of the Afar and the Wejerat, primary actors refer to the local ethnic groups that are openly engaged in conflict whereas the secondary ones are those who push from behind in a hidden way by providing material and moral support to escalate the conflict.

### 3.4.1 Political Elites

One of the main actors in the conflict is a group of political elites who represent their respective groups in the study areas. Political elites in this case refers to regional actors that embrace the *zonal*, *wereda*, and *kebele* or local governments. The role of these political elites in instigating conflict is revealed by all informants. Informants have averred the high involvement of political leaders in the conflicts of 2007 and 2010 by being on the side of their respective communities. On how political elites involved in and aggravated the conflict, informants from both sides show a bit of difference, though they agree on the existence of poor enforcement of the rule of law.

According to elders from Wejerat and militia informants, political elites from Hintalo-Wejerat and Ab'ala *weredas* have no differences on the security of the Wejerat community. The Wejerat informants condemn both Afar and Hintalo-Wejerat officials. When a conflict arises between both communities, the elite in Ab'ala give orders to a special force (*Liyu Hail*) to involve and use force against the Wejerat. The key interest of the political elites in involving in the conflict is holding a better political status. Thus, they support their ethnic group by all means to maintain their political power.

In contrast, when the Wejerat appeal to their respective *wereda* officials, they give no attention to the case. Ironically, they intimidate the people and disarm the militia making the society more vulnerable in the face of the illegal armed groups of Afar.

They say that the government neither ensures stability nor allows them to protect themselves; they rather accuse them of offence when they try one. The Wejerat associate the problem with lack of good governance and weak law enforcement and justice system of both regional governments (Information obtained from Wejerat elders during fieldwork, October 21 and 23/2010, Sen'ale and Adigudom).

The Afar informants, on the other hand, claim that it is the Wejerat legal government militias that take part on behalf of their people in the event of a conflict. The Hintalo-

Wejerat Wereda knows the involvement of the militia in the conflict, but never hands them over or brings them to the court. Unlike the Wejerat, they put more blame on the Wejerat local militia and government officials of Hintalo-Wejerat *Wereda* than on their own officials. They argue that the *wereda* officials support their respective group and do not refer them to courts of law (Interview during fieldwork with Afar local people and Ab'ala Wereda officials, October 16 and 23/2010, Ab'ala and Adigudom).

From the above views of both groups, it is clear that the inter-communal conflict recurs due to the inefficiencies entrenched in the judicial system and the poor enforcement of the rule of law. Government officials of the two regions are biased and favor their own group. They lack transparency and accountability. They are not willing to share and pass the exact information about the conflict. For example, as to who ignites the conflict, the local people blame each other. However, the government officials of both regions do not volunteer to work together at the grassroots level and bring the offenders to the legal court. They only resort to the *gereb* when the conflict is beyond their control.

Therefore, it would be reasonable to say that pastoral and agro-pastoral conflicts in the area have a positive correlation with the weakness of the governments at local, *wereda*, and zonal levels and even far beyond. The argument is that had the rule of law and its enforcement been strong enough, particularly against those who commit homicide, and had the political elites been loyal to the rule of law than to their own groups or personal interests, the Afar and the Wejerat people would not have been involved in a series of retaliation. Almost all informants agree on the political abuse in relation to law enforcement in the study areas albeit each group points fingers at the other. Thus, there is a tendency for the political elites to be loyal and be custodians to their own ethnic groups whom they think are the base for their status in politics.

### 3.4.2 Legal and Illegal Armed Groups

Under this section the roles and interests of the legal and illegal armed forces as actors in the lingering conflict in the study sites are presented. Illegal armed militias are individuals who own private illegal guns (common in lowland pastoralist areas). Such people are the most significant actors who are frequently mentioned.

As all informants from Wejerat agree, the availability of illicit arms owners, particularly modern small arms and light weapons with their bullets in the hands of the minor Afar youth is the actual threat to security. The free and unchecked spread of modern weapons combined with the absence of strong inspection by the regional government made the area more conflict prone.

According to the same informants, the major objective of having illicit arms is related to acquiring and maximizing the social values. That is, in Afar culture, having a gun

is considered as a symbol of power for self-protection and wealth but now guns are often used for offence. These armed groups are the main actors who ignite conflict and once it occurred, they stand by the side of their group and shoot against the other to get social honor. In fact, they also claim that the legal police forces of the Afar (*Ab'ala*) are actors of the conflict. In times of conflict, they fire against the Wejerat community and aggravate the situation rather than stabilize it (Interviews with the former abo-gerebs of Wejerat and local people of the five embas of Wejerat in focus, November 6 and 13/2010, Sen'ale and Adi-Keyh market day).



Figure 7: Afar Militias, with Police men, on Journey to Wejerat Sen'ale Emba for the Final (4<sup>th</sup>) Reconciliation, November 6/2010 (photo by the researcher 2010)

Therefore, the informants claim equal treatment and right before law. They argue that the Afar youth like the Wejerat ones should only carry legal weapons and this has to be allowed considering the personal ethics (maturity, responsiveness, integrity, tolerance), age and accountability of the individuals to the rule of law. They also demand a better political liability on the part of both Afar and Wejerat government officials so as to avoid the security dilemma of the region. In short, it can be said that they are insisting on political power based on rule of law than on rule of men that promotes one's own group or interest. Offenders from both groups must be captured and be held accountable ( *ibid*).

In a similar treatment, the Afar informants insisted that the legal armed forces are the

major actors of conflict from the Wejerat side. Legal armed forces include policemen and legally armed militias. The same informants explained that a sudden clash often occurs between herders of both groups in the common grazing lands of Kalla and Shegli due to pasture competition. When that happens and particularly when it leads to homicide, the government militias soon arrive in the conflict site and violently attack the local people of Afar. They worsen the scenario by retaliating rather than calming things down through dialogue and making efforts to capture the offenders. Such a reaction forces the local Afar and Wejerat residents to involve in the conflict. However, after the clash is over, neither of the two groups brings criminals to the court to ensure justice. The informants further argue that the respective governments (the *Wereda* security and administrative bodies) do not control misuse of legal weapons of the Wejerat militia (Interviews with Ab'ala and wereda administration officials, and local people of Gela'eso, October 16 and 30/2010, Ab'ala and Gela'eso).

Irrespective of blaming each other, the charge of the two *kebeles* (Sen'ale and Gela'eso) reveal that there were members of the police, government officials, and militias involved in the conflict that took place in August 2010. In this regard, legal and illegal armed militias, some policemen, and government officials are blamed for playing major roles in the conflict in both communities although it has not yet been proven by the legal court as to who was responsible for the crime. In the areas, behaviors like killing, theft, and hiding offenders are features of the conflict.



Figure 8: Wejerat Militias on Journey to Gela'eso for the Third (3<sup>rd</sup>) Reconciliation (Photo by the Researcher, October30/2010)

### 3.4.3 The General Public

The general public as actors in the conflict refers to local residents including civilians like the youth, women, elders, and others in the communities. These major ethnic groups and divisions in conflict with each other are the Wejerat agro-pastoralists and pastoralist Afar neighbors. The livelihood of these groups is based on the utilization and protection of pasture lands and water points in the interface areas. Conflict, thus, is likely to arise due to the propinquity to the resource in quest and the implicitly existing hazy periphery in the common grazing lands.

These agents have direct and indirect hand in igniting and pushing the conflict into a wrong track. The agro-pastoral and pastoral youth and adult men in both communities are the active participants in most of the frequent violent conflicts. As was elucidated earlier, the pastoral youth and adult men possess automatic weapons, hence when a simple disagreement occurs with non-own group on resource use, they directly go for homicide mainly because of the firearm at hand. Following homicide, tension usually escalates to a community level. The driving force for the youth to commit homicide is more or less related to the age-old pastoral social value of entitlement to heroism.

The victimized group will pass information to its respective community when such violent conflict happens. It is here that the visible role of women is detected. They pass information by wailing or crying and calling at the specific conflict site and explaining its level (people died, wounded, etc.). Then, any capable adult men and youth rush to the conflict area with local weapons like spears, knives, etc. Women also provide food and morale to actors on their side. The same holds true with pastoral women. They push men of their own group to join the violence.

At times of direct violent conflict, women disseminate information to more men of their group usually through weeping, and the latter take up arms and join the violence (Information obtained from Wejerat and Afar women and elders during the 3rd and 4th public reconciliation meetings, October 30 and November 6/2010, Gela'eso and Sen'ale).

Generally speaking, women are not direct combatants in such violent conflicts. They are rather agitators for retaliation by disseminating news to distant communities, fetching and serving food and water to their group and providing care to the injured. However, women are the most vulnerable groups in conflict. In the event of homicide, the overall trouble lies on the shoulder of women. Describing what happened in the violent conflict of August 2010, one of the Afar women informants noted:

*The trouble was very serious. Women and children were the vulnerable groups. Some were pregnant and others were in delivery. Thus, they had to rush somewhere to save their life*

*like the men when the conflict erupted. Houses were burned and people died, were wounded, and displaced. The season was summer and flood also played a role in the loss of animals and household commodities. As luck would have it, when peace is restored, the duty of rebuilding houses lies on the shoulder of women in the Afar culture. We (women) had a lot to say in the public reconciliation meetings about the effect of the conflict on the life of women and children, (translated from Afarigna) (Field interviews with Afar women of Gela'eso kebele, October 30/2010, Gela'eso).*

In the same way, one of the Wejerat women informants said:

*The recurrent conflicts have taken the lives of many from both sides. Several women became widows and lots of children ended up being orphans. Indeed, it is a tragedy when you see these women and children with no supporter. To win their daily bread, they suffer a lot. All this is the result of conflict (my translation from Tigrigna) (Field interviews with Wejerat women of Sen'ale emba, November 6/2010, Sen'ale).*

Female informants from both groups also stated that women play a significant role in peacemaking. They teach about the value of peace, how to make peace possible, and the effects of conflict on the youth at home. However, today's youth do not lend ears and allow the women to teach them. The same informants revealed that when the youth of the two groups come into clash, the problem should be addressed via dialogue. If homicide is committed, the offender should be apprehended, but retaliation against innocent community members should be a taboo. The Afar and the Wejerat are brothers. So, why are people retaliating to fulfill the interests and whims of few wrongdoers? They claim that the governments give no attention to the recurrent conflict. Had they given credit and punished offenders in the court system, no one could dare to commit crime and retaliate against others (Field Interview with Afar and Wejerat women during fieldwork, Gela'eso and Sen'ale, October 30 and November 6/2010).

Nevertheless, women and youth are excluded from meetings for peace effort albeit they are the potential actors in violence. The center of attention, almost entirely, lies on elders (*abo-gerebs*) that consider the youth and women as less important in the peace process while in reality they are the driving forces of both peace and conflict.

Consequently, to lessen the frequent conflicts ignited by these agents (youth and women), it is mandatory and essential to restructure the male-dominated peace process activities and make women and youth part and parcel of the process. (Observation during public reconciliation meetings and interviews with women and elders of Wejerat and Afar, October 16-November 6/2010).

Other actors blamed for the conflict are elders and religious leaders. They have a prominent role in their communities and take the leading role in both peacemaking and conflict processes. Violent conflicts in these communities had, for centuries, been addressed through traditional laws with the direct participation of elders and religious leaders as arbitrators. Nevertheless, in recent times, the influence of elders and religious leaders is withering away from time to time. Their failure to wield pressure on the youth, particularly on herders, to behave decently and to discourage conflict and also their failure to give timely response to end conflict imply that they have an invisible hand in the conflict. It is sensible to argue that the tit-for-tat vengeance between the two communities, particularly between the youth, should have been controlled by the elders but they lack commitment and social will to combat it (Information obtained from government officials of Afar and Wejerat communities in different sites during the public reconciliation meetings, October 16- November 6/2010).

Informants from both groups (the *abo-gerebs* and elders), however, argue that the responsible organ for the failure of elders and *abo-gerebs* in maintaining peace and order is the modern state machinery. The police and courts in the study sites neither play their legal role in resolving conflicts that arise between the two communities nor empower the *gereb* institution to exercise its power. Government institutions discourage the *gereb* from performing its traditional duties. The same informants avow that condition in the study sites was reasonably tough. Though the *gereb* institution used to exert influence in the community, the continual efforts to bring about lasting peace through religious institutions (the Holy Bible and Quran) of both communities do not last long. It seems the *gereb* has declined from time to time in resolving conflict and has lost its power and influence in the community, partly due to the pressure of ineffective modern state machinery and partly due to the decline of moral values of both communities in being loyal to the institution (*gereb*) (Information obtained from Afar and Wejerat elders and *abo-gerebs* during fieldwork particularly in the four public reconciliation meetings from October 16- November 6/2010).

### 3.5 Conflict Dynamics: Escalation-De-escalation in the Study Area

The term dynamics refers to the factors that inspire the escalation or de-escalation of conflict trends across time and space in the study sites. As Galtung (1996) verifies, dynamics in conflict arena lies between 'conflict formation and conflict transformation' (Galtung, 1996:76). Based on the analysis of the causes and actors discussed in the foregoing sections, trends of conflict escalation or de-escalation on the theme under inquiry will be scrutinized below.

### 3.5.1 Shift of Balance of Power: Economic and Political Power Transformation

In recent times, new trends of conflict are marked in the study sites. New attitudes of conflict, along with offensive and defensive mechanisms, have been observed between the two environs post-1991 period. In this regard, analysis of such trends is decisive to mitigate the current and future intensity of the conflict and new negative patterns of the two communities. In the absence of effective and sustainable conflict management competence at the grassroots level of local administration to bestow achievable remedy, unconstructive trends in conflict-prone areas may lead to rigorous conflict.

This is because “unresolved conflict may lead to frustration, which may lead to violence” (Galtung, 1996: 36). Information obtained from the field reveals that as Ethiopia established new political administration and as the socio-economic and political climate began to change, new types of trends began to emerge. Conflicts which were not observed prior to the emergence of the new government structure and administration have appeared in the study areas since 1991. Violent conflict became visible in various shapes such as recurrent resource-oriented combats, particularly in the form of territorial claim for contested borders, and involvement of actors using new technologies. The conflict is attributed especially to the absence of strong law enforcement and justice system, good governance, and strong conflict management institutions and devices. Of course, lack of justice and good governance were serious problems of the Derg regime, but the question of land ownership is a new paradigm in the communities studied. In contrast to the former days when traditional conflict resolution mechanisms were effective and conflicts occurred at long intervals, currently conflicts are taking place more frequently and last longer.

For half a century prior to 1991, the Afar and the Wejerat communities had somehow good relationship in terms of socio-economic and political power. The Afar used to take cereal crops from Wejerat at harvest time, and returned in kind (goat and sheep) when the time was favorable. It was easy to manage a conflict via *gereb* because of the interdependence they had. Even most of the conflicts that used to occur were in the area of theft and banditry, and sometimes in grazing and water points but never related to land ownership. The emergence of new political outlook that was not there during the imperial and the Derg regimes resulted in new conflict dynamics. The border of Afar and Tigray National Regional States (particularly between Wejerat and Afar) became constant areas of theft and homicide.

The deep-rooted and long-established relationships of Wejerat and Afar have now changed due to several factors. The fact that the Afar are no longer dependent on the Wejerat for food and the widespread government food aid distributed in the lowlands

have affected market interaction of the lowlanders with highlanders, particularly that of Ab'ala (*Gela'eso Kebele*) compared to Megale (*Tonsa Kebele*) who often exchange commodities in Adi-keyh market in Wejerat. Moreover, the mobile nature of the Afar in the border areas is slowly shifting to sedentary agricultural life. This practice raises the question of land ownership between the two groups.

For instance, the demand for establishment of permanent infrastructures for social services like mosques, schools, clinics, etc. on the part of the Afar in the vaguely-defined border sites have aggravated the conflict. This was the main cause for the conflict that occurred between the Afar (*Gela'eso*) and the Wejerat (*Gonka*) in 2007. Further, in the highlands, there is strong firearms control and no one is allowed to own illicit (even private) arms. In contrast, this is weak in the lowland areas where every adult man capable of affording a firearm can have one. This makes the Afar choose guns to solve disputes rather than find peaceful means. Still, factors like weak law enforcement and justice system in the pastoral areas compared to highland areas, lack of good governance, and the decline in traditional conflict management institutions (*gereb*) which were once effective have contributed to the escalation of the scenario (Interviews with Wejerat key informants and local people during fieldwork in different sites, October and November 2010).

All this changed the interdependence and power balance of the two groups. Conflicts started occurring more frequently and lingering much longer, and they grew from simple competition for pasture into the question of land ownership. For example, three years ago, there was a conflict between *Gonka* and *Gela'eso* that lasted for over two years and ended via the intervention of *gereb* and the regional governments of Afar and Tigray. Then the same problem occurred in a year's interval (in August 2010) between *Gela'eso* and *Sen'ale*. When we evaluate the current condition of relations between the Wejerat and the Afar neighbors (*Gela'eso* and *Tonsa*), it becomes clear that the gradual weakening of mutual disposition has attained a stage in unrivaled scale. The symbiotic relations of *fukur*, which is based on give and take principle, and the culture of inter-group resource sharing are intermittent. Violent conflicts usually happen within two years' interval on average affecting both groups. Currently, the traditional causes of conflict such as pasture, water, theft, and the like are not only immediate triggers of conflict but also the tools for the accomplishment of land ownership question in the common grazing areas. Conflicts are instigated along the borders of the Hintalo-Wejerat and the Afar neighboring *weredas* (*Ab'ala* and *Megale*) with the intention of territorial expansion.

As most of the informants affirm, a serious conflict happened in 1995 for the first time in the common grazing land. The first incident occurred when a man from Tsehaftu

*emba* (Wejerat) was killed by an Afar (Tonsa) on his farm land on the pretext of beating a camel. Although the mother of the deceased appealed to the government, the murderer was never brought to justice but was living in *Dande*, a small town of Raya-Azebo near Megale. The brothers of the deceased then retaliated against the families of the murderer and as a result were sentenced to four years imprisonment. This aggravated the scenario. In the same year, an Afar was killed at a place called *Gereb Gegeya*, located between Sen'ale and Gonka *embas* near Gela'eso. The second conflict occurred in a year's interval in 1996 at *Kalla*, a common grazing land between Gela'eso *Kebele* (Afar) and Gonka *Kebele* (Wejerat). The third one happened in 1997 when an Afar from Gela'eso killed a man and injured three others from Sen'ale *emba* as they were travelling with a group to *Wegaye* (a Wejerat area in the lowland) to attend a wedding ceremony. (ibid)

Various conditions have been observed post-1991 period. Negligence by government officials to follow the situation and, to some extent, their participation in the conflicts further aggravated the already existing problem. Availability and proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the pastoralist areas also worsened the situation. Homicide and subsequent revenge reached a level where social networks and economic interactions including use of common grazing lands (*Kalla* and *Shegli*) and attending common markets ceased. Thus, pastoralists from the Afar neighbors and the Wejerat community who freely used the common grazing lands stopped utilizing such resources due to uncertainty in security and mistrust between them. For instance, the common grazing lands of *Kalla* and *Shegli*, estimated to cover more than 20 thousand hectares, were in accessible for about two years (2007 to 2009) due to the conflict between the two communities. Members of either community who would go to the common grazing lands were a target of attack from the other side. Looking for lost cattle in the border areas and going far into the territory of either group was unthinkable (FGD with abogerebs and interviews with Wejerat and Afar local people during fieldwork in different sites of public reconciliation meetings held from October 16-November 6/2010). Retaliation after retaliation continued until 1998. The upshot of this problem was a horrible inter-communal conflict that took place from 1995 to 1998. Both ethnic groups were severely affected. Lack of timely interventions by the regional governments in the conflict-prone areas made both communities feel relatively deprived and mistreated. They took justice into their hands by retaliating instead of waiting for governments to ensure their security.

As a result, the conflict claimed the life of many people; many were wounded and became disabled from both sides. In 1998, the conflict was resolved through the intervention of the *gereb* in *emba* Sen'ale in the presence of relevant parties and religious figures from both sides. Unfortunately, in four years, another violent conflict occurred between Gela'eso (Afar) and Gonka (Wejerat) in the same site of *Kalla* common grazing land.

The worst of all post-1991 conflicts happened in 2007 between Gela'eso (Afar of Ab'ala *Wereda*) and Gonka (Wejerat) *emba*. It claimed more than fifteen lives from both sides and much property was destroyed in its two years' duration. According to informants from both communities, particularly elders, new dynamics which were uncommon prior to 1991 are now emerging. The same informants blame members of the police and security forces on either side. That is, the Afar informants blame the Hintalo-Wejerat police and security forces and vice-versa for participating in the conflict on the side of their respective communities (Interviews with Wejerat and Afar key informants as well as local people during fieldwork, October and November 2010). Most importantly, the Wejerat informants argue that homicide, retaliation and tension surfaced owing to the fact that more security is given from government officials of Ab'ala and clan members to the offenders on the basis of ethnic loyalty rather than guaranteeing the prevalence of rule of law. In contrast, the Hintalo-Wejerat government officials impose serious actions against suspicious individuals from Wejerat side. This creates partial treatment and huge gap while both groups are under one national constitution. Thus, it has become a fertile ground for the escalation of the other causes of conflict that hasten individual level conflict to that of community level.

The victim's families try to ensure justice by taking revenge on criminals when the government fails to take legal measures (Interviews with elders and government militias of Wejerat, October 2010, in different reconciliation sites). In general, since 1991, particularly starting from 1995, many violent conflicts occurred and many public reconciliation meetings and arbitrations were held through *gereb* in the presence of government officials as observers and security shields. However, the conflict is in a terrible stage. The arbitrations could not bring long lasting peace. This is because the question of land ownership and control of small arms is beyond the mandate of *gereb*. Thus, the conflict has been dynamic since 1995 in terms of actors, causes, and effects. The current violent conflict that occurred in August 2010 between Gela'eso (Afar) and Sen'ale (Wejerat) is a tragedy and a violent trend in the study sites. The post-1991 conflict, as a complex observable fact, affects wider relations of the two groups, but it has been given little or no attention by concerned government bodies to provide a long lasting solution (Information obtained from FGD with abo-gerebs and local people of Wejerat and Afar, October 2010).

### 3.6 Effects of the Conflict

The latent and actual violent conflicts between the Wejerat and the Afar (particularly Gela'eso and Tonsa kebeles) have been imposing not only considerable impact on different socio-economic interactions of the communities but have also created security related problems in the border areas of the two regional states (Tigray and Afar). The

volatile border areas have become a safe haven for criminals from both communities due to mistrust and lack of political and social will to hand over criminals and bring them to justice by the governments and the communities in focus. According to the information obtained from the field, post-1991, the conflict has resulted in human loss and material destruction. Government rules and orders have been dismantled. Due to the recurring conflict between the two communities, several women and children have become widows and orphans respectively. In short, the constitutional rights to life (article 15) and security (article 16) of the FDRE Constitution are being violated.

Year	Animal Loss				Damage to Human Life		Property Damage
	Animal Type	Death	Injury	Theft	Death	Injury	
1992 - 2003	Camel	4	5	168	11	21	500 pastoral shelters
	Goats	-	-	136	-	-	-
	Cattle	-	-	20	-	-	-
2004 - 2010	Donkeys	-	-	5	13	18	126 pastoral shelters
Total	4	4	5	329	24	39	626

Table 3: Effects of inter-communal conflict from 1992-2010  
 Source: Fieldwork and police report documents of 2010

As can be seen from Table 3 above, damages from 1992-2010 made to humans, animals and property clearly imply the severity of the inter-communal conflict across time and space. The acts of reprisal perpetuated on both sides resulted in 63 deaths and injuries - thirty two from Afar and thirty one from Wejerat side. The worst of all the conflicts was that of 2007 which occurred between Gela'eso (Afar of Ab'ala Wereda) and Gonka (Wejerat) *emba*.

It lasted for about two years and led to 21 deaths and injuries - thirteen from Afar and eight from Wejerat. A wide area of the common grazing land (*Kalla*) in the conflict site was out of immediate use by both communities. The initial cause of the conflict was Mosque building by Afar (Gela'eso) in the oxen grazing land of Gonka, west of the traditional border-*mengedi negade* (trade route). The federal police, the administrative and justice groups of the two regions failed to solve the dispute.

It was then left to the *gereb* that finally managed to resolve it after a process that took almost two years (Information obtained from the former and present abo-gerebs as well

as elders of both Afar and Wejerat communities during fieldwork and resolution events, October 2010).



Figure 9: Some Burned Pastoral Shelters (Houses) in the Conflict Site on August 16/2010 in Gela'eso (Photo by the Researcher, October30/2010)

In the recent conflict (August 2010) between the Afar (Gela'eso) and the Wejerat (Sen'ale), two people died (one from each side) and four were wounded - one from Afar (Gela'eso kebele) and three from Wejerat (Sen'ale Kebele). Moreover, according to the Afar local leaders in Gela'eso kebele, about 126 pastoral shelters (houses) were burned down, but the Wejerat (Sen'ale) local leaders claim that the burned pastoral shelters were not more than 20 (Information obtained from local leaders and local people of Afar and Wejerat during public reconciliation meetings, October 2010). However, as can be seen from the above figure, shelters (houses) were burned during the conflict regardless of the number. Finally, the conflict was managed through *gereb*, which is the focus of the next discussion.



*Figure 10: Pastoral Shelters (Houses) in Gela'eso (Photo by the Researcher, October 3, 2010).*

## **3.7 Peace Intervention: Modern Approach versus Traditional Approach in the Study Areas**

### **3.7.1 State Level: Modern Legal Approach**

The modern legal approach as conflict resolution mechanism includes modern court and police force. As a wing of government, the police force stresses more on preventing conflict instigating factors through awareness creation in the public on legal issues at formal and informal venues like religious gatherings and political meetings. Besides, the police have the responsibility to hand over offenders to the formal court of law so that corrective measures may be taken on the basis of the law.

Modern or formal court follows procedures put in place by the legal system including the constitution. It emphasizes on difficult issues such as murder, and loss or theft of property that cannot be seen by the local traditional courts and social courts. Its main function is preventing illegal actions and fostering peace, order, and security of the communities and the nation at large. However, because of certain factors, the modern court has its own limitations to solve inter-communal conflict in the study sites. Firstly, it is not as such acceptable to the pastoralists who are not well educated. They see sentence as death. Secondly, the conflict sites are located in the remote areas of the two districts. Thus, it is difficult to follow up closely the movement of the communities due to security problems, lack of transportation and telecommunication services. Thirdly, the action is communal and makes it so difficult to punish the whole community. Even

if an individual commits a crime, members of the respective community do not dare to find out the offender and hand him over to the modern court. Fourthly, the government bodies give no attention to the conflict and thus fail to punish offenders. That is why the local institutions are better suited for conflict resolution than the government institutions (Field interviews with local people and former as well as present gereb members of Afar and Wejerat, October 2010 at different conflict resolution sites).

The intervention of the government in managing conflict in the study sites is not more than providing emergency aid for the victim group in a non-inclusive way by restoring the status quo after violent conflict occurs. The government institutions of the two regions not only lack early warning mechanisms and conflict prevention tools but also fail to address the real causes of the conflict. This was the reality reflected in the recent conflict which happened between the Afar (Gela'eso) and the Wejerat (Sen'ale). The Hintalo-Wejerat *wereda* supplied temporary aid like wheat, blankets, and "kenda" (plastic shelter) for the Afar (Gela'eso) people because their houses were burnt during the conflict. However, this intervention created grief among the Wejerat people and they reflect this saying:

*While the Hintalo-Wejerat administration provided such support to the Afar victims, neither the Ab'ala Wereda administration nor the Hintalo-Wejerat administration did the same for the Wejerat victims. Individuals injured on the Wejerat side were in serious problem due to lack of transport facilities and faced shortage of money to travel to Mekelle for medical treatment. It is the public itself that contributed money and supported the victims to at least cover transport fee. Unfortunately, the aid provided in the name of state intervention for the Afar was from the monthly food aid of the Wejerat people stored at wereda level. We are, however, deprived of our right to such a benefit(my translation from Tigrigna) (FGD with Wejerat local people and interviews with key informants of victim families of Wejerat, October 16 and November 6/2010, Ab'ala and Sen'ale respectively).*

The above statements imply that there was partiality between the two groups at the time of state intervention. This in turn has its own impact on peace restoration and in developing trust between the community and political officials.

### 3.7.2 Local or Community Level: Traditional Approach

The contribution of cultural (traditional) administrative institutions in general and conflict resolution mechanisms in particular for the purpose of keeping collective security, peace, order, and equality and justice is highly considerable. Ethiopia, as a multicultural and multilingual nation, has many of these essential peacemaking institutions. The *gereb* institution (at ethnic group level) is one of such systems that has its own special functions in managing conflicts in the study sites.

### 3.7.2.1 The Gereb and Its Role in Conflict Resolution

The *gereb* is an indigenous institution that comprises *abo-gerebs* committed to the overall societal duties as local court of administration. *Abo-gerebs*, on the other hand, are a collection of people who run the *gereb* institution to resolve an inter-communal or inter-ethnic conflict as peace actors.

*Gereb* has been one of the most successful indigenous courts in managing inter-ethnic conflict between the Wejerat and the Afar. Its members are elected by the total adult male population of their respective locality and have the prime responsibility of restoring law and order. The criteria for electing the *abo-gerebs* are based on social acceptance, patience, past experience, and neutral and impartial stand of individuals in making wise decisions. The *gereb* develops its own rules and regulations known as *Sirit* (traditional law) applicable to its localities. It is not fixed and when necessary, it could be modified with full justification by the *gereb* members. The institution embraces representatives of the two ethnic groups referred to by the society as *abo-gereb*. The basic role of the *abo-gerebs* remains resolving inter-ethnic conflicts including homicide.

They have full power to impose sanctions on offenders in the course of resolving conflicts. Usually compensations -‘blood price’ imposed on the offender - would be decided through the bilateral agreement of the *abo-gerebs* of the conflicting parties. All decisions passed are practical and binding. In general, *abo-gerebs* are agents that resolve inter-ethnic conflicts in time, with less cost and more success at least in recovering the status quo. They are real representatives and watchdogs for the values and norms of the society so as to maintain peace and minimize conflict. They also expose and punish offenders via *gereb*. This way, peace is maintained through non-violent means between the two ethnic groups (Information obtained from present and ex- *gereb* members as well as key informants of Afar and Wejerat elders during fieldwork, October 2010).

All these features of *gereb* were observed in the recent peace process held to resolve the violent conflict that occurred between the Wejerat (Sen’ale) and the Afar (Gela’eso) on August 2010. More importantly, the researcher observed and followed public reconciliation meetings. The peace process had four phases held in four different places in the lands of the parties in conflict. In addition, one general assembly was held in Quiha. The process in general took about two solid months to come to a peaceful end.

The first assembly was held in Quiha on October 6, 2010 to address the conflict that took place in August 2010 between Sen’ale and Gela’eso. Ten neutral *abo-gerebs* from the Wejerat and the Afar, five from each, were elected to solve the problem. Fourteen additional elders, seven from each of the *kebeles*, were also elected to the assembly. The zonal and *wereda* administrators, including security officials of the two regions, were observers of the process and were overseeing security of participants. The *gereb* members and elected elders elaborated the causes and consequences of the conflict.



Figure 11: Abo-gerebs of Both the Wejerat and the Afar in Sen'ale Emba in the Final (4<sup>th</sup>) Resolution (Photo by the Researcher, November 6, 2010).

They (*abo-gerebs*) decided in that assembly the amount of compensation for victims: Ethiopian *Birr* 30,000 for murder, 10,000 for disability or serious injury, and 5,000 for simple injury for victims from both ethnic groups. The burden of compensation is not to lie on individual offenders but on the entire respective community. However, the *abo-gerebs* claim that the amount of compensation demanded for the destroyed pastoral shelters was beyond what the Wejerat could afford. They also say that deciding on the amount is out of their mandate. Thus, this is left to the regional state, particularly to the Hintalo-Wejerat Wereda. The final remark of the assembly was completed by agreeing on the timetable of the next public reconciliation meetings to be held in different sites: first, in Ab'ala on October 16, 2010, second, in Adigudom on October 23, 2010, third, in Gela'eso on October 30, 2010, and the final one in Sen'ale on November 6, 2010. Based on this, the reconciliation process was completed in four phases. Government officials of both the regions participated in the reconciliation process. Peace dialogues were held to end the conflict at community level under the leadership of *abo-gerebs* and in the presence of religious leaders, government and police officials and elders of the two communities in different sites. (Observation during fieldwork in the public reconciliation meetings, report analysis (see annex E1) and interviews with resolution participants, October 2010).

Figure 12: Public Reconciliation Meetings of the Wejerat and the Afar (Photo by the Researcher October 2010).



a) *The Wejerat in Adigudom in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reconciliation Meeting, October 23, 2010*



b) *The Afar in Kalla in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reconciliation Meeting, October 30, 2010*

The conflict resolution has its own procedures. Usually when an individual commits a crime, for instance, from the Afar side, the relatives of the offender send representatives to the community where the victim/s belonged. This is a way of admitting and notifying the offense committed on their part. Then the representatives, with the consent of the victimized community, arrange for dates of reconciliation assemblies usually held in the area of the victimized group. The logic behind is that the offender should travel to the home of the victim and beg for mercy. There is a possibility that the assembly is held in the homeland of the offender if the victims express full consent. Nevertheless, if the conflict is communal, i.e, if homicide has been committed on both sides, the meeting will be held in sites of both conflicting parties and with the involvement of *abo-gerebs* from both communities (Information obtained from the Afar and the Wejerat elders and gereb members during fieldwork in various conflict resolution processes, October 2010).

Figure 13: The Afar (Gela'eso) and the Wejerat (Sen'ale) Asking Each Other for Forgiveness at Inter-communal Conflict Resolution Ceremonies (Photo by the Researcher 2010).



Figure A. The Afar Asking the Wejerat for Forgiveness



Figure B. The Wejerat Asking the Afar for Forgiveness

The offender is asked to kneel down and ask the victimized group for pardon, a process locally known as *afu* in Afar and *yitref* in Tigrigna (Wejerat). The parties in conflict will greet and kiss each other by shaking hands. Then, the *abo-gerebs* speak to the assembly on the advantages of peace and emphatically advise the communities that such offenses should not be committed in the future. Then they express heartfelt gratitude to the conflicting parties for commitment to peace. Mainly, the victims' relatives are advised to completely avoid ill feelings of revenge. Then a blessing ceremony called *du'uâ* in Afar and *mireka* in Tigrigna continues after the reconciliation ceremony is completed.

Elders and religious leaders from both groups bless both communities for the reverence they have shown for peace. Religious leaders from both groups led the oath taking process by quoting words from the Bible and the Quran and their respective groups did the same so that they do not repeat the same mistake. The leaders conveyed a message about the value of peace. For example, a priest from the Wejerat side gave a statement in Geez as: “**ጸልዩ በእንተ ሰላም ፍጹምት ወፍቅር ተአምሐ በበይናቲክሙ በአምሐ ቅድሳት**” which literally means “*Pray for peace which is perfect and full of love, and greet each other with heartfelt love.*” After the contending groups greeted each other, he also added a point saying: “**ናሁናይ ወናሁ ከዳም ሰብይ ሄልዉአሐው ህቡረ**” literally meaning, “*How good and pleasant it is when brothers live in harmony and peace together*” (Observation during fieldwork in the four conflict resolution ceremonies and interviews with participants of the peace process of Wejerat and Afar local people, October and November 2010). These statements show the role of religion in enhancing peace and the culture of tolerance to live together like brothers through mutual understanding among communities.

## Chapter Four

# Conclusion and Recommendations

### 4.1 Conclusion

The main theme of this study was to examine the dynamics of inter-communal conflict between Wejerat and Afar neighbors in north-east Ethiopia. It attempted to examine and assess the nature and context, history of relations, causes and dynamics, actors and their interests as well as effects of the conflict in the study sites. Besides, it highlighted the peace interventions applied so far to resolve conflict. The study eventually revealed the following findings and conclusions from the analysis.

The latent and actual violent conflict between Wejerat and Afar neighbors is mostly portrayed as inter-communal conflict. Conflict could not occur in vacuums, so the conflict in the study areas has its own underlying and triggering causes along with actors that have various interests and attitudes. The conflict scenario is dynamic in nature with trouble effects though the traditional court-*gereb*- plays crucial role to address the problem.

The causes of the conflict in the study sites overlap each other to make sense of conflict as a multidimensional fact of life. Competition over natural resources, particularly land and land- related issues are one of the major causes that ignite recurring conflict between Wejerat and Afar. These causes are gradually transformed into the question of land ownership in the border areas post-1991 which is a new trend of conflict in Federal Ethiopia. The scenario is exacerbated by the contested and un-demarcated administrative regional borders with the presence of mutually shared natural resources (grazing lands, water points, demands for farm land, etc.) in the border areas. In addition, theft and homicide acts accompanied by retaliation between the two communities are other sources of conflict.

The uncontrolled availability, misuse, and proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons (SALWs) in pastoral communities is another underlying factor of violent conflict that develops mistrust, threat and insecurity feelings on the part of their neighbors (Wejerat). The easy accessibility of these firearms to immature youth and adults aggravates homicide and expected revenges. The existing of high demand for and availability of firearms without the control of regional, *zonal* and *wereda* government officials is the upshot of weak law enforcement and justice system along with poor governance.

The other critical issue that has a link with the conflict between Wejerat and Afar is the question of good governance. Good governance is a world-wide mode of contemporary state administration to promote favorable environment for the purpose of ensuring peace, order and security. This is because one of the fundamental functions of the state as a responsible organ is to ensure internal law, justice, security and order (Lobell and Mauceri, 2004). Nevertheless, the research reveals that lack of good governance, weak law enforcement and justice system as well as frequent homicides with impunity of offenders are the dominant features that cause and aggravate violent conflict in the study sites. As a result, people in the areas apply their own devices to secure their survival if possible by traditional court like *gereb*. Otherwise, they employ coercive means for the concerned government is unable to secure and protect them from any illegitimate damage. The weakening of state institutional structures will create insecurity on the side of vulnerable groups where they apply own mechanisms to protect their physical and economic security (Lobell, 2004).

Drought, theft, and homicide are also found to be triggers of conflict in the study sites. Particularly, homicide by the Afar people with ostensible reason in the name of culture and traditional violence against the highlanders is aggravating the likelihood of conflict. The feeling of dishonor when one fails to restore his blood and the successive retaliatory actions are usually supposed as shared duties of the communities in focus. Thus, retaliatory acts that receive positive reaction and are often rewarded by the community to date are underlying causes of the conflict, too. These deep-rooted cultural and traditional values are ascribed to social prestige. Most importantly, the research reveals that the decline of traditional governance institutions has a great effect in the occurrence of recurrent conflict in the study sites. The communal traditional land tenure system has declined. This goes in line with the work of Jeong that says “local exchange relationships dissolved and collective forms of ownership broken up “(Jeong, 2000: 92) with social transformation dynamics.

The *gereb* is the way to fading away fairly owing to the failure of governments to recognize the function of this institution in running intra-and inter-communal conflict at the grass roots level and partly due to the attrition of moral values to pursue customary laws. Thus, conflict becomes a reality beyond the control of elders (*abo-gerebs*) in the study areas. Generally speaking, the nature and context of conflict manifestations between the Wejerat and Afar neighbors lies on socio-cultural, political, legal, security, and economic related causes that might be addressed accordingly.

It is clear that conflicts never erupt by themselves whatever causes and motives might be in certain state of affairs. Causes of conflict need agents or actors for their actual episodes. Accordingly, in the study areas, conflict has held own actors who involve in

the course of conflict for various reasons. To this effect, the major actors of conflict in the study *weredas* are political elites, legal, and illegal armed militias as well as the general public.

Political elites at *wereda*, *zonal* and regional levels are found to be one of the major actors of the conflict. The key interests of the political elites' involvement in the conflict are either holding better political status or negligence of rule of law. Many of the informants do not perceive all conflict as intentionally made by either of the people. They rather claim that political elites are the main agents behind the conspiracy of the conflict. Inefficiencies that are entrenched in the judicial system and the poor enforcement of the rule of law in the study sites contribute to recurrence of violent conflict. The government officials of the two regions are biased and favor their own group. They lack transparency and accountability. They are not willing to share and pass the exact information about the conflict. Thus, there is a tendency to appeal as loyal and custodian to one's ethnic group whom they think a focal point of their status in politics rather than the rule of law.

This is because as Mair (1964) affirms, in any social interaction, all the time and everywhere there are persons with inconsistent and contending interests, seeking to have the dispute settled in their favor and to manipulate community to be in harmony with their interests.

What is more conspicuous among the major actors of conflict in the study areas is the role of legal and illegal armed militias. Legal armed forces include policemen and armed militias. Illegal armed militias, on the other hand, refer to individuals who own private illegal guns (common in lowland pastoralist areas). The role of illicit arms is found to be a driving force for changing the latent nature of the conflict into a violent one. In this regard, most of the tit-for-tat homicides are sporadically caused by these groups who hold small arms and light weapons. Having a gun used to be and is considered as a symbol of power for self protection and wealth in Afar culture and is now being often used for offence. These illegal armed groups are the main actors of conflict who ignite and commit homicide under the banner of social honor. Once a conflict happens, the legal forces stand by the side of their own group against non-ethnic group some to get political position and social honor, and others as a defense. In the aforementioned areas, behaviors and attitudes like killing, theft, and hiding offenders are commonly observed features. However, the two groups (Wejerat and Afar) blame each other as offense and defense mechanisms. This makes the security dilemma intense because the offense and defense balances are indistinguishable (Lobell, 2004).

On the top of the above actors, the role of the general public, the elders, youth, and women of the communities in the study sites to aggravate the conflict is not undermined.

To begin with women, they are not direct combatants in such violent conflict. They are rather agitators of retaliation via indirect involvement like displaying news to distance communities, fetching and serving food and supplying water to the parties in conflict and providing care to the injured. However, women are the most vulnerable and victimized groups of the conflict. When the conflict transforms into the level of homicide, the overall trouble lies on the shoulder of women and children along with the elderly. The failure of elders to wield pressure on the youth, particularly on cattle keepers to behave decently and to discourage conflict as well as the lack of timely response to end conflict is another push factor for the long-lasting homicide. The tit-for-tat vengeance and violence between the two communities, especially between the youth is due to the oversight of the elders. As prominent figures of their communities, they lack commitment and social will to combat it.

As this study reveals, the role of the youth in igniting conflict is one of the flash points in the study areas. The Wejerat and Afar informants associated many of the issues related to causes and actors of conflict with the youth group. Particularly, the cattle keepers of both (the armed Afar youth and unarmed Wejerat youth) clash with each other in the pasture lands. As was indicated earlier, the pastoral youth with automatic weapons are directly inclined to homicide as a solution for simple disagreements owing to the availability of firearms and to obtain the age-old pastoral social value of entitlement to heroism. The agitation among these groups escalates to community level often when such homicide is committed.

The overall pattern of the conflict in the study sites has shown new trends. Some of the newly emerging issues that have impacted the trend of conflict in the region include the shift of balance of economic and political power between the two ethnic groups, the presence of uncontrolled firearms in the lowlands, and political transformation at regional level. The Afar neighbors demand a permanent place and practice of farming in the border areas today than they did before. The Wejerat people also have the demand to cultivate these areas claiming that the land is theirs. This condition raised the question of land ownership between the two groups. For instance, the necessities and establishment of permanent infrastructure related to social services like mosques, schools, clinics, etc. on the part of Afar pastoralists in the non-defined border sites (common grazing lands) become sources of conflict and aggravate the scenario. This goes in line with Fisher's idea that affirms, at all levels of human interactions, divisions between interest groups on central social concern can lead to destructive intergroup conflict and hostility (Fisher, 2006). This was observed as a serious case for the two years' (2007-2009) conflict between Afar (Gela'eso) and Wejerat (Gonka).

All these things whatever their basic motives, have contributed a lot to the escalation of

conflict. In this regard, the current dynamics of social relations between Wejerat and Afar neighbors (Gela'eso and Tonsa) are in the wrong track. It is revealed that the weakening of mutual disposition from time to time has attained a point unrivaled in scale currently. The symbiotic relations like having "*fukur*" which is based on mutual interdependence (give and take principle) and the traditions of inter-group resource sharing are on and off. Violent conflict usually takes place at two years' interval on average affecting both groups. Besides, the traditional causes of conflict (pasture, water, theft, etc.) between the two communities are not only immediate triggers of conflict but also become the tools for the accomplishment of land tenure questions in the common grazing areas. Conflict arising along the borders of the Hintalo-Wejerat and Afar (Ab'ala and Megale) *weredas* seems to have the motive of territorial expansion.

The other undeniable crucial issue of conflict is its ensuing impact. Every conflict has its own direct or indirect ramification on primary and secondary actors of the conflict and the general public at large. The scenario between Wejerat and Afar cannot be an exceptional domain. So, the conflict has affected the general socio-economic and political activities and relations of the community. The conflict has resulted in human loss and material destruction post-1991. Many women became widows and many children became orphans due to the recurring conflict. The volatile border areas become a safe haven for criminals of both communities due to mistrust and lack of good governance and social will to hand over criminals and hand over them to the law. Articles 15 and 16 of the FDRE Constitution guarantee citizens' right to life and security respectively. Article 15 assures that "no person may be deprived of his life except as a punishment for a serious criminal offence determined by law". Likewise, article 16 affirms that "everyone has the right to protection against bodily harm". Contrary to this, people in the study areas and environs are deprived of their life due to the persistent arbitrary killing and retaliation, their human and constitutional rights are also frequently violated. Thus, the scenario forces the communities to be biased against government officials and they are vulnerable to human insecurity.

Notwithstanding the complex and dynamic nature of the conflict, different modes of peace interventions have been practiced to prevent and control the escalation of conflict situations. This comprises traditional and modern methods of preventing and managing conflict.

The modern approach has its own limitations to solve inter-communal conflict because of certain factors. Among others, this approach is not more acceptable in the pastoral areas that are not well educated. Furthermore, the governments give little or no attention to the violent conflict and are unable to discover and punish criminals according to the rule of law. Because of this, the local institutions have better resolution performance than the governments at least in restoring the status quo.

The cultural approach to resolve and manage conflict is known in its local term *gereb*. The role of *gereb* both in managing and preventing the occurrence of conflict in the future is observed to be superlative compared to the modern approach in the study sites. This supports what Lipson (1981) asserts, the accustomed conflict resolution mechanisms are rooted in an indigenous system where aged people are fully capable to execute the element of reconciliation and pass wise decisions. The research, however, reveals that though the *gereb* institution (*abo-gerebs*) used to enhance peace, order, and security in the community, the continual efforts to bring about lasting peace along with religious institutions (the Holy Bible and Quran) and compensation to both communities do not last long. Several arbitrations have been made from 1995 to date to address the violent conflict between the two groups through *gereb*. But, none of them brought permanent peace. This is because addressing the question of land tenure and control of small arms is beyond the mandate and capacity of *gereb*. These issues are political and legal that cannot be addressed through compensation rather demand legal and political solution. It seems the *gereb* has declined from time to time in resolving conflict and lost its power to influence the community partly due to the decline of moral values of both communities to be loyal to the institution (*gereb*) and largely due to the weak and ineffective modern state machinery to deal with the problem.

The state machinery (particularly political elites, police and courts) in the study sites neither perform its legal role efficiently and effectively in resolving conflict that arises between Wejerat and Afar nor authorizes the *gereb* institution to discharge its responsibilities independently. The research avows that the condition at present is understandably different. Thus, the post-1991 conflict as a complex observable fact is dynamic in terms of actors, causes and effects. The frequency of the conflict was very low with minimum damage due to use of traditional weapons pre-1991. Moreover, there were effective traditional ways of resolving the conflict via the intervention of a powerful *gereb* institution. The current conflict differs from the earlier ones in its frequency, intensity, causes, and actors involved, and technology applied. Most importantly, despite its effect on the long established interactions of the two groups, it is given little or no attention from responsible bodies to guarantee long-lasting peace. At present, the conflict is at its post-conflict stage, and it also looks as if those things are calm. Nevertheless, there is still mistrust and hesitation among the community.

## 4.2 Recommendations

Obviously, conflict is a mark of life which is inevitable in the day-to-day of human life. The problem is not the existence of conflict but the way how it is handed. In this regard, a timely sound intervention from both stakeholders: government officials at the *wereda*, *zonal* and regional levels, and the Wejerat- Afar communities are indispensable. Thus, to

maintain peace and security, the following recommendations may be worth mentioning based on the findings of the study:

- The government officials at local, *wereda*, *zonal* and regional levels of Afar and Tigray should give credit and recognition to the deep-rooted local institution-*gereb*- so as to strengthen its conflict prevention and management activities that are necessary to boost peace. Capacity building trainings for *abo-gerebs* in the area of early warning system and conflict prevention mechanisms should be given in advance rather than calling the *gereb* after the conflict erupts and becomes beyond government control. Besides, providing logistics such as transport services, per diem fee, etc. that would facilitate conflict resolution processes should be well thought about.
- The House of Federation, particularly Ministry of Federal Affairs, has to be involved in the demarcation of hazy areas between the two communities. The conflict is on and off due to lack of clear demarcation. The conflict attains its turmoil stage at one time, and goes down again for the time being to a latent stage. No sustainable measures have been taken so far by government bodies. Thus, sustainable solution is needed by conducting studies at the grassroots level.
- Qualified political officials who are loyal to the rule of law and the national constitution than to one's own ethnic group and personal interest should be assigned at all levels of government. Above all, corrective measures should be taken on those political officials who try to abuse the rule of law and cause conflict between the two communities in order to ensure peace and security.
- Disarming totally illegally owned firearms in the lowland areas (Afar) might be difficult. However, there are possibilities of disarming the youth under age and legalize the guns of matured ones on the basis of age and personal ethics to make them legal militias. This could help to reduce sudden homicide and enhance responsibility and accountability making tracing offenders easier. This certainly needs political will and commitment on the part of local, *wereda*, *zonal* and regional officials of Afar.
- The local government officials of Afar and Tigray at different levels should be free and open to highlight the ongoing situation, particularly in the study sites. Heightening conflict may be sensitive in politics, but the conflict resolution mechanisms and processes of *gereb* should be recorded and given media coverage to serve as further references and experiences for others and similar conflict episodes.
- The local government officials should avoid personal emotions and political abuse in times of managing differences and decision making that may ignite public

resistance. Local officials should consider the local context, the interests, and consent of the communities. Thus, it is recommended to give an open ear to the voices of all sections of the community to pass impartial and sound decisions.

- The regional and local governments of the study sites have to promote the deep-rooted and long-established local resource management and land use policy of Wejerat and Afar that would reduce resource-oriented conflict that happens on how to use natural resources due to the decline of traditional rules (*sirits*).
- Joint sustainable development projects and investment opportunities in agriculture should be developed by the two regional states in the potential arable lands of border areas of *Kalla* and *Shegli* that would tie the two communities, mitigate economic-related potential conflict and poverty, and enhance food security.
- Creating awareness and condemning the tit-for-tat attitudes and behaviors that are carried out in the name of cultural values. It is suggested that continued collective public dialogue with involvement of Afar and Wejerat communities in general and the youth in particular might have some positive outcomes. It will also be vital to discover offenders and hand them over to the court of law if local government officials work closely hand in hand with local communities.
- Law enforcement and the justice system should execute their duty consistent with the rule of law to take appropriate measures against offenders. This will allow justice to flourish because it is not only preventing criminals from their wrong deeds but also preventing victims to use their own devices as revenge for they feel the law is effective.
- The modern and traditional (*gereb*) courts should work in collaboration to mitigate conflict. For example, the *gereb* can calm conflict situations via public reconciliation meetings to control inter-communal conflict, but should hand over individuals who committed serious crimes to the modern court of law instead of letting them pay only compensation.

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# Section 2

**Entrenching the Culture of Peace in Ethiopia:  
Challenges and Opportunities**

**Alagaw Ababu**

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

AEUO	All Ethiopian Unity Organization
CUDP	Coalition for Unity and Democracy Party
DAC	Development Assistance Group
E.C.	Ethiopian Calendar
EDP	Ethiopian Democratic Party
EPRDF	Ethiopian People Revolutionary Front
EU	European Union
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
ICG	International Crisis Group
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples
TPLF	Tigrayan People`s Liberation Front
UDJP	Unity for Democracy and Justice Party
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organizations
US	United States

# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.1. Background of the Study

Human societies have institutions that regulate and socialize individuals in their relation with one another and members of outside groups. These include churches, schools, the family, political institutions etc., which either encourage or discourage violence and peace. The history of human society, however, indicates that most institutions promote more of violent culture than peace culture (De Rivera, 2004a). The horrific conflicts that range from civil wars, guerrilla warfare, and terrorism to genocide witnessed in different parts of the world, the prevailing gender based violence and environmental destruction indicate that, indeed, violent culture outweighs peace culture. The existence of violent conflicts and violence is here used to support the argument that the culture of the society besieged by these evils is said to be violent. This is so because war, in particular, and violence, in general, “begin in the minds of men and it will be in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed” (UNESCO Constitution, Preamble). Such evils will be eliminated provided that the values, norms, beliefs and institutions that are developed upon them, which constitute the culture of a given society, are against violence, oppression and exploitation.

Thus, the transformation of our world from the unfolding human tragedy to the path of peace requires transformation of human values, norms, beliefs and institutions that shape human behaviors so that they promote peace instead of violence. Consequently, when the values, norms, beliefs and institutions promote peace and discourage violence, then the society is said to embrace the culture of peace and the opposite is true regarding the prevalence of the culture of violence.

A glimpse at Ethiopian history gives one an understanding that war among various regional groups, the central government and various dissatisfied groups and between the Ethiopian state and foreign powers was rampant in the society. Moreover, oppression, authoritarianism, and exploitation have been the defining features of Ethiopian history. The dominant Ethiopian culture can, therefore, be considered as having cultural elements that are characterized by the prevalence of violence and war. In the monarchical times, this violent culture was part of the socio-political institutions of the Ethiopian polity and in fact it is argued that the socio-political arrangement encouraged this violent culture (Messay, 1999). Even today, it is difficult to assume that the socialization process is much more different from the earlier period and that the prevailing societal and political institutions are immune to norms and modes of behaviors that encourage violence.

However, there are also elements within the culture of Ethiopians that promote the culture of peace because a society with no elements of culture of peace is in Hobbesian state of nature which is tantamount to mean that it does not exist. Hospitality, mutual co-existence, cooperation, humility, tolerance and culture of inter-ethnic integration are but a few of Ethiopian values supportive of the culture of peace (Ephraim, 2008). Thus one can safely argue that peace culture and violent culture are the fact of life of most human societies and the Ethiopian society is not an exception. While it is in the interest of every Ethiopian to see a country whose people embrace the culture of peace, how this could be achieved and the challenges and opportunities to be utilized seem to attract little attention. This study, therefore, is an attempt to delve into a crucial but not much scrutinized issue of the cultural dimensions of peace and conflict.

Even if the concept of culture of peace has eight components as stipulated in the UN Resolution (A/53/243), this study assesses the challenges and opportunities associated with enhancing the culture of peace in Ethiopia only along the components of democracy, non-violence, and tolerance and solidarity. This, however, does not mean that the other components are irrelevant.

## 1.2. Statement of the Problem

With the exception of few traditional societies, today's societies in general are assumed to have a blend of culture of peace and culture of war (Boulding, 2008). The major initiatives undertaken by UNESCO and others, therefore, focus on strengthening the bases of the culture of peace while at the same time eroding the culture of war (UN Resolution, A/64/312). Ethiopian societies, likewise, hold cultures that favor peace as well as cultures that sustain oppression, exploitation and violence.

Notwithstanding the paramount significance that needs to be attached to the goal of building the culture of peace, there has been no comprehensive study that attempts to elucidate the challenges and opportunities in building the culture of peace in Ethiopia in an integrated and systematic manner. However, there are some studies that look at its aspects in one way or the other. The study by Puloaha (2004), for instance, attempts to show the continuity in Ethiopia's state-society relations which by implication is an effort to show the challenge facing change. But as her study is concerned with an anthropological study of child behavior and value at a school in Addis Ababa, it fails to show the complexity of challenges which could not be reduced to cultural continuity. Furthermore, Vaughan and Tronvoll (2003) provided a highlight of the continuity of Ethiopian authoritarian political culture as a justification for difficulty of democratic consolidation. These authors depicted the Ethiopian dominant culture as essentially authoritarian. Though there could be several other authors who discussed the challenges of democratization in passing, a comprehensive presentation of the issue is still lacking.

The issues of inter-ethnic tolerance and solidarity and non-violent political struggle are not even treated the way democratization was handled. The factors that militate against peaceful inter-ethnic interactions and conditions that could enhance peaceful coexistence have not been considered adequately compared to what they deserve in a pluralistic society. Moreover, investigating the hurdles and prospects of non-violent political struggle is an imperative as the debate over the appropriateness of non-violence vis-a-vis armed resistance is not yet a settled issue among contending political actors. With regard to religious tolerance and solidarity, there are studies that focus on the aspect of religious radicalism. Erlich (2007) and Ephraim (2008) are good examples that take the above argument seriously. However, a comprehensive and integrated study is by and large lacking. Thus, this study attempts to provide a modest but important attempt at identifying the factors that mediate peaceful and cooperative inter-religious interactions.

There are also scholars who argue contrary to the points raised above. Ephraim (2008) indicated that there are certain values that are not only shared by all Ethiopians but also serve as a base for democracy, human rights and justice. Similarly, Levine (2008) indicated that there are significant public spaces<sup>1</sup> at the local level that serve as a base for democracy. If the Ethiopian people embrace both cultures, what logically follows from this is why continuity becomes the norm and change the exception. Thus, it is necessary to study the challenges and opportunities that prevail in transforming the society from culture of oppression, exploitation and violence to culture of peace along the components of culture of peace. The aspects chosen in this paper, as indicated above, are democracy, non-violent political struggle, and tolerance and solidarity (both inter-ethnic and inter-religious). The first component is important as its absence or denial leads to a conflict between state and society. The second component is pertinent for the handling and resolution of conflicts in a constructive manner. Tolerance and solidarity are not only necessary for democracy but also for the reduction of structural violence among the different cultural groups. Hence, the issue of culture of peace in Ethiopia is worthy of investigation. The challenges and opportunities in enhancing the above components of the culture of peace in the Ethiopian context need to be analyzed to point out what should be done in a manner that contributes to the reduction of violence.

## 1.3.Objective of the Study

### 1.3.1 General Objective

Generally, this study aims to assess the opportunities and challenges in building the culture of peace in Ethiopia. It aims to give an analysis of the structural, institutional and related challenges as well as the opportunities in inculcating the culture of peace.

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1 The term public space refers to a way in which a given community solves a given problem through the informed deliberation of its members.

### 1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. Examining the challenges and opportunities for the consolidation of democracy.
2. Assessing the structural and institutional challenges and opportunities of inter-ethnic tolerance and solidarity.
3. Identifying the hurdles and prospects of inter-religious tolerance and solidarity in Ethiopia.
4. Exploring the obstacles and possibilities of non-violent political struggle.

## 1.4. Methodology and Study Method

### 1.4.1 Methodology

The study employed qualitative approach for exploring the problem at hand. Reswell (2008) stated that qualitative approach is best suited for researches that are explorative so that it will be possible to identify variables that can be used as a springboard for quantitative studies through objective measure of variables. Moreover, qualitative approach is also best suited for detailed and complex analysis of a given issue as well as for problems that cannot easily be quantified (Cresswell, 2009). Needless to say, the problem at hand benefits from these advantages of qualitative approach. Hence, the approach is worthy of being adopted for this study.

### 1.4.2 Method of the Study

For the purpose of this study, both primary and secondary sources of data were used. The secondary sources of data include books, journals, legal documents, archives, articles, magazines and newspapers pertinent to the study. The primary sources are informants working in governmental and non-governmental organizations, scholars, and representatives of political parties. Data from these sources was gathered by using the following tools.

#### Document Review

For the purpose of analyzing and buttressing what was gathered through primary sources and in an effort to making it reliable, reviews of relevant books, journals, legal documents, articles, magazines and posters were conducted. The secondary sources were then integrated with the primary ones to capture elements of the phenomenon under study.

#### Key Informant Interview

In-depth and unstructured face-to-face interviews were conducted with key informants with the exception of an individual with whom a telephone interview was held. Views

of informants from political parties, government departments, and non-governmental organizations as well as academic and religious institutions were used as data. Representatives from five political parties, namely, Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), Unity for Justice and Democracy Party (UJDP), Ethiopian Democratic Party (EDP), All Ethiopian Unity Organization (AEUO) and Coalition for Unity and Democracy Party (CUDP) took part in the interview. From the Ministry of Federal Affairs, a total of five individuals were interviewed in their area of expertise. Two were from the Directorate that deals with religious issues and the others were from the Directorate of "Culture of Peace Building". The researcher used group interview for both groups of experts. An individual who is part of the secretariat of the Constitutional and Regional Affairs Standing Committee of the House of Federation was also an informant in this study. Three individuals working in non-governmental organizations and eight scholars from Addis Ababa University were also interviewed. The scholars' come from different disciplines: Political Science and International Relations, History, Law, Federalism, Philosophy, African Studies and Human Rights. Moreover, two of the informants were Orthodox Christians and one individual was a Muslim. Thus, a total of twenty-six individuals were interviewed.

### 1.4.3 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using qualitative techniques. The views of those who consented to electronic recording were recorded using an audio tape. For those not willing, manual recording was employed. The Data gathered through interview was transcribed into themes and analyzed together with the existing literature and documents. The data gained from differing sources was juxtaposed for the purpose of critical examination of the various claims.

## 1.5. Organization of the Study

The paper is organized into five chapters. In the next chapter, a sketch of conceptual issues that inform the subsequent parts of the study is provided. After discussing the challenges of building a culture of peace along the dimensions relevant to the study in the third chapter, the paper proceeds to the discussion of available opportunities. Finally, the paper ends with some concluding remarks.

## Chapter Two

### Conceptual Framework

This section outlines the conceptual terrain of the study. Accordingly, the discussion of culture and peace is followed by an explanation of the culture of peace and the bases that are pertinent to this study.

#### Culture

Basically, the term culture is viewed from two broad perspectives: as an elitist idea, usually found in the field of humanities, and as something common to everyone, advanced by anthropologists. Matthew Arnold's work *Culture and Anarchy* is a representative of the former. He defined culture as "the pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us the best which has been done, taught and said about the world" (cited in Reeves, 2004, p.1). From this perspective, culture is the endeavor of the few and the masses are uncultured. Since this study is concerned with behaviors and beliefs at the societal level in general, such a way of conceptualizing culture has little relevance to the study at hand.

The most popularly accepted way of perceiving culture is the one introduced by anthropologists as a totality of human life involving the masses and the elites alike. Within this perspective, there is again variation in defining what culture entails. For the purpose of this study, culture is understood as a set of values, beliefs, norms, attitudes, and behaviors shared and learned by members of a group or a society. The emphasis, however, is on the inner aspects than the practical manifestations of such values and beliefs. Accordingly, values and beliefs, far from inherent in the individual, are assumed to emerge from societal interactions. It may, of course, be objected that the conception of culture as practice and discourse, which constitute the postmodern definition of culture, could have impact on the values and beliefs as well (Fish, 2009). The adoption of such conceptualization is determined by the definition of the culture of peace that should be understood in this manner.

#### Peace

Peace is one of the most contested, complex and ambiguous concepts to define partly because of normative content of the concept (Galtung, 2005). The most common way of understanding peace is to look at it in terms of what it is not i.e. violence. Galtung provides a two-dimensional definition of violence: personal and structural. While the former involves direct physical or psychological harm where the victim and the

perpetrator are visible, the latter involves violence built in the very social, political and economic fabric of a society (Galtung, p. 29). Peace, thus, is defined as the absence of violence. Based on the two types of violence mentioned above, Galtung identified two types of peace: positive and negative peace. Negative peace refers to the absence of direct violence whereas positive peace refers to the absence of both direct and structural violence, which requires the achievement of social justice (Galtung, 2005).

Cabezudo and Haavelsrud (2007) provided a conception of peace as structure and process. Peace structures for them are those “relatively permanent” interactions within and among micro and macro units, which support the values of peace in the form of social justice, diversity and participation. The dialectical interaction between the micro and macro works as follows: since everyday individual interaction constitutes a larger structure or context, the macro is in the micro, i.e. the causes of violence in its various forms are more likely to be found in the macro. Likewise, the macro context could not exist without the everyday individual interactions and hence the micro is in the macro. Since peace structure is interactive, a non-peaceful structure could be changed into peace structure by changing the interaction and vice versa. For the purpose of this study, such an understanding of peace could be synthesized with Galtung’s conception of peace. Hence, peace is viewed as a relatively permanent interaction and that kind of interaction is determined by whether it enhances positive peace or avoids violence in its general sense. When peace is viewed as a process of interaction that could be geared towards enhancing peace values, these values are determined by the positive conception of peace.

## Culture of Peace

There seems to be more or less a similar pattern in conceptualizing the term culture of peace. Boulding (2008:1453) defined culture of peace as “a mosaic of identities, attitudes, values, beliefs and institutional patterns that lead people to live nurturantly with one another and the earth itself without the aid of structured power differentials, to deal creatively with their differences, and share resources.” Likewise, Article 1 of the United Nations Resolution (A/53/L.79) defined culture of peace as: “a set of values, attitudes, traditions and modes of behavior and ways of life, based on respect for life, ending of violence and promotion of the practice of non-violence through education, dialogue and cooperation.”

Moreover, eight bases of the culture of peace are identified in the United Nations *Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace* (A/RES/53/243). These are culture of peace through education, sustainable economic and social development, respect for all human rights, equality between women and men, democratic participation, understanding, tolerance and solidarity, communication and free flow of information and knowledge,

and international peace and security. This UN conceptualization of the culture of peace is based on the assumption of the existence and/or potential existence of a coherent set of cultural traits that either promote violence or Peace (Jose-Miguel, Alejandra and Isabel, 2004). The coherence of these bases, however, is challenged by various scholars who question the analytical utility of the UN conceptualization. The coherence problem, in fact, is the result of compromise needed to get the approval of member states of the United Nations especially those of Western states (Adams, 2000). The culture of peace is also defined in opposition to the culture of violence which, critics argue, is not sufficient and hence additional qualities are needed (De Rivera, 2004b). In spite of such criticisms, it is asserted that ‘...we can use the UN bases to measure some dimensions that seem important aspects of a culture of peace; that nations can be characterized by using these dimensions; and that if we repeat these measures over time, we may be able to assess progress towards the development of the UN ideal’ (DeRivera, 2004b, p.546).

## Democracy

Democracy is one of the buzzwords in the social sciences whose meaning and content is highly contested. The idea that democracy is some sort of popular rule seems to be a settled issue. Beyond this general agreement, however, there is disagreement and contestation in the specific elaboration of this general formulation. The minimalists define democracy as a system where rulers acquire the legitimacy to rule based on regular and competitive elections based on universal suffrage (Owen, 2003). The liberal conception of democracy, in addition to the procedural elements, provides explicit reference to political, civil, property and minority rights with a concomitant institutional structure that embraces the rule of law (Landman, 2005). The social definition further adds the protection of social and economic rights in the list of rights (Landman, 2005).

For the purpose of this study, democracy is conceived to be a synthesis of procedural elements and the rights and freedoms stated in the constitution of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE). The procedural requirements are what democracy at the minimum requires and as the democratization process in Ethiopia is a recent phenomenon, it is necessary not to be over ambitious in demanding from the system what it is not ready to deliver. This does not mean that those rights stated in the constitution are not essential and need not be considered. The stated rights are included because they are acknowledged by the regime and enshrined in the constitution for the reason that they could be respected if there is commitment on the part of the government to this end.

## Tolerance and Solidarity

Diversity and pluralism are expected facts of life in a world consisting of numerous ethnic, religious, racial and cultural groups that should uphold the virtue of tolerance without which peaceful coexistence will not be possible. Tolerance is defined as “the disposition leading to the suppression or at least suspension of the power of interference with others disliked or disapproved behavior, which is considered important both by the tolerator and by the tolerated” (Galeotti, 2006, p.565).

Solidarity is the tendency to sympathize and cooperate with others. It refers to the “social bonds existing in particular societies and the mechanisms that supported this bonding” (Kelly, 1998, p.48). Solidarity requires putting oneself in place of others and being responsible for the “other” as “other” so that the traits and abilities needed to achieve the life projects desired by the agent are developed (Dussel, 2004). It arises when there is a mutual orientation and sympathy among people of different life style and it could also be viewed as interface between different cultures and value systems (Wild, 2007).

## Non-Violent Political Struggle

Like violence, the term non-violence is defined and understood in various ways. From the principle point of view, non-violence is conceived as a way of life or an ethical ideal. Sibley (1963, p.7) defined non-violence as “a body of belief or theory which asserts that even if one party to a conflict utilizes violence, the other should respond non-violently.” On the other hand, for most political scientists non-violence is the exercise of power or influence to effect change without injury to the opponent (Bondurant, 1965, p.9). From this perspective, non-violence is less of a normative ideal and more of a technique for achieving one’s goal.

Having discussed the various concepts related to the study, at this juncture, an attempt is made to pinpoint the relevance of these discussions to the issue at hand. It has been revealed so far that the culture of peace is developed when the complex and multifaceted interactions among actors located at local, national and international levels create peace structures and enhance peace values. These interactions have dialectical relations with the wider pre-existing situational or structural contexts. The peace values and structures are nourished in a condition where there is *inter alia* democracy, non-violent resolution of dispute and inter-group tolerance and solidarity. The challenges and opportunities of consolidating democracy are viewed in terms of the progress achieved in protecting rights, enhancing wider public participation and political contestations. In a similar vein, challenges and opportunities for inter-group tolerance and solidarity are scrutinized as an interface between the dynamics of group interactions and the wider

policy context that mediates these interactions. These interactive dynamics are seen in a spectrum that ranges from outright group hostility to a conviction of others to pursue their good in their ways. Thus the challenges and prospects for the culture of peace in Ethiopia are identified by singling out the patterns of interactions that could be geared towards democracy, inter-group tolerance and non-violence mediated by a complex set of factors.

## Chapter Three

### Challenges of Building the Culture of Peace

In this chapter, the challenges against building the culture of peace in Ethiopia along with aspects that are the focus of the study are sketched. Accordingly, the challenges associated with the democratization process followed by an exploration of possibilities to embark on non-violent political struggle are presented. In the last two sections, prospects for inter-ethnic and inter-religious tolerance and solidarity are discussed respectively.

#### 3.1. Challenges to Democracy

This section deals with the challenges to democracy as reflected in the views of informants. The views are also synthesized with the literature, legal documents and other relevant materials.

##### Authoritarian Political Culture

Tekola (1994), Tronvoll (2009a), and Vaughan and Tronvoll (2003) argued that the dominant political culture in Ethiopia is characterized by authoritarian values, which is in line with the view of an informant approached for the study. Political culture could be seen at the level of the political actors and the society. At the societal level, apart from the prevalence of egalitarian cultures and aspects of a more or less democratic culture, the culture of tolerating dissenters is minimal (Anonymous Informant 1, 2010) and the attitude of members of the society towards the state sustains authoritarianism by and large. Vaguhan and Tronvoll (2003) underscore the exclusionary nature of the culture, which is antithetical to dialogue, compromise, and concession made among political contenders. In contrast, Teshale (2008) casts doubt on this assertion in his contention that tolerance and accommodation of diversity is embedded in the cultural foundation among both northern and southern Ethiopian societies.

The government is viewed as an authority that is there to collect tax and control the people but not as a responsible body working to uphold the interest of the people and act accountably to them (Merera, 2010) Based on the 1995 election observation in the rural parts of Ethiopia, Aspen (2002) claimed that the state is viewed by the peasants as an outside force far distant to liberate them. At the root of this is the history of the Ethiopian polity where authoritarian system of governance is the norm and democracy the exception. Ethiopia had not had any regime with a semblance of democratic claim till 1991, and there has not been any ruler that continued to live peacefully within the country after losing power (Clapham, 2004). Ethiopian society is also accustomed to a

system of governance where unquestionable compliance with decisions that come from above is normal and this applies across the board from the family and community level upward to the different hierarchical settings moving on forming a hierarchical chain (Mesfin, 2010). These hierarchies are characterized by unquestionable obedience to the individual at higher level of the hierarchy (Ibid). Vaughan and Tronvoll (2003) argue that there are entrenched hierarchical norms in the dominant socio-political culture of Ethiopia that continually remind individuals of the superiority of the male household head at the family level, and the unquestioning power of the *Kebele* administrators over the community who in turn owe automatic obedience to higher level authorities.

However, justifying authoritarianism in terms of authoritarian culture is objected as a western oriented, implicitly racist idea that blames the victims for the problem they are facing (Anonymous Informant 2, 2010). The focus, it is argued, should be on the leadership that is capable of creating democratic culture by adhering to the principles of tolerance and accommodation. At the core of the controversy is the fact whether the cultural sphere could have a relative autonomy over the structural aspects of the society. Human beings produce and reproduce values and even discourses from their collective experience. Those who are accustomed to authoritarian systems tend to develop their values, beliefs and attitudes in such a way that they justify their experience. Once developed, they are likely to reinforce the particular socio-political structure they justify. Considering culture as a contributor for entrenchment of authoritarianism in no way diminishes the contribution of the leadership in sustaining authoritarianism or democracy.

At the level of political actors, the culture is not different from the societal level. The culture of tolerating and entering into dialogue with those who have different ideas is uncommon among political actors (Informant 1, 2010) who are unable and unwilling to tolerate those who have different viewpoints (Sisay, 2003). The contributing factor to this is the Marxist-Leninist political philosophy from which the existing political actors draw up their world view and ideology in the earlier time and for some it still holds true (Anonymous Informant 3, 2010). In fact, it is asserted that the Ethiopian Students Movement from which today's political activists grew out, was "the most radical student movement in Africa influenced by Marxist ideology" (Teshale, 2008, p.346). Marxist-Leninist philosophy is characterized by making dichotomy between oppressors and oppressed, progressive and reactionary, and democratic and anti-democratic forces. Success is achieved by the complete defeat of the so-called reactionary and anti-democratic forces. This ideology also claims to provide the absolute laws of 'social development' leading to the consideration of one's own way as the only truth and the castigation of all others into the camp of counter-revolutionaries (Teshale,2008)

Intolerance to and blind rejection of the “other” is still prevalent among today’s political actors (Informant 2, 2010). This could be evidenced from various parties’ assessment of the government. On the one hand, there are those who consider the current government as no more different from its predecessors and tend to blame it for every problem the country is facing and also denying even the visible positive changes being experienced (Anonymous Informant 1, 2010). In fact, the major opposing political forces, adopting two extreme stances, either suspect the government of deliberate engagement of fragmenting the historic Ethiopian polity or considering Ethiopia as “a prison house of nations and nationalities” (Ibid). Contrary to this, some individuals and the ruling party (EPRDF) glorify the policies devised and the situation arising thereof. Hence, neither of the divergent views accepts nor even emphatically listens to the other. It seems that each bloc is contented with proceeding along its own version and vision of Ethiopia. Politics in Ethiopia goes through “hate, blame, conspiracy and character assassination” (Sisay, 2003, p.105). Relation among political parties, mainly the ruling and the opposition groups, is characterized by hostility, mistrust and power imbalance (Kassahun, 2003). The climate of political polarization could stimulate social relations beset with mistrust, fear and aggression (Lira, 2001), and creates a social underpinning of the culture of violence.

This political polarization is also manifested in other spheres such as the media. Whereas the government media are alleged to be instruments of government propaganda, the private ones tilted to the other extreme (Anonymous Informant 2, 2010). Thus, they are an extension and manifestation of the prevailing political fault lines. The private press that mushroomed in the aftermath of the post-1991 regime change has been characterized by hostility to the government, exaggeration and misinformation in its role as faultfinder thereby giving reason for crack down by the government (Vaughan and Tronvoll, 2003). The government is not also tolerant of those in media that strive to give reasoned critique if not balanced presentations of various socio-political issues (Anonymous Informant 1, 2010). In this condition of mutual mistrust, it could be presumed that the government-controlled media could attempt to balance the backlash of the private press. Hence, they cannot be impartial and neutral. In fact, it is alleged that “government and party-affiliated media are subservient” (ICG, 2009, p. 21). The press, both private and government-owned, appears to be unable to command the confidence of the people too. An online analysis of World Values Survey data regarding interviewees’ level of confidence in the press in Ethiopia indicates that while 24.9% of the interviewees (out of a total of 1314) who took part in the survey do not have any confidence at all, 48.5% state that they do not have much confidence, which is higher than even African countries’<sup>2</sup> average included in the survey (10.5% for the former and 33.3% for the latter).

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2 The countries included are South Africa, Egypt, Ghana, Morocco, Burkina Faso, Mali, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Zambia and Ethiopia.

## EPRDF'S Hegemonic Aspiration

The other challenge to democracy is EPRDF's hegemonic aspiration (Merera, 2010). The ruling party's aspiration for staying in power as long as possible, Merera argued, is manifested in the various governmental actions practiced and legislations passed using various pretexts. The practice of freedom of expression is minimal, to which the media law is alleged to have contributed. Tendencies such as immediate reaction and giving response for allegations are indicators of the trend (Anonymous Informant 4, 2010). Likewise, in the area of political participation, the space for competition is tilted towards the ruling party. The opposition even argues that the election that was conducted under conditions favorable to EPRDF was characterized by fraud and mal-practices (Informant 3, 2010). The counter-argument, of course, is that it is not surprising to hear this from party members whose organization is defeated in elections (Informant 4, 2010). It is also alleged that the ruling party uses the media more than what is allocated for its competitors (Anonymous Informant 4, 2010). According to an informant, the culture of political accountability is not that much developed within the government itself. The court system is not in a position to deliver justice impartially and independently (Merera, 2010). Such allegations abound underlining that EPRDF has a hegemonic aspiration that in the end is considered a challenge for democratizing Ethiopia. The legal foundations for authoritarian tendencies are said to be laid down in the party formation law, the anti-terrorism legislation, the charities and societies' proclamation, and the media law.

Such lines of argument not only put the blame squarely on EPRDF but also assume that democracy is something to be given or withheld at the will by the ruling party. A critical analysis of the above assertions requires first and foremost examining the credibility of the allegations.

With regard to the court system, Assefa (2010, p.15) asserted that "the judiciary has not yet defined its role as a third branch of government within the constitutional framework". It has neither sufficient jurisdiction nor the will to assert its power and command confidence and trust among the public and non-ruling political parties alike. He argued that the courts' improper interpretation of the principle of separation of power results in voluntary loss of the crucial functions of reviewing acts and decisions of the executive and administrative agencies (Assefa, 2010). Additionally, most of the judges at the federal and regional level (four selected regions) believe that the court has no role in enforcing chapter 3 of the constitution thereby exempting the political branches from judicial review for observance of fundamental rights and freedoms (Assefa, 2010). Accordingly, it is cautioned that "there is the risk that the (constitutional) provisions will remain as dead letters until such time the judiciary breathes life into them" (Assefa, 2010, p. 26).

Regarding political participation, the EU's final election report concurs with the complaint of opposition parties. The report stated that the space for free competition in many places strongly tilted towards the ruling party (EU Election Observer Report, 2010) and that the government's asset was used for election purpose; the government media allocated 50% of the time to the ruling party; and the legal regimes that lay the foundation for genuine competition were not implemented as stipulated (EU Election Observer Report, 2010). In a similar vein, Aalen and Tronvoll (2009) argued that the political space in Ethiopia was gradually narrowing down because of "clampdown" of opposition and civil societies, in the face of new repressive laws, and local structures of control and coercion. The government rejects such allegations as fabrications or gives alternative explanations. Hence examining the allegedly repressive legislations might give a clue regarding the validity of the claims of contending parties.

The major legislations that are usually mentioned in this regard include the Revised Political Parties Registration Proclamation No.573/2008, Charities and Societies Proclamation No.621/2009, Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation No. 590/2008, and the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation No.652/2009. The provision of the party registration law considered repressive is the one that prohibits donation from abroad and as part of this, parties are required to put record of donors to the National Electoral Board (Art.52 and 56). The prohibition of foreign donations coupled with the fear of potential domestic donors risking retribution on condition that their donation for opposition parties is disclosed, is alleged to have a weakening effect on opposition political parties (Aalen and Tronvoll, 2009). In fact, it is alleged that in the 2010 election, it limited opposition parties' access to support from Ethiopian Diasporas (Tronvoll, 2010) who are considered as key sources of resources, ideas and leadership by the opposition (Lyon, 2007). Conflict-generated Ethiopian Diasporas, however, are prone to pose as a hardliner and uncompromising stance of which the post 2005 political crisis was used as evidence (Lyon, 2007).

The government's justification for enacting the legislation is aimed at limiting foreign meddling in the politics of the country. The ruling party's consideration of some opposing political parties as "messengers of foreign powers," or "neo-liberal messengers" (Informant 4, 2010) tends to affirm the government's wish (and/or pretext?) to extricate such parties from foreign influence. There are also provisions that require the government to provide financial and other support to political parties though the amount is determined by the number of parliamentary seats held by each party (Art. 42-47). Unfortunately, the taking effect of legislation could entail a dual effect in the sense that it can both weaken opposition political parties and at the same time contain foreign influences. The risk of fearing punishment for donating to opposition political parties on the part of Ethiopians could be minimized had there been a competent, impartial

and independent judiciary with adequate power. Regrettably, as discussed above, the judiciary is not in such a position.

The other issue that was hotly contested and allegedly repressive is the charities and societies proclamation No.621/2009. Critics argue that the repressive provisions stipulate that national charities or societies should not receive more than 10% of their budget from abroad which otherwise should be registered as either Ethiopian resident societies or foreign charities (Art.2-4). Charities and societies that are not registered as Ethiopian organizations are prohibited from working in the areas of advancement of human and democratic rights, promotion of equality of nations, nationalities and peoples, and other right-based matters like promotion of the rights of children and disabled, conflict resolution and reconciliation, and justice and law enforcement service (Art.14). The argument is that under the general state of poverty prevalent in Ethiopia, putting in place a strong and internally-driven civil society organization cannot be possible (Informant 3, 2010). The net effect is, according to critics, the absence of well-developed charities or societies working in the aforementioned areas. There are informants who argued that the number of charities working in the above mentioned areas had decreased and the existing ones are limited to regions in which they operate (Anonymous Informant 2, 2010). Following the issuance of the new charities and societies proclamation, the number of charities and societies has decreased from a total of 3822 to 1615 and of these only 97 were registered as Ethiopian charities and societies (Markos, 2010). From the list of registered charities and societies, the researcher manually counted around 18 that were working or organized in areas related to the issues raised above and most were societies of a particular group like journalists, lawyers, and women.

The government argues that the proclamation is necessary so that foreign influences could be reduced and charities and societies are enabled to make meaningful contribution by addressing pressing problems. There are also informants who consider the proclamation as an opportunity to develop mass-based organizations. It is argued that the focus should rather be on keeping the mass-based organizations free from government intervention and influence in one way or the other (Anonymous Informant 4, 2010). Studies conducted with regard to the contribution of NGOs asserted that they had not made a critical contribution for entrenching democracy (Kassahun, 2002). Mennasemay (2009a, pp. 9-10) has also argued that civil society in Ethiopia is primarily understood to be “a site of palliative social care to the underprivileged...”, far from being antithetical to authoritarianism, and site of resistance and autonomy. This view naturalizes inequality and denies the agency of the underprivileged by treating them as recipients of assistance. On the other hand, Abbink (2009) argued that many NGOs operating in Ethiopia have made significant contributions in “enlightening” and “empowering” the people and hence promoting democratization in the last decade.

They also tend to explicitly ally themselves with the opposition groups in the case where they actively involve (Lidetu, 2010).

The freedom of the mass media and access to information proclamation again is not free from controversy. Those who see it as oppressive argued that “repressive elements of the previous proclamation were maintained, while new articles allowed prosecutors to summarily stop any publication deemed a threat to public order or national security, and the punishment for defamation was increased” (Aalen and Tronvoll, 2009, p. 200). On the other hand, the government and some independent observers characterize the media personnel as amateurish with poor record of professional ethics. They are neither responsible nor neutral and accountable (Abbay, 2009; Lidetu, 2010), which forms the justification for limitations on the media.

Finally, the anti-terrorism legislation is considered as an instrument of state repression (Informant 3, 2010). It is argued that the legislation, through broad definition of terrorism, could limit freedom of expression, and subject political opponents to repression of one form or another (Ibid). On the government side, it is argued that terrorism is an existing threat detrimental to the security of the Ethiopian people. Hence, the need to ensure the safety and security of the citizens and foreigners in Ethiopia becomes the responsibility of the government. What needs to be clear is that terrorism by its very nature is a secret act that necessitates discretionary measures on the part of the government to contain the threat. It seems that the legislation gives discretionary powers to the government to combat terrorism, which could be misused.

From the above, critics conclude that “Ethiopia is not an incomplete democracy; it is rather an authoritarian state draped in democratic window-dressing in which manipulated multiparty elections are a means to sustain power” (Aalen and Tronvoll, 2009, p.203). In contrast, pro-government circles conclude that “[t]he current hybrid system of democracy and autocracy, which is not entirely antidemocratic, if not fully democratic, is a lurching step in a long and arduous march to a mature democracy” (Abbay, 2009, p.196).

### **Ideology of the Ruling Party**

The ideology of EPRDF is argued to rest upon the principle of democratic centralism where decisions are made at the top through deliberations and which everyone needs to implement and abide by them (Merera, 2010). Even at higher level, it is asserted that discussions are limited to debating over proposals handed by the party executive where minor issues are adjusted and in case of serious friction, “the party dissidents are expelled (“purged”) and sent into the wilderness, dismissed and put under surveillance...” (Abbink, 2009, p. 23). Top officials of the party arrive at a decision

and once a decision is made the lower level “cadres” are required to implement it without any complaint (Ibid). Abbink (2009) confirms the above by arguing that the party is considered as a “vanguard” which is “always correct” and hence should not be questioned. Since democracy is inseparable from devolution of power at the local level, this trend is felt to be a hindrance against the democratization process. The formally institutionalized division of power between the three branches and the federal and regional governments is bypassed through integration and overwhelming powers of the ruling party. Smith (2005) has also demonstrated that the local level political and administrative structures are instruments of information dissemination and policy enforcement developed at a higher level rather than being a means for genuine citizens’ participation and hence engender apathy and disempowerment.

### **Ethiopia`s Geo-political Position**

Most of Ethiopia`s neighbors are characterized by the prevalence of instability, authoritarianism and conflicts of various sorts. Somalia is a failed state and Eritrea seems to be in a dismal situation. The situation in Sudan is still uncertain rendering the fear of degenerating into full-blown war, a likely scenario unless unreserved effort on the part of all stakeholders including the international community is played. All these have repercussion on Ethiopia`s democratization process (Anonymous Informant 3, 2010). The prevailing sub-regional geo-political environment is thus presumed to affect Ethiopian democracy in major ways. First, instability in one country tends to lead to instability in other states through spillover effect given that the existences of cross-border communities connect these countries. Secondly, instability in one country creates a favorable operating ground for militant opposition groups of the other country. The Horn of Africa constitutes a security complex whereby adverse conditions in one state tend to have unfavorable consequences in others (Berouk, 2010).

Moreover, though the policy of the western states regarding Ethiopia favors continued democratization in principle, under the prevailing geo-political environment, they tend to focus more on the stability of the Ethiopian polity (Anonymous Informant 3, 2010). There is a tendency of giving lip service to the issues of human rights violation and under-performance of governance institutions on the part of the international community. This views Ethiopia as “a rather powerful state in an important geo-political niche (cf. the global anti-terrorism campaigns) that has not descended into chaos, like Somalia, is not insular and inaccessible, like Eritrea, and not negatively anti-Western and defiant, like Sudan” (Abbink, 2009, p. 18). Thus the contribution of the international community to Ethiopia`s democratization is at best minimal and negative at worst. Though vehemently rejected by the Ethiopian government and undermined by the Development Assistance Group (DAC), Human Rights Watch (2010) alleged that donors’ assistance is used for strengthening repressive structures and practices

in Ethiopia. There is also an argument that the western countries and international financial institutions continue their support to the Ethiopian government for the reason that imposing sanction in the end affects the ordinary people (Yakob, 2010). Given the logic of foreign policy experts that “there is no permanent enemy or friend but interest”, it is unlikely to expect support of the international community for what they consider undemocratic Ethiopian government by disregarding their interest. Hence, there seems to be a tendency of compromising democracy in their fight against terrorism.

Mesfin (Mesfin, 2010) argued that except pro-democracy and human rights organizations operating in Western countries, the genuine interest of Western governments will not be satisfied by democratization of the African state alone thereby implying that they do not favor full-fledged democracy in Ethiopia. The argument is that the more a country is democratic, the more voices there will be and the more voices there are, the more various groups and associations challenge the government particularly when the latter feel that neglect of national interest has taken place. In this connection, Mesfin argued that under dictatorial regimes, the interests of Western states could easily be entertained without any significant challenges. The conclusion derived from this argument is that the international environment is more of a challenge than an opportunity.

### **Lack of Inclusiveness in the Democratization Process**

The liberation forces that defeated the military dictatorship in 1991 spearheaded the democratization process in Ethiopia. Consequently, the political forces that were in power and some other forces that struggled against military rule were not involved by the time the terms and conditions of the democratization process were set (Anonymous Informant 4, 2010). The stance taken on Eritrea and the consequent war the two countries entered into emanates from exclusionary tendencies and practices of the new forces (Ibid). This in the end alienated part of the population that was committed to the ideals of territorial integrity and national unity. Moreover, the government that was established in 1991 was not inclusive of various groups. This creates a feeling of being cheated by portion of the elites of some ethnic groups. The result is the erosion of the legitimacy of governance institutions established which is essential for democratic deepening. Kassahun's (2003) argument that EPRDF's exclusionary tendencies were not only present from the outset of the transition process but also showed no sign of abatement subsequently, is in line with the above argument.

### **Lack of Separation between Party and Government**

One of the major practical problems for Ethiopian democracy is the fusion of government and party. The ruling party, for example, uses the resources of the government in election campaigns and government buildings are used for party activities (Anonymous Informant 4, 2010). The consciousness among the ordinary people and lower level

EPRDF cadre equates the government with the party (Ibid). Aspen (2002) is of a similar view in stating the merging of party and government officials as one representative of the state/government in the eye of ordinary individuals. In fact, the Amharic word *menigst* is used to refer to the conflation of government, state and power (Aspen, 2002). The implication is that democracy could not thrive under a condition where one party uses government resource whereas others do not enjoy such advantages.

### **Lack of Favorable Socio-Economic Conditions**

Building democracy requires socio-economic development that enables people to attain material, intellectual and social independence, which in turn develops both the capability to and aspiration for values of emancipation like liberty and autonomy thereby necessitating democratic institutions compatible with the values (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005). The socio-economic condition in Ethiopia, however, is not supportive of democratic institutions as more than 80% of the population is rural and most are illiterate. This hampers an understanding of democratic principles and practices. Consequently, the limited awareness of the tenets of democracy among the majority of the population militates against efforts aimed at democratic consolidation. Moreover, the survival pattern of the population is a hindrance to the development of such awareness (Kebede, 2010). Most of the rural peasants and pastoralists lead a life of subsistence whereby they are pre-occupied with ensuring day-to-day means of survival. Sisay (2003) concurs to the above assertion when he argues that it is difficult to avoid dictatorship and institute democratic institutions amidst poverty.

Furthermore, the existence of a robust middle class is considered as the foundation for a well functioning democracy (Dawisha, 2005) since the tested experience is that political party adjusting their programme in relation to the middle class. In Ethiopia, this is conspicuously absent and that the few emerging middle classes, rather than attracting political parties, are opportunistically attached to them in one way or the other (Anonymous Informant 1, 2010). EPRDF seems to have properly understood this fact when it categorized the bourgeoisies as a force of middle ground between rent seeker and developmental forces (EPRDF, 2006b) and stated that this force moves based on the balance of forces between rent seekers on one hand and developmental forces on the other thereby indicating possibilities of opportunism (EPRDF, 2006b). However, there are informants who argue that the private sector is scared by widespread arbitrary governmental acts (Anonymous Informant 2, 2010). The Reporter, in its January 1, 2011 edition (p. 71), revealed what it called the widespread fear of the business classes as openly expressed by a participant in a meeting of influential business people with the Prime Minister of Ethiopia. After expressing the scaring effect of various government measures on such people, she is quoted as saying “How does one fear his country? How does one fear his government? The government would have to fear business people.”

Abbink (2006b, p.174), alluding to the complaints of non-party affiliated business classes over unfair, non-transparent competition, and preferential treatment, stated that “a selective hold on politics and economics in Ethiopia was established” giving rise to “new, tremendously wealthy, party-associated elite” (Abbink, 2009, p.12). From this perspective, it could be argued that the driving force of opportunism is unregulated interference of the government in the market domain that results in unpredictability of the behavior of power holders whose inner motive at times exhibits a mix of pragmatism and political profit (Anonymous Informant 2, 2010).

### **3.2. Challenges of Non-Violent Political Struggle**

Having discussed the challenges to democratization, this section deals with the challenges associated with non-violent political struggle.

#### **Narrow Political Space and Weak Opposition Parties**

One of the challenges against non-violent political struggle raised by informants from all opposition political parties is the limited political space available to them. Non-violent political struggle demands waging peaceful demonstrations and other peaceful direct actions. They alleged that the government uses various tactics against them that range from repression, unlawful detention, killing, dismissal from jobs to enacting prohibitive legislations. Informants from NGOs and other organizations likewise share this complaint. The trend of gradual narrowing of the political space is prevalent in the post-2005 period where repressive legislations and practices are adopted (Anonymous Informant 5, 2010). Tronvoll (2010) and Abbink (2009) also comment on the gradual narrowing of the political space by means of discretionary laws that are susceptible to misuse, and omnipresence of party structures at the local level. The implication of this for non-violent political struggle is that violence tends to be defined in extensive ways of relegating acts, which seems to fall into gray areas as violent. Hence, individuals who claim to use them as instruments of political resistance are accused and punished for employing violent means. Such extended interpretation of violence reduces non-violence to “fig leaf activities” that legitimize the government’s democratic credentials and criminalize political activities that challenge such understanding of violence (Mennasemay, 2009b). The very idea of non-violent political struggle, however, requires withstanding authoritarian tendencies through engaging in non-violent forms of struggle. Hence, the weaknesses of political actors in conducting non-violent political struggle should not be totally attributed to the prevailing political environment though this might have its own effect.

More profound than this is the confusion and weaknesses prevalent among the political actors who conduct or at least claim to conduct non-violent political struggle.

Kassahun (2003) attributed this problem to opposition parties' inability to establish a durable alliance based on a set of agreed on programmes, and the influence of aspects of Ethiopian political culture. The ethno-cultural diversity and the way it had been handled could also exacerbate the weaknesses of the opposition for the reason that it sets to the political scene actors with contradictory and conflicting demands. The problem within the opposition is acknowledged by some informants within the opposition itself. An informant from EDP (Informant 1, 2010), for instance, argued that the major problem of non-violent political struggle in Ethiopia is the confusion and lack of clarity regarding the forms and essence of peaceful struggle. He argues that some political actors within the opposition agree to peaceful struggle for pragmatic reason rather than accepting non-violent political struggle as a matter of principle. Once a non-violent political struggle is adopted, he argues, engaging in elections and accepting its outcomes, whatever it is, and joining parliament should be the norm. Accepting such things in Ethiopia gives the agent labels such as 'traitor', and 'EPRDF in disguise'. The argument seems plausible seen in light of the prevailing political polarization among ruling and opposition parties combined with the existence of political actors that adopted violent means under the banner of all-inclusive struggle. The debate over non-violence as a political instrument and as a moral ideal is well reflected in the inadequacies of the opposition in several ways. The above assertion, however, should not be taken in its entirety. Waging non-violent struggle does not necessarily mean acting in accordance with institutional rules and procedures; it rather includes the non-institutional means of undertaking non-violent direct actions including violation of laws presumed to be oppressive (Cromwell and Vogeleson, 2009).

Even worse, there are informants who question the existence of political commitment within the opposition political parties for non-violent political struggle. They are not yet ready to fulfill the requirements of non-violent political struggle (Anonymous Informant 1, 2010). Non-violent political struggle requires maintaining group solidarity, the supervision of quality leadership, understanding the science of non-violent political action, developing and managing self-service projects, and learning the practical skill of responding non-violently to government provocations and use of violence (Summy, 2009). It appears that opposition parties lack both the commitment and resources to do this. The existence of opposition parties with contradictory and seemingly irreconcilable agendas contribute to fracturing the opposition and depriving it of the chance of devising a coherent and widely accepted strategy of non-violent political struggle.

## **The Role of Culture and Economy**

The dominant political culture in Ethiopia, as stipulated in the section dealing with democracy, is authoritarian in the main. In a similar manner, it is also against non-violent political struggle. War, both internal and external, is the dominant feature of

Ethiopian history more than anything else. Because of this historical fact, war is not as such rejected by the population by and large. In fact, it is argued that there is no clear distinction between “*Shiftanet*” (banditry) and resistance (Tronvoll, 2009a). Bahru (1999) is also of the same view when he asserts that bearing arms or being a soldier is an admired profession considered to be a sign of heroism. Thus the culture strongly supports bringing change through the barrel of the gun (Informant 3, 2010). It is argued that a significant section of the population considers those who engage in direct confrontations with the government as heroes (Informant 1, 2010). In a condition where political polarization is the defining feature of Ethiopian Politics (Sisay, 2003), at least the elites are likely to favor those political actors who are hardliners and uncompromising. The very fact of existence of various political actors who choose to wage armed struggle implies the prevalence of societal support for such acts. This societal support is attributed to the closure of the political space and the consequent problem of lack of democratic political change that characterized Ethiopia’s political arena. Recognition of the people as ultimate power holders is the foundation on which the theory and practice of non-violent struggle is based (Cromwell and Vogeles, 2009). However, the majority view of government is contrary to the requirement of democratic governance let alone non-violent political struggle. Without the cultural support for democracy, there will be little commitment to and support for non-violent political struggle. Among the majority of the rural population, the power of rulers is perceived to be derived from God’s will and electing of an opposition is tantamount to challenging God’s will and hence undesirable if not sinful (Tronvoll, 2010).

Moreover, an opportunistic attitude that shapes political actions is indicated to be prevalent within the population (Informant 2, 2010). As a result of this, membership in political parties is usually determined not by support for the principles which that party advances but on a mere calculation of benefits and costs. Often people join both the ruling and opposition parties on this ground (Informant 1, 2010). When the benefits calculated to be accrued are not realized, opportunists either withdraw or cease to make any meaningful contribution to the party of which they are members. The argument on opportunism of elites is consistent with Andargachew’s (2005) claim of the entrenchment of such behaviors and supporting norms. If such assertions hold true, it is unlikely to think that party membership could be impervious to temptations of personal benefits relying only on the commitment to bring about the desired change.

Furthermore, the larger population is immersed in poverty and this has its impact on non-violent political struggle. First, political parties collect part of the finance needed for waging non-violent political struggle as well as for their day-to-day activities from their constituencies (Informant 1, 2010), which cannot be realized under a situation of prevalent poverty. Therefore, the impoverishment of the population is also by extension

the impoverishment of political parties (Ibid). Secondly, the risk that political parties will be dominated by few financially powerful individuals is likely to take effect (Ibid). A heavy involvement and dominance of the opposition parties by the Diaspora tends to affirm this fact of the saying, “The one who pays the piper calls the tune” applies to them too.

### 3.3. Challenges to Inter-Ethnic Tolerance and Solidarity

This section sketches the challenges to inter-ethnic tolerance and solidarity.

#### History of the Ethiopian State

The Ethiopian state historically evolved by entailing national oppression through those who succumb to what Merera called “nation building thesis” reject this. In a similar way Ethiopians paid a lot for the upkeep of the territorial integrity and national unity of their polity. These historical facts have different meanings for different groups thereby eroding inter-ethnic tolerance and solidarity (Anonymous Informant 4, 2010). On the one hand, the defunct assimilation policy adopted by successive regimes of Ethiopia, not only brought national oppression but also elites who consider the Ethiopian state as a colonial empire from which colonized groups have to strive to attain freedom and independence. On the other hand, the inability or unwillingness of some elites who fail to acknowledge such historical oppressions could be viewed to be the result of their emphasis on the sacrifices made by individuals from various ethnic groups to keep the territorial integrity and national unity of the Ethiopian polity. Michael (2008) indicated that those who are strongly pan-Ethiopian associate with the price their forefathers dearly paid for maintaining national unity and territorial integrity while ethno-nationalists associate their strong commitment with the plight of their ethnic groups to the detriment of national unity. Mistrust, suspicion and consideration of the other as unsympathetic to one’s genuine concern are a natural product of this historical fact and the attendant elite divisions, which in the end hampered the cultivation of the virtue of tolerance and solidarity at least among the elites.

#### Coping with the New Demands of Ethnic Federalism and Ethnic Politics

It is argued that the new claims and demands of ethnic federalism are straining the social fabrics that hold together individuals of various ethnic backgrounds (Anonymous Informant 1, 2010). The fact that ethnicity is the basis of political power or representation means that it is the primary card used for accessing political, economic and social resources by the elites of the different ethnic groups. Local elites, motivated by a desire to have a share of the regional cake, which often is delivered in the form of budget and employment, misuse the principle of ethnic rights. The local elite’s manipulation are

made using the constitutional provision as a legitimizing instrument of their demand for self-determination (Anonymous Informant 3, 2010). Accordingly, historical differences with other groups are selectively narrated and similarities are conveniently ignored (Ibid). Tronvoll (2000) observed that under such an arrangement, ethnicity may become a political construct created and manipulated by political entrepreneurs to enable them reinterpret and select aspects of culture and history that legitimize their grip on power. Lincoln (2000), after observing the dynamics of ethnic-based federal arrangements in Nigeria and Ethiopia, argued that such arrangements give people additional reason to remember and stress their distinctiveness in the quest for benefits arising from having title over particular land. The conflicts that arise between various groups at the local level are byproducts of misconceptions regarding federal arrangement (Anonymous Informant 3, 2010).

Even in cases where there is no violent conflict and where peaceful solutions are adopted through the creation of special *zones* or special *weredas*, the institutional arrangement tends to promote differentiations between groups of varying identities (Anonymous Informant 1, 2010). So long as the principle of self-determination is recognized in principle, groups that aspire to gain full and unreserved right for self-administration tend to claim that they actually deserve to have this right. Thus, the arrangement is likely to exacerbate the problem rather than solve it given the rigid procedures associated with the realization of this goal. Vaughan (2003) indicated that such arrangements lead local elites to persist with the demand for self-determination, which could not be easy to attain.

Opposition parties' use of the ethnic instrument as a means for getting political support is also considered as a challenge for the prevalence of inter-ethnic tolerance and solidarity (Teklehaymanot, 2010). Ethnic-based political forces attempt to get political support by advancing their claim in such a way that their ethnic groups are marginalized or denied what they deserve in comparison with other groups<sup>(Ibid)</sup>. Since ethnic issues are sensitive and have emotional elements, these political forces are likely to create the perception of being unduly disadvantaged in comparison with "significant others". This in the end creates resentment of members of the perceived oppressor group as they are alleged to be responsible for the oppression inflicted on others. There are also scholars whose argument is consistent with the above assertion largely. Horowitz (2000, p. 291) summed up the line of reasoning regarding the exclusionary and conflict generating role of ethnic parties in the following manner:

*By appealing to electorates in ethnic terms, by making ethnic demands on government, and by bolstering the influence of ethnically chauvinistic elements within each group, parties that begin by merely mirroring ethnic divisions help to deepen and extend them. Hence, the often-heard remark in such states that politician has created ethnic conflict.*

In the Ethiopian case too, Lincoln (2000), citing Huntington (1993), pointed out that when ethnic parties are combined with ethnic federalism, a mix of the undesirable with the unavoidable is imminent having disastrous outcome through effects culminating in cleavage.

The other side of the argument is that this is a country where there was and still prevails a yearning for deconstruction of ethnic hierarchy (Anonymous Informant 4, 2010). This could be achieved by mobilizing and raising the consciousness of the downgraded groups for their equality. As equality is a condition for inter-ethnic tolerance and solidarity, ethnic-based mobilization is assumed supportive of tolerance and solidarity. There are also arguments in support of the position that ethnic-based political mobilization promotes inter-ethnic tolerance and solidarity. Those who succumb to the consociational school claim that ethnic parties promote inter-ethnic cooperation and thereby moderating the claims of various sub-cultures and disaffected groups into mainstream politics (Ishiyama, 2009).

Moreover, the new ethnic-based political arrangement, in spite of its claimed relevance for addressing historically-generated ethnic grievances, results in new minorities (numerical minorities in some context and political in others) that are discriminated and in some places even totally disenfranchised from political participation (Anonymous Informant 6, 2010). Consistent with this, Assefa (2007) argued that there are alarming reports of minority abuses, which appear to be given little attention by regional and federal governments.

Furthermore, enhancing the process of addressing grievances, which was the main focus of the EPRDF regime, was accompanied by public expression of the maltreatments that various groups encountered in the past (Anonymous Informant 3, 2010). Not only were the grievances publically discussed, but also elites and even in some cases groups that committed atrocities were pointed out (Yakob, 2010), and this breeds resentment and a revenge mentality among the population of the oppressed groups. EPRDF's attempt aimed at getting legitimacy by showing the injustice which were once committed by the *Neftegna* on the various ethnic groups of Ethiopia is also considered as the challenge for inter-ethnic tolerance and solidarity (Ibid). This makes sense given the fact that for most ordinary individuals, the term *Neftegna* is likely to be equated with Amhara. As Tsegaye (2009, p.59) claims the "old ethno-national conflicts have been addressed directly and frontally." The ruling party is likely to use this effort as means of widening its competitive niche, which requires publicizing what was prevalent in the earlier period. The prevalent resentment and indignation is likely to be reactivated by such acts, and this is not supportive of tolerance and solidarity. The use by EPRDF officials of inflammatory phrases against the then main opposition Coalition for Unity and

Democracy (CUD) is also often raised in this regard. The argument is that attaching such labels to the opposition is said to be anti-tolerance for the reason that it creates fear and anxiety.

Finally, the existence of political actors who do not explicitly recognize the rights of nations, nationalities and peoples erodes tolerance and solidarity in one way or the other. The denial of the need for acknowledging past injustices based on the fact of belongingness and devising political arrangement pursuant to that historical fact further develop mutual suspicions and inhibit the state of tolerance and solidarity among ethnic groups (Informant 4, 2010). On the part of opposition, there are arguments that EPRDF is accusing them for not recognizing the rights of nations, nationalities and peoples while they actually recognize these rights (Informant 1, 2010). However, an informant from the All Ethiopian Unity Organization argued that the very use of discourse of nations and nationalities' right to self-determination is a hindrance against tolerance and solidarity for it emphasizes differences. He further added that the protection of individual rights leads to respect for group rights whereas EPRDF undermines the necessity of the former. Assefa (2007) stated that one of the central questions in the political intransigencies of Ethiopia's political actors is whether the country should be seen as a "single cultural unit" or a "multi-cultural entity". Some political parties across the spectrum advocate the former while others stick to the latter. The above informant's allegation is, therefore, directed against political actors holding the view that Ethiopia should be seen as a single cultural unit. Does this amount to rejection of the rights of nations, nationalities and peoples? For EPRDF the response appears to be in the affirmative since the "national question" whose central essence is the right to self-determination of nations and nationalities, was the defining issue that provoked the major ethno-political conflicts prior to 1991. Studies on mechanisms for reducing horizontal inequality suggest a direct approach (the one that seems to be favored by EPRDF) as well as an indirect approach (the one that seems to be the policy of some opposition parties) depending on an analysis of the nature and source of horizontal inequality, the former being preferable in entrenched and multi-dimensional group inequality (Stewart, Brown and Langer, 2008).

### **Achieving Equality among Ethnic Groups**

The key for inter-ethnic tolerance is the prevalence of proportional equality among the various groups especially with regard to access to national and regional, political, economic and social resources (Yakob, 2010). Equality entails recognition of the equality of the language and culture of various groups and equal participation in self-administration and proportional representation at federal institutions where undue privilege and social status are not extended to any one group or the other (Ministry of Information and Communication, 2002). In this regard, due to historical factors,

some groups have better human and material resources for asserting and developing their culture, language, history as well as for self-administration (Informant 5, 2010) . Consequently, there seems to be a tendency of domination of the former by the relatively advanced ones. Thus, domination breeds a perception of inequality and powerlessness, which causes anti-tolerance, and lack of solidarity.

On the other hand, even among the major groups there is a perception that some groups are unduly benefiting while others are only on lookers. This is the view expressed by some Oromo and Somali ethno-nationalist elites. For such groups the fundamental nature of the Ethiopian state has not been changed from the previous practices since what is taking place is a mere change of actors who are dominantly in charge of national politics (Merera, 2010). Tsegaye (2009) is of the view that the system has been addressing old questions of ethno-nationalist injustice and hence the above perception may not reflect realities on the ground. Such a perception affects not only the tolerance and solidarity at the level of political actors but also the intergroup relations at the level of the masses since there is an interface between elite and mass perception and that the former often shapes the latter under certain favorable conditions. The cumulative effect of the inequality, both perceived and actual, is the development of stereotypes and prejudices.

### External Influence

It is stated that there is an influence of external actors that undermines the state of inter-ethnic tolerance and solidarity in Ethiopia (Anonymous Informant 2, 2010). The case in point is that Eritrea supports political forces of one kind or the other. Its support for forces that took a radical agenda in the name of ethnic-based political entrepreneurs waging political struggle leads to the erosion of the state of inter-ethnic tolerance and solidarity in Ethiopia (Ibid). These groups allegedly use ethnicity as a means for attaining political gains by inciting violent conflicts among various ethnic groups with the objective of weakening the central government (Teklehaymanot, 2010).

The existence of ethno-nationalist political actors choosing to wage armed struggle is repulsive to inter-ethnic tolerance and solidarity. The symbols selected by ethno-nationalist political actors are dependent on the goal the elites aim to achieve (Bariagaber, 1998). The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), the two major ethno-nationalist insurgent movements in Ethiopia, strive to attain goals related with secession of their respective regions from what they call the colonial Ethiopian state (Kassahun, 2003). Thus mobilization of the population along this line requires selecting and emphasizing cultural and historical antecedents in a manner that renders their group different from other groups. All other groups that have a stake in the continuation of the Ethiopian state are likely to be antagonized by these

obstructive tendencies of the ethno-nationalist goals as a result of which inter-ethnic tolerance and solidarity could be eroded.

### 3.4. Challenges to Inter- Religious Tolerance and Solidarity

In this section, the various internally generated and externally induced problems affecting inter-religious tolerance and solidarity are discussed.

#### Religious Fundamentalism

One of the challenges for inter-religious tolerance and solidarity is religious fundamentalism. It is the tendency that takes aspects of a religious dogma in an extreme way that appears absurd and illogical to the moderate or non-believer (Daniel Seifemichael, 2010). It is also a concept used to refer to those embattled religious movements characterized by disappointment and disenchantment with modernity, and fear of secularism displacing and eventually eliminating religion from the public realm (Armstrong, 2002). According to Daniel, such groups present themselves as self-righteous and others are depicted as impure. Such a belief in turn mediates their interaction with both followers of the same religion and those of others.

Religious fundamentalists, which according to my informant, are found both within Christianity and Islam, are a danger not only to inter-religious tolerance and solidarity but also to intra-religious interactions. Some fundamentalists in Ethiopia exist at institution level mainly in its Islamic version. *Wahhabists* and followers of *Gematel Tefkir/Kawurjya* are the institutionalized form of fundamentalism operating in Ethiopia (Oromia Nationality Zone, 2009). The latter attempt to bring an Islamic state through armed struggle. They command their followers to refuse paying tax to the government, involving in social development practices, and attending public schools (Ibid). The Jimma incident where Christians were victimized was perpetrated by this group of radicals (Anonymous Informant 1, 2010). Tekelgne (2008) from his study of the 2006 Jimma incidence also stated that *Kawurjya* sect teaches intolerance towards followers of other religions and the government itself. They are also found to have links with the OLF (Oromia Nationality Zone, 2009).

Likewise, the *Wahhabists* attempt to instill radicalism through building and expanding Islamic institutions and targeting youngsters and children as their recruits. They demand an allocation of praying time in educational institutions and also require their female adherents to veil their face in public (Oromia Nationality Zone, 2009). Jenkins (2007) also argues that *Wahhabism* is strict, intolerant and puritanical that views other variants as unauthentic. If the assertion that fundamentalism grows in a condition

where there is socio-economic and cultural pressure is correct (Demant, 2006), the future of inter-religious tolerance in Ethiopia is likely to be further challenged. However, others contend that some of the rituals that are practiced are not fundamentalism. They just involve acting in accordance with what the religion requires (Hassen Taju, 2010). On the Muslim side, it is alleged that *Mahbere Kidusan* is suspected to be a form of institutionalized Christian radicalism, radicalism being conceived as acting against other's religion (Hassen Taju, 2010). There are some publications by members of *Mahbere Kidusan* that appear to object to some of the teachings of Islam and particularly to radical Islam. Using radicalism to express the harmful acts of one religion against the other, however, overstretches the concept of radicalism. Camus (in Mennasemay, 2009a, p.5) contends, "to name things wrongly is adding to the misery of the world," and hence inappropriate.

### The Trend of Extricating Religion from Culture

The two major religions of Ethiopia (Christianity and Islam) have cultural elements within them. What is separated by religion is united by culture thereby avoiding double exclusion and serving as a social bond that binds individuals of different religious background (Tizazu and Mohammed, 2010). Abbink (1998) concurs with this view in his observation that a pattern of religious oscillation and salience of ethnic-linguistic identities impute the existence of common cultural threads among followers of Islam and Christianity. Nevertheless, these common threads are being eroded as a result of the attempt of extricating religion from the culture (Tizazu and Mohammed, 2010). Social organizations like *edir*, for example, which were once shared by Christians and Muslims, are becoming exclusionary of one or the other in different parts of the country. Likewise, it is argued that ceremonies such as marriage which were enjoyed together by followers of both religions are becoming exclusionary. Abbink (1998), from his interview at Aliyu Amba, also indicated that the Muslims in the rural part of Ethiopia are pressured to give up contact and cooperation with Christians and urged to emphasize their Muslim character.

Some Christians suspect that the Islamic purification drive is not purification proper; it is a replacement of what is indigenous with what is Arabic culture (Taffesse G/ Egziabher, 2010). In this condition, it is argued, religious boundaries become cultural boundaries too. Accordingly, the criticism of the intrusion of Arab culture, for example, Arab way of dressing, is interpreted by the Muslims as an attack over Islamic religion. Thus, to argue for Ethiopian way of Islam is perceived to be a conspiracy against Islamic religion. For some Muslims, such tendencies are interpreted as acting in accordance with the demand of the religion (Hassen Taju, 2010). Even the Arabs, Hassen argued, adopt their culture out of acceptance of Islamic religion. The counter-argument is that there are various sects within Islam and the one stated above, which is antithetical to

peaceful coexistence, is contrary to the variant common in the Horn of Africa (Ephraim, 2008). Advocating the Ethiopian way of Islam is suspected for the reason that it tends to reinforce Christian's and particularly Orthodox Christian's historical dominance.

For the Muslims it seems that such objections arise out of the difficulty of accepting and respecting differences positively by the Christians. The Muslim newspaper, *Bi'er*, for instance, states that accusing Muslims for speaking Arabic, shortening their trouser, building Mosques, and wearing hijab as being fundamentalist emanates from the lack of willingness to accept difference positively ("Akirarinet be Ethiopia," June 2002). They are considered to be mere manifestations of Muslims "true identity" ("Akirarinet be Ethiopia," June 2002). Hussien (2006) also stated that the cultural, political and institutional revival of Islamic identity provoked reaction from some Christians. Seen at face value, this seems to be an acceptable objection. Erlich's (2007) argument that *Wahhabists* goal in Ethiopia is to bring a step by step transformation of Ethiopia into an Islamic state beginning with a re-definition of Ethiopian culture adequately captured the Christians' perception of the prevalent religious purification process. Likewise, it seems that the Muslims frame the Christian's objection in light of the history of domination and marginalization perpetrated under successive Ethiopian regimes. Hassen (Hassen Taju, 2010), for instance, argued that one of the major challenges for inter-religious tolerance is that the historical discrimination and marginalization the Muslims had faced in the past created frustration. Thus Mohammed's (1995) assertion of Muslims life in Ethiopia since the medieval period as a life of hardship, oppression, and marginalization seems well taken by at least the so-called radical Muslims.

### Intra-religions Conflicts

Intra-religions conflicts, which are not unique to the Christians, however, have other sources beyond ethnicization of religion. Within the Orthodox Christians the other source of intra-religious conflict is the result of conflict of interest over financial and administrative issues. They are in a sense interest-driven conflicts within the leadership of the church (Amhara National Regional State, 2010). Such conflicts per se are not as such dangerous for intra-religious interactions and by extension inter-religious tolerance and solidarity. Their serious threat rather is the transformation of these conflicts into conflicts among followers of the different leadership. On the other hand, the conflicts among adherents of Islam have elements related to the new trends of Islamic extremism on which the extremists and the moderate compete over access to leadership (North Wollo Zone, 2009). Societal disintegration and fragmentation as well as the erosion of the social fabric that eats away the strands binding people together are likely to arise out of this conflict that threatens not only intra-religious interactions but also inter-religious tolerance and solidarity. Moreover, if there is the possibility that extremist and/ethnicized people acquire religious leadership, their attitude towards other religions could be intolerant.

## Globalization and External Influences

In a period when the so-called “time space comprehension” is increasingly becoming willy-nilly as an accepted reality of human existence, what happens in one corner of the world affects others located elsewhere. Religious interactions are not the exception in this regard. Consistent with this fact, the state of affairs of religious tolerance and solidarity in Ethiopia is also influenced by the global dynamics and the role of external forces and actors. In the first place, the global Muslim-Christian confrontation is directly implicated in local inter-religious interactions (Tizazu and Mohammed, 2010). The criticisms forwarded against one religion by the other, which are directly transmitted via the new technologies, are given local responses which in turn lead to reaction by the other groups (Ibid). On a poster in Addis Ababa, for instance, the researcher observed a topic entitled “*Talaku Fiticha: Dr. Zakir ena Sadik Be eyesus Chiristos la'y lanesuachew tiyakewoch yetesete orthodoxawe milash*”/ “The Great Confrontation: An Orthodox Response Given for Questions Raised by Dr. Zakir and Sadik Regarding Jesus Christ.” Similarly, another poster is entitled “*Quran Chirstosn Ayawekewum: Kirstos Tewodaju ye Islam nigus lemilew ye Ahmed Didat tsihuf yetesete mels*”/ “The Quran does not Know Christ: A Response to Ahmed Didat’s Christ the Loved Islam Prophet.” All this indicate how the confrontation at the global level is transformed into local confrontation. This, of course, by itself may not be problematic given that there is a culture of enlightened discussion and debate. But in a context where religious proselytizing is conducted through denigration and downgrading each other, the consequence could be more destructive.

Additionally, informants claimed that there are external forces that sponsor followers of different religions. The Arab-funded NGOs have been raised as one case where external influence is manifested (Teklehaymanot, 2010). Part of the global strategy of Islamists is to strive to control civil society so as to widen their popular base (Demant, 2006). What is taking place is buying a private home and demolishing it for constructing a mosque on the plot and this is against the city/town master plan (Amhara National Regional State, Administrative and Security Affairs Bureau, 2009). Likewise, the western sponsored NGOs take part in the process of spreading religion of their own denomination by providing material resources and even employing only adherents of their own religion (Teklehaymanot, 2010). There is a tendency among Western states in viewing terrorism and fundamentalism as a danger for the survival of their cherished ideals (Edwards, 2006). In this milieu, it is also argued that the Western states aim at using Ethiopia as a means to block the spread of Islam further into the southern part of Africa and the poor and underdeveloped parts of Ethiopia that are vulnerable to outside forces of both camps (“Religion as a cover,” February 2009). Therefore, it can be argued that the Western states will not refrain from spreading religion of their own version using various means including NGOs as a bulwark against Islamization. The Orthodox Christians, in a similar vein, saw this as encroachment on their long-held

dominant status and react in ways that occasionally lead to tensions and intolerance and began making unfair claim for land for practicing their religion (Amhara National Regional State, Administrative and Security Affairs Bureau).

Furthermore, the global development has far more destructive psychological effect on both the Christians and Muslims. The Arab-Israel relations, events in Afghanistan and Iraq compounded with the misconstrued Western consideration of all terrorists as Muslims created a feeling of helplessness, alienation and powerlessness among the Muslim population (Hassen Taju, 2010). Shore (2006) is also of the view that hopelessness on the part of the Muslim population regarding Western states' exploitative and destructive actions in Muslim countries like Iraq drives some Muslims towards extremism. This is further compounded by the theoretical articulation of clash of civilization mainly between Islamic and Western civilizations by scholars like Samuel Huntington. In the same vein, Islamist Organizations (like Al-Qaeda) call for a global war against the West and its allies thereby affirming the inevitable clash of civilizations (Desai, 2007). Likewise, a depiction of Prophet Mohammed wearing turban shaped bombs which initially was produced by a Danish newspaper *Jyllands Posten* and later reproduced in many of the Western newspapers provoked sensitivity among the Muslim population (Desai, 2007), of which the Ethiopian Muslims are not an exception. Even the political process in Sudan where the Southern Sudanese are likely to choose independence is considered by some Ethiopian Muslims, as Western states' effort of attacking Islam on every front (Hassen Taju, 2010). Thus, the above feelings are reinforced by such political developments.

On the other hand, the Western depiction of terrorists as Muslims created fear of victimization among the Christians. Consequently, the Christians are induced to think that the Muslims have to be kept in check, sort of which they are likely to adopt destructive strategies to expand their religion. This fear, however, is not solely a product of the Western depiction of Muslims as terrorists. The book written by the former archbishop of Addis Ababa, *Abune Samuel* (2008), regarding the state of inter-religious tolerance in Ethiopia, for instance, asserts that radical Islam (*Wahhabism*) is posing a grave danger to Christians by using the tactic of killing them, burning their churches, distorting their history, and disturbing the age old culture of tolerance among the population. Ephraim (2008) likewise, stresses the formidable problem that Islamic radicalism has created against harmonious existence in Ethiopia. Assuming that the above assertion is true, it can be argued that Christians are likely to view (radical) Islam as a threat to their identity. The population, both Christian and Muslim, are, therefore, psychologically ready for violence whereby any minor incident leads to conflict among the followers of the two religions at least in some places (Hassen Taju, 2010).

## **Lack of Good Governance in Dealing with Religious Matters**

Most conflicts are ignited by claims and counter-claims over worship places. Most of the time, local administrators give a place of worship or legalize what is already held by one group though there is a claim by another group thereby prompting reaction by the other religious groups (Amhara National Regional State, Administrative and Security Affairs Bureau, 2009). The administrators, therefore, in their attempt at managing day-to-day affairs, become part of the problem. The administrators' decisions in some places tend to be biased towards their own religious group which in turn breeds reaction by the other group (Amhara National Regional State, 2009). They are thus either unable or unwilling to handle issues where claims and counter-claims are raised. Had there been the involvement of the people in the making of decisions on contentious issues, there would have been a probability of developing trust and mutual understanding.

## Chapter Four

### Prospects for Building the Culture of Peace

In this chapter, the opportunities for building the culture of peace relating to aspects relevant to the study are expounded. After portraying the available opportunity in the first section, the prospects for democratic consolidation and non-violent political struggle are discussed subsequently along with the chance for entrenching inter-ethnic and inter-religious tolerance and solidarity.

#### 4.1. Government Recognition of the Need for Building The Culture of Peace

The government acknowledges that sustaining peace requires efforts directed at entrenching the culture of peace. Accordingly, the Ministry of Federal Affairs has instituted a unit known as 'Directorate of Culture of Peace Building', which is mainly preoccupied with building the culture of peace in conflict-prone areas and from which regional states could expand their operation. According to informants from the Directorate (Anonymous Informant 5, 2010), the necessary institutional structures are being instituted and peace building initiatives are being undertaken in the pilot areas where violent conflicts are prevalent. Community reconciliation and dialogue as well as attitude and value change are the main instruments adopted by the Directorate for ingraining the culture of peace. As part of this, peace committees have been established at regional, *zonal*, *woreda* and *kebele* levels whereas peace clubs have been organized in schools. The gender component of such committees and clubs is one of the areas to which adequate consideration was given (Informant 6, nd). Furthermore, trainings have been delivered for those who are in leadership positions to let them act as catalyst for attitudinal change in their communities. In areas where violent conflicts occur between groups of different religions, coalition committees that empower the local communities to participate in solving their problem in their own way through their own means have been established.

This appears to provide a good opportunity for building the culture of peace notwithstanding that the culture of peace is understood only in terms of changing attitudes and values. Maladministration, lack of good governance and human rights violation are equally significant factors in terms of sustaining violence. The concern seems to be with the horizontal interactions among groups and citizens, which are necessary for entrenching the culture of peace. As learned by this study from the interviews with informants of the Directorate, the vertical interactions of various

groups and individuals with the state structure and their implication for conflicts attract little attention. The prevalence of structural violence in the governance realm creates a culturally embedded tolerance of violence at local level reinforcing the culture of violence bequeathed from above (Kisielewski and LeDoux, 2009). Apart from this weakness, the Directorate's effort in entrenching the culture of peace is a promising one that should be further developed.

## 4.2. Opportunities to Democratic Consolidation

First and foremost, there is an explicit recognition of the necessity of democracy as the governance structure in Ethiopia is designed to be a *Federal Democratic Republic*. Thus, democracy is acknowledged as a process, policies and laws are devised, and institutions and procedures are instituted. The constitution stipulates the principle of constitutional supremacy (Art.9), and also lays down transparency and accountability of public officials to the public on behalf of whom they make decisions and policies (Art.12). Fundamental human and democratic rights are accentuated to be protected (Art.10) in a manner that conforms to international human rights conventions and treaties that are adopted to be part of the Ethiopian legal system. The legal framework that opens the political space for the operation of free media, civil societies and political parties is provided in the constitution. All these indicate that at least theoretically the government is committed to consolidating a democratic system of governance.

In addition to setting the norms of democratic governance, government practices to some extent conform to the norms provided in the constitution. This is accepted even among some quarters in the ranks of the opposition albeit cynically. Notwithstanding documented reports<sup>3</sup> and allegations by opposition parties regarding government misbehavior, an informant from the ruling party stated that the government acts in accordance with the constitutional provisions. Given the tendencies of glorifying what is being done at least publicly by the ruling party and belittling the same by the opposition, the reality is likely to be somewhere in between. Thus not only the legal and procedural foundations of the rule of law have been laid down but also the culture of rule of law is being developed through the government's effort of conforming and urging others to conform to the law at least regarding issues that are not politically sensitive. There seems to be a consensus among observers of Ethiopian politics that there is space for opposition and freedom of expression albeit in a limited manner. The very existence of opposition parties as well as the mushrooming of the private press is indicative of this (Mesfin, 2010). Hence, the existence of political space can be taken as an opportunity for the further development of democracy.

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the yearly reports of Ethiopian Human Rights Council on human rights violations.

Moreover, it is argued that the expanding level of literacy is likely to have a positive effect on building democratic culture. According to an informant from EPRDF (Anonymous Informant 4, 2010), the rapid growth in school enrollment rate is one of the arenas that the government is using to create a generation capable of playing interest-based politics. The main instrument for achieving this goal is Civics and Ethical Education offered from elementary to higher education levels. While the ruling party doubts that teachers may not adequately understand the democracy building intention behind the subject and hence teach contrary to what is expected, the opposition fears that it could be another instrument of indoctrination in line with the ruling party's ideology. There are also informants who suspect that educational institutions are likely to be viewed from the perspective of the ruling party's ideology. The party argues that educational systems could contribute to the development of democratic values through their struggle against rent-seeking behaviors (EPRDF, 2007) in the face of the disposition of opposition parties as actors and entrepreneurs of rent-seeking (EPRDF, 2006a). The poor quality of education also hampers the contribution of Civics and Ethical Education to developing a critical mass of citizens. The very expansion of education by itself, however, is likely to have a positive impact in different ways: the more educated the society is the more enlightened and rational it could be. Education also has the effect of improving the living condition of the literate which in turn plays a role in empowering citizens and inducing others to follow suit.

Economic growth is being recorded as still another opportunity for the consolidation of democracy at least in the long-run in spite of its inhibiting role in the short-run. Economic growth, if sustained over time, can be transformed into development. The more the economy develops the more the people will be independent from the government as development necessarily involves economic empowerment. Inglehart and Welzel (2005) argued that the empowerment of the people in turn inculcates democratic values that necessitate democratic governance institutions. It also strengthens the middle class so that it could be capable of articulating its own non-parochial interests. According to Medhane (2004), the government showed considerable commitment to develop the economy in a way that is pro-peasant. The government itself is also loud in stating that the current economic growth is driven by the economic performances of the rural population. If the above assertion holds true, it could be argued that the socio-economic foundations of a democratic system are being laid down. The peasantry by its very socio-economic condition incline to support authoritarianism (Tekola, 1994), which could be reduced by their economic advancement that leads to the development of their awareness regarding the positive ramifications of democracy.

The international environment is also an opportunity in the sense that, at least in rhetoric, democracy is becoming "the only game in town." The international community

acknowledges a democratic system as the only legitimate form of governance. Pursuant to this, there are various pro-democracy and pro-human rights organizations that persistently put pressure for democratization in countries where democracy is at its incipient stage (Informant 1, 2010). Though it is difficult to bring democracy through the agency of external forces alone, so long as the people within a country are committed to democratic governance, the international environment does not hinder the effort of the domestic population. The Western states, who give lip service to democracy in case their national interest is threatened, could ally with democratic forces if such forces are strong enough to unite the population and wage a peaceful and democratic struggle (Informant 3, 2010).

The aspects of democratic practices and values inherent in Ethiopia in general and Southern societies in particular are also cultural resources from which Ethiopian politicians could draw lessons that guide their political ideals and practices (Kebede, 2010). Even the oft criticized authoritarian socio-political tradition of northern Ethiopian societies has had democratic cultural elements in their history that needs to be cultivated. The culture of being abided by law and fair arbitration and security over access to land had been some of the cultural elements that enhanced the self-esteem and self-worth of the northern peasants (Bahru, 1999). These need to be embedded in the policies devised and institutions designed. Kebede argued that rigorous studies need to be conducted for identifying and integrating these values and practices in local, regional as well as national politics. The lessons of Marxism and other tenets indicated that an ideology developed within the context of other countries is likely to be misapplied and hence could be more destructive (Anonymous Informant 3, 2010). The imperative of integrating regional and national politics with local democratic values is emphasized by some informants. However, the necessity of doing so seems to have been given little attention by the government as well as the opposition. The House of Federation (HoF) could be an institution for advancing such integration by involving in the law making process which is not the case in its current functioning. Levine's (2008) argument that there is an ingrained tradition of public space that could serve as a model for enlightened politics if micro-macro synthesis is achieved confirms the above argument.

### **4.3. Opportunities for Non-Violent Political Struggle**

Notwithstanding the complaint that the political space is being gradually narrowed, there exists political space for waging non-violent political struggle (Informant 1, 2010). There are opportunities to form political parties and engage in election campaigns that contribute to the development of the culture needed to wage non-violent political struggle. Tesfaye (2008), in line with this, argued that the political space is fairly, though

not fully, open for parties to advance their objective as long as they act in accordance with the constitutional framework. Moreover, it seems that most political parties recognize the necessity of waging non-violent political struggle as the only tool for uprooting what they call EPRDF's dictatorship and instituting democracy. Political actors championing non-violent political struggle outnumber those espousing armed struggle (Anonymous Informant 5, 2010), which partly could be the result of Western powers castigation of most armed resistance movements as terrorists that have no reliable support for advancing their cause (Tesfaye, 2008).

There are also long-held traditions of conflict resolution at the local level from which political actors can draw lessons for working together and resolving differences between them. Most customary dispute resolutions often involve compromising between parties who are pressured to have a share in the responsibility (Getachew and Alula, 2008). Thus one party is not viewed as a loser and the other as a winner and hence win-win game. Besides, conflicts are most of the time solved before they become serious resulting in loss of life and property and processes are more participatory and consensual as regards decisions so that their enforcement can be backed by the community (Getachew and Alula, 2008). Political parties claiming to wage peaceful struggle can learn the necessity and expedience of concession making instead of polarization through avoidance of dichotomy between "us", the opposition, for instance, and "them"; and the need for wider public participation including the would-be supporter of the status quo in their quest for justice, democracy and respect of human rights. According to an informant from UDJP (Informant 3, 2010), the population can easily be mobilized for waging non-violent political struggle given the prevailing political and economic hardships encountered.

#### **4.4. Opportunities of Inter-Ethnic Tolerance**

Similar to the opportunities for democratic deepening, appropriate legal mechanisms that could enhance inter-ethnic tolerance and solidarity are stipulated in the constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Both individual and group rights are well articulated whose unfailing enforcement protect dissenting individuals and groups from reprisal. The preamble of the constitution stipulates the envisioned ideal of tolerance and solidarity. A glance at this indicates the recognition of the need for equality among nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia, the existence of historically produced interactions which result in common interest and outlook, and the need for redressing the historically produced grievances (The Constitution of FDRE, 1995). The historically generated ethnic grievances have been addressed, at least partially, by the prevailing arrangement (Anonymous Informant 4, 2010). The constitution recognizes the rights of nations, nationalities and peoples to self-administration, developing, promoting and

preserving their own language, culture and history to self-determination including and up to secession (Art.39). Thus the equality of nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia is constitutionally enshrined which also accord them with sovereign power (Art.8). All these arrangements are a positive step and serve as opportunities for entrenching the culture of tolerance and solidarity by addressing ethnic grievances arising out of the assimilation policies pursued by Ethiopia's successive regimes.

An informant from EPRDF argued that EPRDF itself is a product of ethnic contradictions. Hence it has not only acknowledged the necessities of addressing the ethnic grievances but also has practically implemented what is provided for in the constitution. The celebration of nations and nationalities day is one of the symbolisms used for enhancing tolerance and solidarity among various ethnic groups. According to an informant from the House of Federations (Informant 5, 2010), there are positive trends in this regard. Those whose work influence the opinion of the society such as artists, musicians and poets are using the culture of nations and nationalities in a manner that signify diversity as an asset from which new thoughts, values and attitudes can be generated.

However, it is to be noted that there are individuals who consider some aspects of the constitutional arrangement, mainly the ethnic-based federal structure arising thereof, as a liability for inter-ethnic tolerance and solidarity. Linclon (2000) indicated that, at the national level, the arrangement has created inter-ethnic cooperation by and large. However, its effect is more of accentuating inter-ethnic conflicts (Abbink, 2006a, 2009; Clapham, 2004; Medhane, 2006; Tsegaye, 2009). Even those who accept the constitutional provision on self-determination as a significant move towards inter-ethnic tolerance and solidarity question the practicability of the legal norms. This doubt is reflected in Merera's (2007) argument which claims that the arrangement, which he alleges to be of paper value, has not moved demand for inter-ethnic symmetry, and ethnic autonomy even by one iota. The experiences of other countries too indicate that there is a danger in symbolic promotion of diversity and equality of cultural groups, which could be used as part of "a political agenda to divert attention from underlying socio-economic and political inequalities" (Langer and Brown, 2008, p. 45). However, since equality in one sphere is likely to reinforce equality in other aspects and since cultural inequality is likely to have a direct link with violence (Langer and Brown, 2008), such efforts need to be appreciated and preserved with.

The historically evolved composition of Ethiopian society is an opportunity for inter-ethnic tolerance and solidarity as well (Teklehaymanot, 2010). It is argued that Ethiopian society evolved in a manner that contributes to inter-ethnic integration. There were significant population movements, which were induced by factors such as drought, shortage of farming or pastureland, war and the like. These population movements

were followed by inter-ethnic integration. The population is interconnected through marriage as a result of which a significant portion of the Ethiopian society is from families with double or triple ethnic background serving as an important mechanism for inter-ethnic networks and interconnections (Ibid). Urban centers, where individuals of mixed background are more visible, are indicators of the long process of integration. Levine (2007) also highlighted this view in his argument that Ethiopia is a product of the intermingling of people of various cultures, languages, and customs through inter-marriage, commerce, shared festivals, cultural borrowings, common political aspirations and defense of their country. When one talks about ethnic groups in Ethiopia, s/he is talking about more of socially constructed identities than primordially determined entities (Teklehaymanot, 2010). With the exception of cultural and linguistic differences, it is difficult to physically distinguish the ethnic background of individual Ethiopians. Thus, the fact that ethnic groups are not discreet entities is an opportunity for mutual understanding, tolerance and solidarity as it will not be difficult to construct an inclusive superordinate identity, which, as Vollhardt, Migacheva, and Tropp (2009) argued, is necessary for inter-ethnic tolerance and solidarity.

## 4.5. Opportunities to Inter-Religious Tolerance and Solidarity

Formal recognition of the equality of all religions significantly contributes to inter-religious tolerance and solidarity of which the Ethiopian constitutional arrangement, cognizant of this, proclaimed the secular nature of the state. State and religion are separate and the undue meddling into each other's affairs is legally circumscribed (Art.11). The formal political arena, therefore, provides the milieu for religious tolerance and solidarity among adherents of various religions. In response to the threat of recent religious revivalism and tension, the government established "Religious and Faith Issues Directorate" within the Ministry of Federal Affairs. According to informants from the Directorate, issues of religious revival and tensions are being carefully watched and studied in cooperation with regional states. Peace committees, consisting of representatives of five religions, have been established. These committees are designed to be an arena where the concerned parties deal with issues of concern. They are also working on promoting more harmonious and amicable relationships among followers of the various religions. Preparation of regulations dealing with the allotment of worship and burial places for the followers of various religions is also underway. It seems that adequate attention is given to handling religious issues, which is quite necessary to sustain religious tolerance and solidarity in the face of global and local socio-economic and political dynamics that are likely to promote religious revivalism.

The existence of an ingrained tradition of religious tolerance and solidarity among ordinary people is the other opportunity that further advances harmonious inter-

religious interaction. The relations between followers of the two major and oldest religions of Ethiopia, Christianity and Islam, are marked by harmonious coexistence. They engage in building Mosques and Churches together, participate in marriage ceremonies and other societal functions such as *edir* and *equb* jointly. They even sometimes pray together in cases of drought, war and other emergencies and impending dangers (Teklehaymanot, 2010). According to Levine (2007), at the root of followers of different religion and historical interaction lie intermarriage, joint celebration of one another's festivities, sharing of special occasions such as annual pilgrimage to the site of the Archangel Gebrael at Mount Kulubi. The interactions among them, therefore, transcend tolerance as these features cannot be adequately captured by the term tolerance. They rather signify a case of solidarity which could be considered as the most significant and probably a unique case of Muslim-Christian interactions as compared with the interactions of the two religions throughout the world. There were conflicts where politically and economically motivated causes were manipulated and redefined to have religious dimensions. The two religions have accumulated experiences of coping with difficult times which could not be easily reversed by the prevailing externally-induced revivalism (Anonymous Informant 5, 2010).

It seems that tolerant interactions also have economic foundations for the followers of the various religions that are economically interdependent. Usually, the Muslims dominate in businesses while others control other areas thereby creating interdependence among individuals of various religious persuasions. This reinforces competition among followers of the same religion while promoting accommodation among adherents of various religions as intolerance is against the economic self-interest of individuals of various religious groups. Moreover, the existence of more than two religions has its own contribution due to the fact that inter-religious tolerance avoids the polarization of the society into two major dichotomies.

Moreover, the existence of diverse ethnic groups with cross-cutting religious identity is considered as the other relevant opportunity to sustain inter-religious tolerance and solidarity. Ethnic difference is not reinforced with religious differences. One can have, for instance, a Gurage Muslim as well as a Gurage Christian, an Oromo Muslim and at the same time an Oromo Christian, an Amhara Muslim and an Amhara Christian, etc. What is separated by religion, therefore, is connected by ethnicity generating different encounters in different contexts. Belonging to the same ethnicity enables individuals of different religious background to share similar languages and other values that diffuse tendencies of radicalization and enhance inter-religious tolerance and solidarity. However, it has to be noted that in the peripheral areas of Ethiopia, religion and ethnicity are mutually reinforcing, which, unfortunately, are also economically marginalized areas as compared with other relatively better ones.

An informant from EDP also suggested that identification of religious followers with their country is strong enough to contribute to avoiding relapse into serious conflicts. Islamic religion in other parts of the world, for example, has a tendency of transcending the nation state. Hence, its followers are less likely to be as nationalist as followers of other religions. But in the Ethiopian context, he argued, both Christians and Muslims have similar attachments with their country.

## Chapter Five

### Summary and Conclusions

There are several challenges that militate against the entrenchment of the culture of peace in Ethiopia. Among others, the democratization process is beleaguered by historical, ideological, socio-cultural and economic conditions that militate against the development of enduring democracy. Historically, the survival of Ethiopia, often under hostile international and regional environment, is upheld through autocratic leaderships that ushered in the nurturing of hierarchical, authoritarian, and mistrustful values. On top of this, the then emerging educated elites' trepidation with the country's ills arising out of complex socio-economic and political problems, coupled with the global emergence of Marxism as an ideology of liberation, induced them to adopt it as guiding ideology. Marxist ideology has not only amplified the Ethiopian authoritarian culture but also set the scene for exclusionary political maneuvering in the leadership of the country whose impact is still observable. Furthermore, socio-economic conditions that sustains democracy, which mainly but not exclusively includes mass consciousness of the tenets of democracy and a well-developed and articulating middle class, cannot be claimed to be in sufficient existence. All these, compounded with government's desire to stay in power as long as possible, as is the case with every government, derail the democratization process. Violent culture, violence being defined to include structurally induced as well as openly and physically manifested, and undemocratic currents could be rectified by systematic, non-violent political struggle and an agenda of socio-political transformation. However, the agenda of non-violent transformation of politics itself is under the threat of limited political space, weak political actors, and unfavorable cultural and economic conditions thwarting it.

Inter-ethnic and inter-religious tolerance and solidarity are also confronted with various challenges. The defunct assimilation policies of the past and the institutions designed to facilitate them have engendered various obstacles militating against inter-ethnic tolerance and solidarity. Inequality and marginalization of various cultural groups in the name of pan-Ethiopian identity generated ethnic grievances and resentments as well as radical secessionist agenda by some ethno-nationalist groups. Inter-ethnic dialogue, tolerance and solidarity cannot be fostered in such an environment. The post-1991 ethnic-based federal arrangement that sought to establish inter-ethnic symmetry is also shaped by the politico-history of inter-ethnic relations. However, the federal arrangement has created obstacles to inter-ethnic tolerance and solidarity ranging from emphasis on difference, ethnic competition, elite manipulation, ethnicization of social relations to outright threat affecting the survival of new minorities in some

places. Moreover, economic deprivation tempt individuals to attribute the causes of their suffering to other groups thereby steering negative stereotypes and xenophobic attitudes. Ethiopia, with a significant portion of its population being below the poverty line, has not fared better in this dimension either.

The often narrated religious tolerance and solidarity is also threatened by local socio-economic dynamics and global development. Religious fundamentalism in some quarters of Islam and Christianity is intruding and pressuring religious interactions to unfolding in a manner that has a tone of destructiveness. Religious institutions themselves are preoccupied with conflicts arising within their institutions for one reason or the other, which tend to affect the followers of the various factions and/or sects. The maintenance, strengthening, and functioning of societal threads is likely to be shaken by these changes combined with transformative and/or disintegrative effects of globalization. More profoundly, global Muslim-Christian confrontation has substantial effects on local inter-religious interactions. This global confrontation is implicated in local inter-religious interactions, which also engendered psychological feelings that are against tolerance and solidarity.

Amidst challenges, there is a hope that democracy may flourish and consolidate and non-violent handling of political difference may become the norm thereby entrenching inter-ethnic tolerance and solidarity. The existing constitutional framework and government's tendency of adhering to the spirit of the supreme law could consolidate democracy. Expanding education, notable economic growth, and main features of the international environment are significant assets that could serve as opportunities for democratic consolidation. Van de Walle (cited in Smith, 2009, p. 869) argues that the existence of a significant number of Sub-Sahara African hybrid political systems that combined deep-rooted authoritarian tendencies with democratic dispositions could impair progress in this regard. This raises doubts about the future of democratic outcomes including in Ethiopia.

Likewise, the historical evolution of Ethiopian society lays the structural foundation for policies that enhance inter-ethnic tolerance and solidarity. In the sphere of religious tolerance too, the entrenched culture of tolerance and solidarity among fellow citizens of different religions, the existence of overlapping identities, and economic interdependence further strengthened by policies that adequately deal with religious issues tend to prevent relapse into violent inter-religious conflicts.

Tolerance could have been probably affected by the post-1991 socio-political transformation by making the Ethiopian state inclusive of all groups along the line of gender, religion and most importantly ethnicity. In the field of social-psychology, it is argued that the more the superordinate category is considered to be inclusive of the self-

nominated and positively evaluated distinctive attributes and values of every group, the more tolerance is likely to arise (Mummendey and Wenzel, 1999). But, the more there is projection of a single trait and value as a trait and value of the superordinate category, the more social discrimination and intolerance there will be (Mummendey and Wenzel, 1999). The former seems to be what is done in Ethiopia along both religion and ethnicity though its effect on tolerance is far more contested. This calls into question the linkage between the vertical interactions of the various ethnic and religious groups with the state on the one hand and the horizontal interaction among adherents of different religions and/or individuals of diverse ethnic origin on the other.

De Rivera's (2004b) findings that the components of culture of peace identified by the UN are not coherent is reflected in the study as well. Coherence requires that the advancement of some of the components contribute to the betterment of the others since they are underpinned by similar sets of values, norms and attitudes. From the analysis of the various challenges and opportunities, it can be argued that there is no any coherent relation among the aspects of democracy and inter-ethnic as well as inter-religious tolerance. Despite the fact that the governance system has obviously improved from the earlier period, it is difficult to argue that similar improvements have taken place regarding inter-ethnic and inter-religious tolerance and solidarity.

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# Section 3

**Religious Tolerance and Tension between  
Orthodox Christianity and Islam Religion in  
Gondar Town, North West Ethiopia**

**Haileyesus Muluken**

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

ANRS	Amhara National Regional State
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CSA	Central Statistics Agency
E.C.	Ethiopian Calendar
EOTC	Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church
FBOs	Faith-Based Organizations
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
IFPB	Inter Faith Peace Building
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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## Abstract

*The central objective of this study was to examine the religious tolerance and tension between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Gondar town. The study has employed a qualitative approach to analyze data gathered through focus group discussions, key informants interview, official letters, reports, and personal observation of the researcher. Secondary sources have also been consulted for the purpose.*

*The findings of the study revealed the existence of various causes and actors in the conflict between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Gondar town. As a result, provocative religious propagation, lack of clear legal regime regarding religious matters, religious extremism, lack of understanding and misapplication of freedom of religion, new identity consciousness, lack of good governance, competition over ritual and burial sites, historical factors, national religious problems, and globalization and external involvement were found to be the causes of religious intolerance between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Gondar town.*

*The major actors in the deterioration of religious tolerance in Gondar town were religious leaders, religious-based groups and associations, the Federal Government of Ethiopia, the government of the regional state, the town officials and political elites. In some cases, the actors played a destructive role in the relations of the two religious groups which eroded the social ties and cooperation and resulted in exclusionary business practices, boycotting and lack of dialogue between religious leaders. These were observed to be the manifestation of religious intolerance and tension between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Gondar town. Finally, this study suggested that implementing the new policy on religious issue, law enforcement and enactment, establishment of religious joint committee, assignment of well trained local political officials, organizing regular religious forums and conferences, establishment of peace clubs, active role of non-governmental organizations, civil societies and faith-based organizations would help to alleviate the problem and establish harmonious relations between the two groups.*

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The three major world religions, Christianity, Islam and Judaism have existed in Ethiopia (Ephraim, 2008). It is also believed that there are some segments of the population of the country that belong to traditional beliefs and religions other than the three major ones. All of these religions have been practiced for centuries in Ethiopia. The historical alliances of all these religions in Ethiopia are unique in religious tolerance and mutual understanding in various parts of Ethiopia (Constantinos, 2008).

One of the historical places in Ethiopia is Gondar. Gondar town is found in the Amhara National Regional State. Historically, Gondar was the imperial capital during the medieval periods. Most of the aforementioned religions in Ethiopia have co-existed peacefully in Gondar town since then. Especially, Gondar is still a host for many followers of these three major religions.

Hence, the study about the inter-faith relations among different religions will help to understand the extent and source of tolerance as well as togetherness of the peaceful religious coexistence in one society. In addition to the peaceful coexistence, it can also help us for better understanding about religious intolerance and conflict.

To the researcher's best knowledge, religious tolerance and tension in the study area have not been well studied. In this regard, the intention of this research is to assess the extent of religious poles of tolerance and intolerance between Orthodox Christianity and Islam in the study area. Here, the study focuses on the Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity and Islam in Gondar. Hence, this thesis intends to contribute to our understanding of the inter-faith relations between Orthodox Christianity and Islam not only in the study area but also in other parts of Ethiopia.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Religion can have a positive influence for one nation in numerous ways. It is a powerful factor in the struggle for peace and reconciliation. However, religion can also contribute to violent conflicts. Regarding this, Vijapur (1999) and Smoch (2007) stated that religion can be both a factor for intolerance and warrants for discrimination as well as prejudice that destroys life and damages human capacity. Thus, we can say that, as far as there is heterogeneity of religious practice, there will be some religious conflicts all over the world though the extent, intention and dimension vary from country to country.

Accordingly, religion is becoming a source of violence around the world and deeply interwoven into other sources of violence like economic, ideological and ethnic sources. As a result, the global trend of current religious conflicts has been greatly exacerbated (Yost, 2005).

Ethiopia, as a multi-religious society, cannot be free from religious influence for both peace and tolerance on the one hand, and conflict and intolerance on the other. With regard to religious tolerance, most scholars agree that Ethiopia is one of the few countries of the world in which religious tolerance exists (Ahmed, 2000; Ephraim, 2006; Sirgiw, 2007; Andreas, 2008; Tadesse, 1972). In history, Ethiopia was considered as a place of religious tolerance that is deep and abiding. Hence, Ethiopia has been known as an island of peace among different religions (Ahmed, 2008; Andreas, 2008; Tadesse, 1972).

On the other hand, some writers agree that religious tolerance which existed in the past is challenged in the present time. They claim that there were some occasional tensions and clashes between Christian and Muslim communities. For instance, Hussien (2006) stated that violent incidents were seen in Addis Ababa in 1995, in Harar in 2001, and in Kamise in 2001. For Hussien, the main challenge of religious tolerance in these areas is the confrontation between Christians and Muslims.

Other scholars explained that the present inter-faith relationship between Orthodox Christianity and Islam in Ethiopia is full of intolerance and conflict (Hiruey, 2005; Medhene, 2004; Ephrem, 2008; Samuel, 2008 and Takalign, 2008). As a result of such kind of religious intolerance prevailing in Ethiopia, provocative religious words are used in time of propagation, and speeches of hatred about other religions become the main features of the current inter-faith relations (Yitaktu, 2006). There are very few studies about inter-faith relations in Ethiopia. Ahmed (2000), Hiruey (2005), Medhene (2004), Ephraim (2006), Hussen (2006), Sirgiw (2007), Ephraim (2008) and Samuel (2008) have focused on the general trend of religious tolerance and tension across faith relationship in Ethiopia. Even though these studies discussed religious tolerance and conflict in Ethiopia, they hardly provide detailed analysis on specific sites of the study. In other words, these studies did not focus on the inter-faith relations of various parts of the area.

In addition to this, Hussen (2006), Abbink (2007), Fiquent (2008), and Mohammed (2010) have focused on areas of Dessie, Kamise and Kambolcha. Although there are many lessons that we can learn from these studies, they could not wholly present the dynamics of inter-faith relations in other areas since inter-faith interactions in different places are likely to be a product of the constellation of various historical, political, local actors and events with its own ebb and flow.

Similarly, others have done their studies in very few selected areas. For example, Hussen (2006) wrote about the inter-faith relation on the historical town of Harar. Takalign (2008) has focused on the inter-faith crises between Muslim and Christians in Jimma, Illubabor and West Wellega in Oromiya, especially between Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and Muslims. Afework (2009) attempted to explain religious tolerance in Addis Ababa. Most of these studies have given emphasis either to the general inter-faith relations in Ethiopia or very few selected areas.

Moreover, from the historical aspect of the inter-faith relations of the study area, scholars like Trimmingham (1965), Abdussamed (1990), and Marcus (1994) wrote about historical peaceful and conflict inter-faith relations in Gondar town. However, these previous studies have two basic limitations. First, the primary objective of these scholars who wrote about Gondar town was to deal with the political and economy of the feudal life of the medieval era of Gondarine period rather than investigating deeply the inter-faith relations of the area. In other words, scholars have paid little attention to the issue of inter-faith relations in Gondar town and discussed the issue in a paragraph or half a page in their works. Second, previous studies did not show the recent development of the area because they have described the medieval period only. Thus, in terms of time framework, there is a wider gap between the previous scholars' work and the present one.

At this time, dealing with the contemporary issue of religious tolerance is of paramount importance which could be instrumental in creating awareness for the prevention of destructive momentum. For example, according to the Amhara National Regional State Security Affairs Report, there was a religious conflict in 2009 between Orthodox Christians and Muslims on the occasion of holiday celebration in Gondar town. The clash between people of the two religions is one of the factors that inspired the researcher to do this study. Hence, the time frame of this study covers the period after 1995. This study starts to scrutinize religious tolerance since 1995 in the study area because it is after this time that religious freedom has been fully acknowledged by the constitution.

In general, a detailed study of religious tolerance and conflict is still a subject worth researching in various parts of Ethiopia. In line with this, Ahmed (2008) stated that, in the long history of Ethiopia, the case of religious tolerance as a specific research has not been the subject of thorough study. Moreover, Ahmed (2008:115) also argued, "There was a tendency to ignore the uncomfortable issues when it came to relations between the Orthodox Church and other religions in Ethiopia."

Thus, the overall nature of religious tolerance and tension needs further study. Accordingly, this particular research tries to bridge the gap on the issue of religious tolerance and tension between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims.

## **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

### **1.3.1 General Objective**

The general aim of this study is to examine the overall nature of religious tolerance and tension between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Gondar town.

### **1.3.2 Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives are to:

1. analyze the nature of religious tolerance and accommodation as well as tension between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Gondar town after 1995.
2. identify the major causes of religious tensions and conflicts in the area.
3. assess the role of different actors in sustaining religious tolerance and/or intolerance.
4. analyze the manifestations of intolerance in the study area.

## **1.4. Significance of the Study**

Peaceful religious co-existence is a prerequisite for a nation to grow and prosper. Investigating present religious tolerance and tension, and looking for possible accommodative solution is very important to develop the culture of religious tolerance and mutual understanding in a society. Hence, religious institutions, faith-based Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's), the Amhara National Regional State, academic institutions and other stakeholders are believed to benefit from this study.

## **1.5. Scope of the Study**

The study is limited to Gondar town in the Amhara National Regional State. The inter-faith relationship between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims is the only focus of this study. In other words, the thesis does not look into the inter-faith relations of other religions.

## **1.6 Challenges and Opportunities Encountered in the Fieldwork**

It is natural to face a challenge and reaping an opportunity when one wants to study the issues of conflicts like Christian-Muslim schism in Gondar town. In the fieldwork and data collection process, the main challenge was extracting valid and reliable information from the target groups. In the first place, the subjects selected to feed relevant data to this research were reluctant to share their views. They were reluctant to respond to the questions about the conditions and reasons of the conflict due to the fact that

they would consider anyone outside their community a spy. This was a challenge to gather pertinent data for the study. The other challenge was lack of organized data in the security institutions at local level. The local security forces did not only try to make the information secret but also have not documented the information systematically to make it convenient for data collection.

Nevertheless, the goodwill and unreserved cooperation of the officials at the regional and zonal levels might be considered as an opportunity. The regional and zonal officials were looking for researchers who may produce possible solutions for the conflict in their area. For this purpose, they have opened their office open for those who are interested in investigating conflict-prone issues.

The challenge encountered from the adversaries was also solved through the help of friends. The researcher has friends and relatives among both the Orthodox Christians and Muslims. This gave an opportunity to approach religious leaders and select informants easily. Moreover, the letter of support written from Addis Ababa University was also helpful to get the informants' trust.

## 1.7. Limitations of the Study

It would have been much better to include the views and opinions of all the stakeholders of the conflict to make the data for the study more inclusive and representative; however, some of the Muslim groups who are blamed for instigating the conflict were not accessed. The members of *Wahabism*<sup>1</sup>, *Muslim League*<sup>2</sup> and *Jematal Tefiker*<sup>3</sup> were not allowed by the government to conduct their activity freely for they are alleged to be extremists and secret groups. Thus this study did not include the ideas of members and leaders of these groups.

The other limitation of the study is the gap of gender constituency. The religious leaders among both Christians and Muslims were entirely males as required by their respective beliefs. Regarding *Medresa*<sup>4</sup> schools, females were reluctant to provide information, whereas female Sabbath school students were more reticent and reluctant to share their ideas. Hence, the study mostly contains the ideas of male students.

## 1.8. Organization of the Study

This thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter One deals with the introductory part that

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- 1 Wahabism is an Islamic sect categorized by the regional government as extremist. This group is acting in educational and government institutions to expand their mission.
  - 2 Muslim League is an Islamic organization formed by fundamentalist Muslim Youth members
  - 3 Jematal Tefiker (Kawarja) is an Islamic sect that aims at establishing Islamic state of Ethiopia
  - 4 Medresa is an Islamic religious school

includes the background, statement of the problem and objectives of the study. Chapter Two deals with the methods employed to undertake this study and the geographical setting, demographics, religious composition in the area, and the history of inter-religious interaction of different religious groups in the study area. Chapter Three features the religious tolerance and tension in Gondor town. Chapters Four describes the major actors and manifestations of tolerance and intolerance. And finally, chapter five concludes the major thematic areas and recommends the possible solutions to the conflict.

# CHAPTER TWO

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Methodology

In this thesis, a qualitative method was used to gather and analyze the data generated through various means. Qualitative study is useful for getting the real picture of the problem (Creswell, 2009). Hence, in order to get the real picture of religious tolerance and tensions between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims, this study employed a qualitative approach.

#### 2.1.1. Key Informant Interview

In this study, in-depth interviews with key informants were used as a major source of data collection. People and representatives of the Orthodox Christians and Muslim religious leaders, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church North Gondar Administrative Zone ecclesiastical officers, priests and deacons in different parts of the church in the town and the representatives of Sunday Schools of the church as well as the executive committee of Mahbere Kidusan<sup>5</sup> were used as informants. In the same manner, from the Muslims' side the President of Islamic affairs of North Gondar, Ulumas<sup>6</sup> in different Mosques and Medresas (Mosque schools) were interviewed. Respected local elders of the town, police officers, experts from the regional state security and administrative office, and departments of security and administrative experts in Gondar town office were also interviewed. These people are believed to have better knowledge about the issue and represent the views and opinions of the majority of the people in the study area. An unstructured face to face interview was employed in the study.

#### 2.1.2. Focus Group Discussion

Four focus group discussions were conducted. Two of the groups were formed by religious leaders from the two religions. The focus group that constitutes church leaders was composed of seven experienced ecclesiastics, whereas the Muslim focus group consisted of nine religious leaders. Other groups were from students of Sabbath schools of Orthodox Church (consisting of five males and two females) and Medresa or mosque schools (consisting of eight male members). The members of each group were purposively selected to elicit pertinent data.

5 Mahibere Kidusan is set under the Sunday school department of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. It provides spiritual services to the faithful in the dioceses all over the country and in the Diaspora.

6 Ulumas is a Muslim council in the mosque comprising knowledgeable Muslim religious leaders.

### 2.1.3. Document Review

For the purpose of this thesis, both primary and secondary sources were extensively used. The secondary sources of data include reviews of relevant books, journals, legal documents, articles, official letters, magazines, newspapers and others documents pertinent to this study.

## 2.2. Methods of Data Analysis

The primary sources of data are informants from religious leaders, students, and religious organizations both at regional and local levels. The data collected through key informants, focus group discussions, and document analyses were analyzed qualitatively. First, data recorded on a tape was transcribed, coded and then carefully interpreted. After the coding process was completed in each transcription, categories and themes were identified. The categorization was done by documenting each coded segment of the transcription into separate files, linking to its respective code label. Then in line with the objectives of the research, the identified categories were assorted into themes.

### 2.2.1 Description of the Study Area

#### 2.2.1.1 Geographical and Demographic Profile

The Amhara National Regional State is one of the nine constituent states of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE constitution, 1995). According to the Central Statistics Agency, 2007 Population Census, the population size of the Amhara National Regional State is 17,221,976. The distribution of the population by religion in this State is the following: Orthodox Christians (82%), Muslims (17.2%), Protestants (0.2%), Catholics (0 %), traditionalists (0 %) and others (0.1%) (CSA, 2007).

Gondar is one of the historical places in Ethiopia. North Gondar Administrative Zone is one of the 11 zones found in the Amhara Regional State. The Regional State of Tigray borders it in the North and Benishanguel Gumz Regional State and Sudan in the West as well as Southern Gondar and West Gojjam in the South and Waghmira Zone in the East. The special zone of Gondar has 21 *woredas* and three town administrations. Gondar town is one of these three town administrations (Tesfaye, 2010).

The topography of the town of Gondar and its surrounding makes it a hostel for the flora, fauna and wild life animals with different type of environment. Its average altitude is 2000 meters above sea level. Gondar is a medieval royal city with many cultural and natural attractions (Tesfaye, 2010). The town of Gondar is composed of Amhara, Agew, Gumz, Kimant and other nationalities with different religious backgrounds.

In the medieval period, Ethiopian kings used to move from place to place and this was a great obstacle for the development of the town. This medieval royal city has many things to offer to the visitors; the imperial enclosure, the ancient monasteries, the Bete Israel village, the Fasil Bridge, the rich daily market, and the typical culture of the people. The Semen Mountain National Park, Lake Tana's Northern shore (Gorgora), and surrounding natural and cultural attractions are also found within a short distance. Emperor Fasildas chose this beautiful site - a flat volcanic ridge at seven thousand feet surrounded by mountains on three sides, but with easy access to Lake Tana in the south (Marcus, 1994). The foundation of this imperial city witnessed a period of optimism and renaissance of the golden days of Aksum and Lalibela. Architecture, literature, education, music, painting, commerce that perished after the fall of ancient Aksum, rose to prominence (Melaku, 2010).

Historically, Gondar town was the imperial capital during the medieval periods. In the eighteenth century, Gondar was at the height of its prosperity and its population may have reached seventy thousand at that time. Gondar town was founded by Emperor Fasildes in 1636. The glorious historical and graceful city of Gondar had been the seat of the Ethiopian state for about two centuries. The establishment of Gondar as permanent capital for more than two centuries marked an important change in Ethiopian imperial practice (Marcus, 1994). The Ethiopian imperial city, built on the high level plateau of Gondar is still surrounded by its walls of warm brown basalt having twelve gates (Sylvia, 1955).

Demographically, according to the Central Statistics Agency 2007 Population Census, the population of Gondar town was 206, 987. Regarding religious composition, the predominant religion in the town as well as at the zonal level is Orthodox Christianity. Thus, Orthodox Christians constitute the largest population of the town. Gondar is said to be a town of 44 churches. Muslims constitute the second largest population of the town (Tesfaye, 2010).

### **2.2.2. History of Inter-Faith Interaction between the Two Religions in Gondar Town**

Ethiopian rulers have their own distinct ideology about their subjects. Different Ethiopian kings reacted differently towards followers of other religions. Moreover, most of the Christians rulers of Ethiopia considered themselves not only as Christians but also as defenders of the Christian faith (Henze, 2000). Yohannes I (1667-1682) used religion for political purpose in which he followed a policy of segregation which affected all religious minorities (Abdussamad, 1990). Yohannes I maintained the supremacy of the Orthodox Christians and encouraged their separation from the Muslims and the Falashas (Abdussamad, 1990). Henze (2000) also affirmed that Emperor Yohannes I was

a strong supporter of the Orthodox Church. As Abdussamad (1990:129) states, 'The Muslims were assigned to live in the territorially segregated lower quarter of Gondar town on the banks of the Qaha River. This Muslim quarter, situated at the foot of the mountain, was called Islam age or Bet-al Islam'. Moreover, the king declared a decree of segregation that castigated and prohibited Muslims and Falashas (Ethiopian Jews) from owning land in the town and getting married to Christians (Abdussamad, 1990).

As a result of this act of the king, the view the Christian population had about the Muslims changed drastically. To this effect, Elich (1994:42) stated following:

*Muslims were looked down upon by Christians in their daily life; the Christians called them eslam or negade (trader) with a contemptuous connotation. Christians wore a blue neck cord, the matab, to distinguish themselves from the Muslims or pagans, who in some respect were regarded as equally impure; Christians would not eat from the same table as Muslims. Making love with a Muslim woman was considered a sin. 'The sky has no pillars', according to a saying that succinctly reflects the attitude of the Christians, and 'Muslims have no land.'*

In line with this, Abdussamad (1990:130) stated that when a Christian met a Muslim in the streets of Gondar, he saluted him with the left hand which was undoubtedly a mark of contempt. In contrast to this, Muslims also developed a similar attitude towards the Christians. Elich (1994:42) added that Muslims looked down upon Christians as semi-pagans. Christian ceremonies of the *tabot*<sup>7</sup> were regarded by Muslims as tantamount to pagan worship.

Apart from this tension, Elich (1994) wrote the views of other observers who expressed their positive impression about the cultural similarities and the harmony between the two communities even during turbulent times. Ahmed (2008:108) also argued, "Medieval period was a period of widespread conflict that often took on a religious hue, in spite of actions of various emperors, religious tolerance between different religious communities did not disappear."

However, the decline of the Gondarian authority in the Era of Princes (1769-1855) led to the weakening of the Christian empire and the Christian-Muslim relation was marked by tolerance, and the era was further noted as favorable for the expansion of Islam (Afework, 2009). Religious coercion of minorities also continued intensively during the reign of Tewodros II and Yohannes IV. As a result of these historical coincidences, the Christian-Muslim relationship was asymmetrical (Abdussamad, 1990). However, the pragmatic nature of Menilik II took moderate attitude regarding religions.

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7 Tabot is the sacred Ark of the Covenant in the Ethiopia Orthodox Church

On the other hand, as Abdussamad (1990:134) states, the Italians tried to undermine the influence of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church by building a mosque with a minaret near the Saturday market of Gondar. Abdussamad (Ibid.) remarks that the Ethiopian state in particular and the Christian population in general segregated the Muslims by denying them land and ostracizing them socially.

Hussien (2006:77) states the religious policy of the imperial era as follows:

*Emperor Haile Sellassie I paid lip service to the popular saying that 'the country belongs to all, and religion is a private affair'. In fact the Ethiopian Muslims were, during the imperial era, the subjects of the Christian state and were not full citizens as Christians.*

Moreover, Hussien (2006:798) states the period of the Derg regime in the following way:

*During the period of military rule, Islam acquired a ceremonial status of parity with Christianity, and Ethiopian Muslims enjoyed a sense of equality as full citizens, not as subjects of the country. However, the regime's socio-economic policies, inspired by socialism, severely undermined the material basis of significant sections of Ethiopian Muslim community and its hostility against religious institutions weakened the potential for the growth and consolidation of Islam.*

To conclude, Ethiopia's uninterrupted political history is characterized by the dominance of the Orthodox Christianity, which was also a state religion until the end of the imperial era. The practice of the state in treating the various religions was replete with marginalization of one religious group and favoring another and the act had its own impact on the relations between the various religious communities.

## CHAPTER THREE

# Features of Religious Tolerance and Tensions in Gondar Town

This section discusses the nature of the interaction between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims, the 2009 incident and causes of the conflict. The relation between the two communities in Gondar town has been deteriorating from time to time due to different factors. The incident of January 19-22 of 2009 is the most noticeable that caused intolerance on the surface. Other major factors that contributed to the intolerance are maladministration, denigration, fabrication or distortion of history, extremism, and competition over resources.

### 3.1 The Nature of Interaction between Christians and Muslims

In Ethiopia, there is a strong tolerance among various religions, and the people from different religions lived in harmony for a very long time. The same is true for Gondar and the town is known for its long history of tolerance between Christians and Muslims. The amicable relations between the two religions have been developed to the extent that Muslims contribute money to build churches and Christians to build mosques (Ephraim, 2008). Ayele (Ayele Anawte, 2010) argued that despite the prevalence of sporadic tensions, tolerance and amicable relations between the adherents of the two religions in Gondar were a stark manifestation of their coexistence since earlier times.

This idea has been supported by most informants of both Muslims and Orthodox Christians in both focus group discussions and key informants of this study. The key informants from the Orthodox Christians and Muslims asserted that Muslims and Christians interact peacefully in social and economic affairs by accepting their differences. For instance, Mohammed (Mohammed Musa, 2010) stated that celebrating religious holidays, participating and organizing wedding ceremonies, helping each other in times of hardship are examples of manifestations of religious tolerance between the two religions. Religious leaders in the focus group discussions of both Muslims and Orthodox Christians explained that in *yetut abat*<sup>8</sup>, inter-marriage, drinking and eating together, participating in various social relations as well as helping each other in time of construction of churches and mosques was a typical example of religious tolerance in Gondar town. The Dejeselam website<sup>9</sup> has also confirmed that 'Churches and mosques

8 *Yetut abat* is a means of forging relation between individuals who do not have blood ties.

9 Dejeselam is an Orthodox Christians' web site writing on religious matters.

sprawl together and, with a history of inter-marriage, many Ethiopians boast about a long period of religious tolerance.'

Ayele (Ayele Anawte, 2010) explained the harmonious relationship between the two religious groups as follows:

*My friend, who is in the federal government, told me that a foreigner came to visit Ethiopia and asked him where the Christian community lived. My friend was confused and told him that there isn't any division between Christian and Muslim communities here in Ethiopia. He told the foreigner that the Ethiopian people live together without any division and stratification of religion. Even the followers of two religions live in one house together.*

However, the trend of their relation is changing towards tension and confrontation in recent times due to fundamentalism, provocative preaching and competition over resources (Hussien, 2006). The long-standing cultural affinities between Ethiopian Christians and Muslims, questions of land inheritance, and social and kinship organization may have been the main reason for this pattern of oscillation. Abbink (1998:110) states the situation as follows:

*Indeed, in recent years, after the 1991 change of regime, these very patterns of tolerance (in Wollo and elsewhere) have been the target of a movement of itinerant teachers/preachers of 'true Islam'. In 1994 during interviews in the Aliyu Amba area (a traditional mixed border-area in east-central Ethiopia where Islamic and Christian people live together in the villages), it was remarked to me by some people that their village had been visited by strangers from Aliyu Amba who asked them to reduce their contacts and co-operation with the Christians, and to reinforce the 'Muslim character' of their village and their way of life.*

Currently, the religious tolerance between the two religions is gradually deteriorating. The 2010 report of the Regional Administrative and Security Affairs Bureau of the Amhara region stated that the present incidences of religious disagreement and contradiction among religious people have increased. The report stated that in towns such as Gondar, Dessie, Kemise, Chagni and Mota conflicts and destructive trends were manifested, and hostile relations which were not known before are being created. Both the participants of focus group discussions and key informants from the Orthodox Christians and Muslims revealed that the problem is not only in Gondar town but also in Ethiopia in general. Muslims who took part in the focus group discussions and their key religious leaders stated that religious tension and conflict in Ethiopia is the current feature of the country and, areas like Jimma, Gondar, Dessie, Dire Dawa, and Harar are typical examples.

All participants in this study who assert the existence of religious tolerance between Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Gondar town expressed their worries about the deterioration of tolerance from time to time. Hussein (2008) argued that there are occasional frictions and clashes between followers of the two religions and that such confrontation undermine peaceful interaction. The writer further affirmed that the potential and actual confrontation between the two religions at this moment is characterized by recurrent tensions, misunderstandings and confrontations. Today religion in Ethiopia is becoming a source of conflict and a cause for loss of life (Addis Adams<sup>10</sup>, 2010). Hence, it is necessary to assess the cause, pattern and impact of religious intolerance (Levine, 2008). It is worth discussing the 'current sue and tension' of inter-religious relation in Ethiopia. Discussing the current religious tension and confrontation does not mean denying the long culture of tolerance of the Ethiopian Christians and Muslims (Hussien, 2006). So, it is important to assess the causes of intolerance and hostile relations between followers of both religions in the area.

Despite the long history of amicable relations between the Muslims and Orthodox Christians in Gondar town, a new trend of tension and conflict has emerged since 1995. The Muslims demand for land to build a mosque in *Kebele* 18 of Gondar town was not responded to by officials in a welcome manner. Instead of giving them land free from religious possession, the officials, knowingly or unknowingly, tried to give plots of Christians to Muslims. This caused tension between the Christians and Muslims, which later escalated to the destructive conflict of 2009 briefly described hereunder.

### **3.2. The 2009 Incident of Religious Violence between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims**

In Gondar town, there is an open space located west of the main road which leads to Gondar University, east of Qaha River, South of the agricultural center of the town, and North of Gondar Teachers' College. This place was granted to the church to celebrate Epiphany for the royal family during the reign of King Yosetoes. Since then, the successive regimes did not claim to take over the land from the holding of the church. After the coming to power of the recent regime, the ever increasing Muslim community demanded land for building mosques for their formal worship. Convinced by the demand, the City Administration, in 1995, decided to lease a plot of land to the Muslims to construct a mosque. This decision has the rationale to realize the constitutional right of worship. The administration should have given the Muslims a place in a free area or under the state holding but it granted them a plot of land from the church holding that was used to celebrate Epiphany for centuries. Whatever the case was, the Muslims obtained a site map and a plan to construct the mosque.

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10 Addis Adams is a weekly newspaper published every Saturday.

One may ask why Muslims wanted to construct their mosque in such a conflicting place. The Muslim focus group discussants explained that the city officials were the agents who enticed the Muslims to use that land. In the first place, land is under the possession of state and the public. This implies that Muslims were convinced about the decisions of officials without reconsidering the intentions of their Christian brothers and sisters. Consequently, the claim on this plot of land has led to disagreement and tension since 1995. The problem would have been solved in time if the officials were genuine to promote peace between the two communities. Because of the negligence of officials and lack of vigilance among the two communities, the tension gradually was transformed into a conflict in 2009. Whether this has been done deliberately or by accident, it has left a scar on the community causing a draconian loss.

The immediate cause of the conflict was attributed to the bellicose act of some unknown individuals. According to focus group discussants from the Orthodox Christians, the 2009 clash was flared up due to the throwing of a stick of *chat* on the Ark of the Covenant (*Tabot*) during the Epiphany celebrations. Following this event, mosques and shops were damaged, business centers were closed and many Muslims were in crisis. Life was precarious and gloomy for the Muslims and their business during that time. In return, the Muslims had isolated the Christians by denying them access to materials in their shops including bread. In response to this, the church bought six bakeries and boycotted buying items from the Muslims.

In addition to the Epiphany place, Muslims had tried to build a new mosque in another *kebele* in front of Saint Gabriel and in the middle of the dwelling area of Christians without the knowledge and permission of the city officials. The Orthodox Christians opposed the project and brought the case to the local administrators. Christians who took part in the focus group discussion explained that the attempt to build a new mosque in front of Saint Gabriel and in the middle of the residential area of Christians was intentionally made to provoke the Orthodox community. When the administrators later decided that the attempt should stop, the conflict between Christians and Muslims started getting worse.

Moreover, the conflict was exacerbated by factors that included provocative religious propagation, new identity consciousness, history, governance problem, national religious effect, fundamentalism, etc. These factors are dealt with in detail in the following sections.

### 3.3. Causes for Religious Intolerance and Tension

#### 3.3.1. Provocative Religious Propagation

One of the purposes of religious propagation is to help followers lead their life in a peaceful way with others. Andreas (2008) also supported this idea and stated that the

source of religious tolerance lay in the theological discourses, preaching, texts and doctrine of different religious beliefs. Conversely, provocative religious preaching is widely conducted through CD or VCD which may cause religious tensions. Apart from face-to-face provocative propagations, such denigration is manifested via electronic media like the above or others as well as through wearing symbolic clothes that have negative impact on the state of harmonious inter-religious interactions.

Christian and Muslim focus group participants blamed each other for the provocative preaching and publications. Most Muslim participants explained that some religious books are causes for religious tensions and intolerance between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Ethiopia in general and in Gondar in particular. As they stated, such books with their abusive language about Islam such as criticizing the Holy Quran and Allah and categorizing Muslims as fundamentalists and terrorists have very harmful effects on the Muslims. *Lemin alselemukum* [why I did not convert to Islam] was mentioned as an example. Hussein (2006) also criticized the author of the book by arguing that it attacked and ridiculed the doctrines and practices of Islam and hence aroused indignation and protest by Muslims. The Muslim focus group discussion participants, however, did not accept that their religion encourages confrontation with others. Hajji Omer Ahmed (Hajji Omer Ahmed, 2010) explained this in the following manner:

*If a person preaches in provocative words, we conclude that he/she is against the Holy Quran. We categorize him as a shifita (bandit) against his religion. Provocative words and denigrating others' religion is not the rule of Holy Quran. Preaching the words of Allah and Prophet Mohammed is the only thought of Islam.*

There are also provocative preaching against Muslims and their teachings which could be evidenced by sayings like '*Tenes islam liwerrih new*' [literally means 'Rise! The Muslims are going to invade you'], '*Bagerachin ingida hayimanot aschegeren*' [literally means 'An alien religion has caused us a problem in our town'], and '*yeslam iristu Mecca, yamora hagaru warka*' [literally means 'Mecca is the home of the Muslims and the Oak tree is the home of the eagles']. Such provocative speeches used by religious teachers may ignite bad feelings that instigate animosity and apathy of one group against the other. The result of such provocative teaching is denigration and social stigma. In turn, this denigration and stigma leads to frustration and conflict.

Bantyederu Tessefa (Bantyederu Tessefa, 2010) admitted that preachers use provocative language for the purpose of giving awareness to their followers regarding Islamic fundamentalism that perpetrated the recent terrifying incidents against the church. Due to this, the Christians become skeptical towards every Muslim, and this leads to further erosion of religious dialogue and understanding.

Focus group discussants from the Orthodox Christians also added that Muslims are preaching to their followers not to shake hands with Christians and denounce the practice of inviting Christian friends to Muslim wedding ceremonies. They further alleged that provocative Muslim religious publications are contributing to the conflict between the followers of the two religions. Books, magazines, newspapers and pamphlets are alleged to be pointing against the Orthodox Christians that are often blasphemous. Books like 'Jesus is the servant of the Prophet Mohammed' '*eyesus fetari neweni*' (Is Jesus God?) '*Yehamere tewahedo kitfet*' ('*the lies of Hamare Tewahedo*') are some of the provocative publications that eroded tolerance. This is considered as an indication of widespread provocative religious preaching. As a matter of fact, provocative preachings and propagation are continually intensifying, (Addis Admas, 2010) which, in turn, aggravates inter-religious intolerance and tension in the area. Such kind of propagation has the tendency to 'instigate or exacerbate conflict' between the two religious groups (Mohammed, 2010).

Bantyeleru supports this saying:

*On my part, I do not want to hear provocative religious preaching and publications even in my religion. Responses to provocative religious propagations like those by Dr. Zaker and other publications are not good for the peaceful coexistence between the two religions. They are not the best solution and do not control counter-provocations. They rather broaden the scope of conflict between the two religions.*

The reasons behind the expansion of provocative preaching and publications include absence of legitimacy, absence of binding laws, and government's weakness to take preventive action. The first reason is that different groups denounce the competence and legality of religious leaders. Ayele (Ayele Anawte, 2010) and the focus group participants from the Sabbath schools of Gondar town explained the erosion of religious leaders legitimacy as an attribute resulting from maladministration, lack of transparency, and inefficiency in managing religious matters. The ensuing consequence is the proliferation of provocative religious publications and preaching. These publications and preaching have deleterious effects that destroy the existing societal values and assets. The loss of legitimacy of religious leaders meant that any individual who is capable of publishing religious books or disseminating preaching can write or disseminate on behalf of his or her religion without being controlled by the religious institutions.

The second reason is the absence of legal framework to control provocative religious preaching and publications. There is no legal provision in the criminal code to take corrective measures against those who disturb the peace of the community by disseminating vitriolic preaching and publications that cause conflict between the followers of the two religions.

The law does not provide appropriate legal sanction against those who write and preach by denigrating other religions. Most informants from the Orthodox Christians complain against the incumbent government for its unfair treatment of Christians, while enforcing the law. They alleged that security forces are not able to prevent provocations that lead to discord. Even after the conflicts flare up, they react to extinguish the fire usually in favor of the Muslims.

The other reason is the government's weakness to take timely preventive measures to contain conflicts before it occurs. The government's justification for lack of timely response seems to be grounded in the misconception regarding the constitutional principle that defines the separation of state and religion. Responsible government bodies assume that they should not interfere in religious affairs for religion and state are separate institutions. Thus, such understanding leads to disorder and the abuse of the concept and practice of freedom of religion.

The government, however, needs to interfere in such matters, because the government has the duty to maintain order by preventing criminal acts before they arise. From this vantage point, government bodies have the responsibility to intervene in areas that are likely to lead to disturbances. This does not mean that government bodies are dictating to them what to worship, but how to exercise their freedom without violating the freedom of others.

### **3.3.2. Religious Extremism**

In the context of the study area, both the Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and Muslims believe that religious extremism is one of the causes of the conflict between the two religions. However, from the Orthodox Christians point of view, religious extremism alludes to the Islamic religion. All the Orthodox Christian respondents who participated in focus group discussion reckoned that the reason behind the conflict between Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Gondar town is Islamic extremism.

Though the Muslim key informants and focus group discussants believed that religious extremism could be a cause for intolerance between the two religions, they stated that they have strongly been discontented by the wrong perception of Orthodox Christians with regard to Islamic extremism. According to Muslim informants, associating religious fundamentalism only with Islam and concluding 'all Muslims are extremists' will hurt the feelings of the Muslim communities. This attitude created frustration and despair in the Muslim quarter in Gondar town. As a matter of fact, Muslims misconceive Christians as a threat to their security. This misconception could ultimately lead to discord and intolerance.

The key informants from the local and regional administration believed that some organizations have emerged under the name of Islam. For example, the Muslim Youth League<sup>11</sup>, which is a fanatic organization, moves in the country without the recognition of the Islamic Affairs Office. Ayele (Ayele Anawte, 2010) explained that this group has played destructive roles in the name of the Muslim youth. It has a hidden agenda and has already tried to put it into practice in Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP) and Oromia regional states.

### 3.3.3 New Identity Consciousness

New identity consciousness on the part of the Muslims is a factor for the conflict between the Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Gondar town (Amhara National Regional State/ANRS/report, 2009). Abbink (1998:110) states this in the following way:

*The 'quest for identity' is an expression that can be applied to the efforts of Ethiopian Muslims to be recognized, to organize, and to raise their position in the country towards parity with the Christians, who have been politically and culturally dominant from the fourth century until the 1970s. This quest has been fraught with difficulties of an historical and political nature.*

The key informants and participants in the focus group discussion of the Orthodox Christians explained that the dressing and preaching style, intensive construction of mosques, religious schools as well as the returning of Muslims home from other countries are considered to be the manifestations of the new Muslim identity which could be a threat to Christianity in Ethiopia.

Some of the allegations forwarded against Muslims seem unreasonable. It is the Muslims' right accorded by the constitution to worship and manifest their religious activities without any restriction as far as they do not disturb the order of the society. The provocative actions and allegations against Muslims should be corrected without further delay. On the other hand, efforts must be made to raise the awareness of both Christians and Muslims regarding religious freedoms stipulated in the Constitution of the country.

Hussien (2006:16) stated the new identity of Muslims in the following way: 'Islamic forms of dress, greetings, display of Islamic discipline, emergence of a new and vigorous form of Islamic preaching with the opening of Islamic schools and colleges, books and travel agencies are the current expression of Islamic identity in Ethiopia.'

The new 'identity consciousness' has increased the understanding of religious followers

11 Muslim youth league is an informal Muslim religious organization which mobilizes the Muslim youth of Ethiopia.

about the Islamic doctrine (Eyayu, 1990). In the same way, Abbink (1998) stated that the Ethiopian Muslims have, in recent years, gone through a phase of revivalism and self-assertion. Hajji Nurhussien (Hajji Nurhussien Dawed, 2010) explained the new identity of Islam in the following way: 'Broadening and understanding knowledge in the current religious education have helped us to answer the questions of who we are, how we should live and in what way believers should exercise or manifest their religion.'

The new identity consciousness of Muslims is attributed to globalization of information technology. Modern technology has significantly contributed to the formation of the new Islamic identity. The world is getting interconnected through electronic media such as satellite television and the internet. Ethiopians are also exposed to such modern communication media and are influenced both positively and negatively. The possibility of observing and hearing what the Islamic way of life looks like in the outside world has made believers that think the local Islamic way of life as impure and perverted. This, in turn, ushers in adherence to fostered new Islamic identity that is observed through the new technologies.

Abbink (1998:113) expressed the nexus of globalization and identity formation as follows:

*It is likely that such local-level developments - which can, however, only be understood in the changing configuration of a globalizing Islam that is expanding under new social and political conditions - will reshape the social fabric of Islamic societies in Ethiopia and the nature of Muslim identity and identification in the country. Villagers will be drawn into a wider debate, initiated by globally oriented scriptural Islamic community leaders or missionaries, on Islamic ideals and practice. The present climate in Ethiopia of politicizing everything, from personal identity and choice of friends to economic activity and elementary development work, will enhance this development.*

Hussein (2006) too, appreciated the new Islamic identity that is acquired by different means of communication. He also expressed his resentment about the conception of Christians against the new identity. The new expressions of Islamic identity aroused subtle and popular reactions from some Christians. Hussein (2006) also argues that, the Orthodox Christians consider the Muslims that acquire the new identity as aliens who should not take root in Ethiopia.

However, unlike the explanations and position taken by the above scholars, Deacon Muluken (Muluken Kassa, 2010) views the new Muslim identity as a threat to the peaceful coexistence and tolerance of the two religions. The fact that fundamentalists who committed atrocities on Christians in various parts of the country are those who display and staunchly support the new form of identity has resulted in the castigation of all those who exhibit the above identities as fundamentalists.

The Orthodox Christians who participated in focus group discussion and the key informants even consider the new form of Islamic identity as one that aims at transforming the Ethiopian state into an Islamic one. For them, the new sect is very different from the existing Islamic thought both in approach towards and accommodation of tolerance. The new sect promotes provocative teaching and instigates conflict between the two religious groups, whereas the old and existing sect promotes coexistence and tolerance. That is why the Christian communities conceive the newly emerged Islamic sects as a threat to their religion and country. This perception contributed to the tension between the adherents of the two religions in the face of absence of proactive government management of the issue.

New identity consciousness also creates another controversy between the youth and religious leaders. The former are the ones who are easy prey to the new identity that is not supportive of tolerance. Some of the informants from the Orthodox Christians and the Muslim religious leaders explained that lack of spirituality is a cause for the intolerance and tension between the two religions in the area. The focus group participants of Muslims and Orthodox Christians stated that the youth is out of control because they are very emotional and sensitive to everything. Most youth consider the tradition of religious leaders as outdated and illiterate. Conversely, most religious leaders also argue that the youth practice their religion without spirituality. They claim that the present cause of the religious intolerance and tension is the youth of the two religions in Ethiopia in general and in Gondar in particular. The focus group discussants from both Muslims and Orthodox Christians argued that the competition increases the 'religiosity' of the youngsters not in the sense of becoming devout to what the religion demands but in a manner that symbolizes the strength of their religion.

Ademe (Ademe Mohammed, 2010) briefly explains this in the following way:

*Are the youth really following Christianity? Do they really follow Islam? It is doubtful. Lack of spirituality and tolerant attitude from the youth is a cause of the religious intolerance in the area.*

In the same way, liqe liqawent<sup>12</sup> Ezera (Liqe leqawenet Ezera Addisu, 2010) expressed the trend of the new generation as follows:

*There is a gap between the present generation and our ancestors. Our generation has nothing inherited to take the legacy of our forefathers. Most of us did not have the motivation to read and know what the peaceful coexistence of our ancestors looked like and the mystery behind their culture of tolerance. Without a father, there is no son or daughter; without history, there is no generation. Breaking such kind of relation means building a house without a base.*

12

Liqe leqawenet is a title given by the church to those qualified in all church education.

*Our generation is like a castle built on sand. That is why religious intolerance and tension prevailed in Ethiopia in general and in Gondar in particular. In the context of Gondar, if someone blames our ancestors and what they did, the statue will condemn him/her.*

Finally, local and regional officials have been convinced that the elders have deep religious knowledge and the youth also have access to modern education and knowledge. In this view point, if the knowledge of the elders and the potential of the youth can be exploited together systematically, it is possible to attain peaceful environment for the two religious groups. If there is peace and stability, the government can speed up its development goal instead of wasting its time and resource in resolving and mediating conflicts between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims.

The emerging Islamic fundamentalism and flourishing of mosques in Gondar seems a factor of articulating Muslims' identity. This new trend breeds a perception of *Islamophobia* on the Orthodox Christian community. The new Islamic identity formation and Christians phobia has denuded the existing tolerance between the two religious groups.

Religious celebrations are conducted not only for the sake of their spiritual values but also for giving vent to the prevailing competition. The Orthodox Christians, for example, fly national flags with crosses on them on roads close to the place where the religious celebration is held, especially during Epiphany. May be they are signifying their originality to the country thereby expressing their nationalist orientations or articulating their commitment to the country or at worst may be symbolizing others as uncommitted to the country. Liqe Liqawent Ezera (Liqe leqawenet Ezera Addisu, 2010) stated that the challenges of inter-religious tolerance tends to give a clue about their action. Consequently, a clear dichotomy is being created between the followers of different religions and we are on the way to losing the common Ethiopian values that hold us together. He asserted that it is necessary to say "We are this kind of people as Chinese and that kind of people as Ethiopians."

From this, what can be inferred is the fact that the competition also involves deconstructing the foundations upon which the Ethiopian state is built. The Muslim magazine entitled *Bi'er* clearly affirms this fact when it asserts that the reaction of Christians emanates from the failure to accept the role other religions play in the Ethiopian identity within the existing situation (Bi'er, 2002, no.7) Ethiopian identity has been seen from the perspective of one religion and challenging this and manifesting a genuine Muslim identity relegates the Muslims as radicals (Bi'er, 2002, no.7).

Whether this idea is representative of the Muslim population at large or the radical element is unclear. Yet the alternative identity that fills the vacuum seems to be contested

as each group comes up with identities that are neither acceptable nor worthy of consideration by the other. The product of such deconstruction will be unpredictability, insecurity and violence of various sorts.

### 3.3.4. Lack of Good Governance in Managing Religious Issues

Lack of good governance is another factor for the prevailing religious problems causing conflict between Orthodox Christians and Muslims in the study area (ANRS report, 2009). Lack of good governance is manifested in different forms; namely, partiality, failure to resolve problems, diverting religious issues into politics, and failure to give proper certificate of ownership of religious places to build churches and mosques as well as of a celebration place.

Partiality of government officials is one of the current problems of good governance. As a result, the 'abuse of power in favor of a particular religion was a cause for the religious tension and confrontation of the two religions' (Mohammed, 2010). The local leaders and administrators of the town give places for religious celebration and construction of churches and mosques without analyzing the social impact of doing so. Most focus group discussants from the Orthodox Christians argued that the system of accountability that checks those who abuse government policy on the basis of their interest is not adequately operating. The participants concluded that some officials failed to fulfill their responsibility.

Kelemwork (Kelemework Ashagre, 2010) expressed the effect of partiality as follows:

*This is not the problem of the followers of the two religions .The country has been governed with a system of laws. Accordingly, when the Muslims used the land of the Christians the authorized body should have ordered them to respect the right of Christians. The problem in our area is due to the open space of Epiphany which belongs to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church but given to the Muslims.*

Lack of timely response to the demands of religious institutions is the other manifestation of lack of good governance in Gondar town. Three letters that demanded a solution to the conflicting space were written by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Ecclesiastical Office of North Gondar Administrative Zone to the City Administration in 1995. The letters recommended that the local administration should pay serious attention before violent conflict takes place between the followers of both religions. They also warned that giving a space that has traditionally been used for Epiphany celebration to others for the constructing of a mosque was illegal. However, the City Administration and the Mayor's Office did not give serious attention to the issue until the conflict of 2009.

Another letter was written in 2008 to the President of the Amhara Regional State by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Ecclesiastical Office of North Gondar Administrative Zone. The letter complained about the lack of transparency and goodwill on the part of the administration in licensing religious places in accordance with the land lease regulation. The letter further requested for the intervention of the Regional State to handle the issue in a peaceful manner. The President then sent a letter to Gondar Administration Office commenting that if they gave the place to followers of another religion without any discussion with the concerned, then it should be understood as a problem of good governance.

Furthermore, in the letter from the President, the Gondar Town Administration was asked to check if the place had been used for Epiphany celebrations, for how long, and the alternative options suggested if the place is to be given to the Muslims.

Although there was a significant level of tension between the two religions, the Town Administrators and the Police Department reckoned that the problem of the two religions had been solved. Almost all reports of Gondar Town Administrators to the Regional State Security and Administration Office showed that both religions in Gondar town have agreed and decided to reserve the Epiphany celebration place for investment purpose.

Furthermore, most informants and focus group discussants explained that the local administrators saw the religious confrontation as an attempt of subverting national elections. This idea might seem convincing because the conflict happened on the eve of the election and the ruling party was busy organizing the election process. At this time, the opposition political parties on the one hand and the conflicting religious groups on the other were fanning the conflict in the town. Therefore, it could be plausible to categorize the claimants as actors who were subverting the electoral process. Even if they did not have political objectives, the time factor between their claim and the electoral politics may force the ruling party to believe that the religious claimants were agents of opposition political parties. The participants added that diverting the attention of religious conflict into another issue would not solve the real problem of the two religions. Hussein (2006) also argued that diverting the problems either intentionally or unintentionally results in further widening the scope of the religious tensions.

Finally, the failure of the government to provide a proper license of ownership to the religious groups was one of the problems that aggravated the conflict. Until now, no party has a proper certificate of ownership of the place.

### **3.3.5. Competition over Ritual and Burial Sites**

Competition over ritual and burial sites is another cause of conflict between the Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Gondar town (ANRS report, 2009). The

2009 Amhara National Regional State report stated that there was a problem on the provision of land for ritual and burial purposes. Hussien (2006) also concurs with this in arguing that there were some occasional disputes between the Christians and Muslims over the acquisition of religious sites.

The 2009 incident clearly indicates the nature and dynamics of competition over ritual places. Officials of the municipality have licensed the Epiphany celebration quarters to Muslims for the construction of a mosque and a religious school. At the beginning, the land was fenced and Christians were not aware of what was going on there. But later on, it was discovered that the land was ready for the construction of a mosque. The Orthodox Christians of the town went out in mass to destroy the fence and took control of the land. At that time, both the local and the regional government officials decided that the land should be free from religious activities, and that it should be used for investment purpose. However, the decision neither satisfied the interest of the members of the two religions nor rendered justice to them.

According to Orthodox Christians who participated in the FGD, the religious intolerance became prevalent as a result of the unfair provision of land holdings of the church to the Muslims. These participants and other informants explained that the intensive construction of mosques was to make the number of mosques equal to that of the churches that were built since ancient times. 'Counting the number of mosques and churches' is one of the major criteria of the competition between the two religions (Mohammed, 2010).

Moreover, the participants added that most Muslims in the town have developed a feeling of deprivation in the history of Ethiopia. As a result of this, most Muslims wanted an affirmative action for redressing the past injustice via building mosques by dubious means such as changing the individual houses into mosques and abusing the officials through bribery or corruption. These participants of focus group discussion and key informants from Orthodox Christians further explained that an affirmative action is good for women and less developed regional states, but affirmative action does not work for religions in the Ethiopian context. Some of the focus group discussants from Orthodox Christians considered the construction of many mosques and religious schools in various places in Gondar town as an instrument for promoting Islamic fundamentalism. On the other hand, all Muslim focus group discussants and informants did not accept the accusations. Hussein (2006) also argued that in various parts of Ethiopia, Christians are usually opposed to the building of mosques in proximity to Churches and their residents. The Muslim informants argued that the increment of population and the absence of mosques in nearby places is the main reason for the construction of mosques. They further claim that their mosques are limited in number,

not more than twenty and that these were constructed through the relentless efforts of few Muslim believers without any support from the government.

The town's authorities were convinced that the site where Epiphany was celebrated was leased to the Muslims unlawfully in 1995. Conventionally, the place was under the holding of the church before 1995. However, the then Mayor granted part of the site to the Muslims to construct a mosque without the knowledge of the officials of the town and the zone. Since the Mayor acted alone, other officials of the town and zone condemned the act of transferring the land to the Muslims unlawfully. Cognizant to the wrong doing and upon the agreement of the parties, the municipality charged and dismissed these corrupt officials and decided to relocate the site for investment. According to the agreement, half of the land was given to the Orthodox Church and half was reserved for investment. The Muslims were given a plot of land in a different area instead.

Although the authorities reported that the reallocation of the land for investment was done with the consent of the religious groups, the protagonists complained that the action was taken without their knowledge. At the same time, the agreement was neither documented nor accepted by the contending parties. Moreover, the authorities did not take a corrective measure except removing the corrupt officials. The result was that the two communities relapsed into conflict again.

As regards the burial site, both the Orthodox Christians and Muslims use proximate areas which are not clearly demarcated. For this reason, they seldom compete and conflict in this area. For example, Orthodox Christians and Muslims clashed over a burial place which resulted in the death of a Muslim. Consequently, the Muslims held a demonstration in Gondar town raucously shouting 'Allah Akbar.'

### **3.3.6. Historical Factors**

Most Orthodox Christian informants explained that the misconception associated with the past is one of the causes of religious intolerance and tension between the two religious groups in Gondar town. The key informants from Orthodox Christians explained that the Ethiopian government and the Muslims reckon that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is the institution that benefited most in Ethiopian history. Focus group discussants from the Orthodox Christians, on the other hand, argued that different emperors had used the Ethiopian Orthodox Church for their own political purposes and expressed the of view that Orthodox Christianity was not the most privileged religion in Ethiopia. Both the Muslims and the current government tend to blame the Orthodox Church for the past political oppressions in the country. The discussants further stated that the Muslims assumed that the Orthodox Church was responsible for the deprivation of

their religious freedom since early times in this country. They added that the Muslims want to redress the past injustice against them by depriving the Christians of their rights with the support they get from the government.

As indicated in the theoretical framework of this thesis, participants from the Orthodox Christians feel that there is a relative deprivation for Orthodox Christians now in comparison with their past privileges. It can be argued that the fact that Orthodox Christianity was favoured and the other religions were disregarded was the main cause for the religious intolerance and tension in our country in general and in Gondar town in particular.

On the government side, the Christians complaint is taken as a false allegation because the flourishing of Mosques and Muslims' practicing their religion has emanated from the constitutional principle of 'freedom of worship.' The government is impartial and remains impartial regarding religions so far as every religious group practices its religion in line with the rights and freedoms enshrined in the constitution. Ayele (Ayele Anawte, 2010) has argued that granting freedom of religion gives Muslims the opportunity to preach their doctrine, expanding their religion in terms of followers and the building of mosques and various religious schools in different parts of the country. In his view, all these achievements of Muslims are mainly due to the full utilization and exercise of freedom of religion as articulated in the constitution.

Hussein (2006) is also of the view that in some way there are various degrees of success in satisfying the aspiration of Ethiopian Muslims. He further states that all these successes were not due to the special treatment accorded to Muslims; it is rather the result of the political and economic liberalization of the country. Similarly, focus group discussants from the Muslims confirmed that getting a small place of worship for the Muslims in Gondar town was not charity from the local administrators and regional state officials; it was rather the result of the unreserved commitment of the Muslims to fight for their rights.

The other historical factor that causes religious intolerance and tension between the two religions is the rhetoric "Ethiopia is a Christian Island" (ANRS report, 2009). All Orthodox Christians who participated in FGD believed that Ethiopia is a Christian Island. Some of the justifications for this are: first, 80% of the cultural heritage of the country and the sources of revenue that comes from it is owned by the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church. Pertinent to this, Ethiopia is one of the pioneers that preached Christianity to the world. Second, Orthodox Christianity was the national religion of Ethiopia until the 1974 revolution. Third, Ethiopia is surrounded by Muslim neighbors, which means a Christian country surrounded by Muslim neighbors. This, however, does not mean that other religions do not and should not exist in Ethiopia.

The Muslims, on their part, consider the idea that 'Ethiopia is a Christian Island' as a means of relegating ownership of this country only to the Christians. Muslim informants in the focus group discussion explained that the statement 'Ethiopia is a Christian island' is upsetting and denies the citizenship of others who are the sons and daughters of the country. Ahmed (2008) also argued that the view that 'Ethiopia is a Christian island' is not supported and proved by substantiated historical evidences. In line with this, Abbink (1998:113) also contended that "Ethiopian Muslims do not derive from 'Arab stock' but are indigenous, belonging to the various ethnic communities of the country."

Hajji Nurhussien (Hajji Nurhussien Dawed, 2010) also reflected on the notion of 'Ethiopia is a Christian Island' in the following way:

*In what way is Ethiopia an island of Christianity? Who authorized and ordered Ethiopia as a Christian island? One cannot see Ethiopia as a Christian island even on the map or in its geographical location. Ethiopia is an island of nations, nationalities and people with variety of religions. Such kind of discrimination have caused the schism between the two religions in Gondar town.*

The other contributing cause for religious intolerance between the two religions in the area is the history of King Nejash (Hussien, 2006). In the fifth century, there was a king called Nejash who welcomed people who fled their country because of persecution.

According to the focus group discussants from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the reference to King Nejash by the Muslims is an attempt to Islamize Ethiopian history. Informants from Orthodox Christians explained that the basic goal of such fabrication of history is a dream to establish an Islamic state in Ethiopia. The discussants also argued that Muslims are fabricating a pseudo Muslim king in an attempt to compete for a place in Ethiopian history. There are neither archaeological findings nor written history to support their argument. For example, the archaeological findings attest that the coins used by the then society carried the symbol of a cross which indicates the existence of a Christian King, not a Muslim King. On the basis of this evidence, respondents forwarded the idea that Ethiopians have welcomed and protected Quarish immigrants from persecution. This means Ethiopians hosted the immigrant Muslims on humanitarian grounds. This does not mean that they were converted to Islam.

On the other hand, most Muslim informants and focus group discussants explained that next to Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia was the second country to accept Islam because of King Nejash. The Muslim informants expressed that the conversion of Nejash to Islam was a fact, and that he was a follower of Islam but this has no connection to the allegations of Christians that Muslims desire to establish an Islamic Ethiopian State.

The controversy is backed by the existence of different controversial sources on the history of the King. For instance, Fiquet (2008) suggests that a reasonable historical balance is necessary for the peaceful inter-religious interactions between the two religions. When the historical factor is examined, there is rhetoric without evidence that aggravates the tension between the religious groups. The story of ‘Christian island’ claimed by Christians has been an outdated idea that creates siege mentality among Christians. The same is true of the story of Nejash. There is no historical evidence that shows that Nejash was a king in Ethiopia. This person might be a converted Muslim. However, considering him as king is distorting Ethiopian history. So the historical controversy is a result of dubious perceptions and rhetorical conceptions.

### 3.3.7. The Effects of National Religious Problems

Religious problems that prevail at the national level have a negative impact on inter-religious relations in Gondar town (ANRS report, 2009). The incidents of religious confrontation in Oromia, in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP) and in different parts of Amhara Region and other regions have a negative spillover effect on the situation in Gondar town.

Muluken Kassa (Muluken Kassa, 2010) explained the spillover effect of religious intolerance in other areas in the following manner:

*The Gondar University was an example. The students were aggressive over what happened in Jimma. Most Orthodox Christian students have refused to eat from café for one day. There was a religious holiday of Muslims which was celebrated after a week of the incident at Jimma. On that religious holiday, almost all Orthodox Christians refused to eat and drink from the students’ café. They believed that eating and drinking from the café on that holiday was like eating and drinking the blood and flesh of their brothers and sisters who lost their lives for their religion. Besides, the religious confrontation of Dessie had also an impact on Gondar town. At that time, some Orthodox believers considered Muslims as an enemy for the reason that their brothers and sisters lost their lives for their religion.*

Nurhussien (Hajji Nurhussien Dawed, 2010) likewise, explained the impact of these incidents in the following statement:

*It has a negative impact on the inter-faith relations between the two religions. For example, in the south region we heard the burning of the Holy Quran and using it as toilet paper. All this upset and annoyed the people who are Muslims in Gondar town.*

The contexts and social settings of conflicts between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims in different parts of Ethiopia may differ significantly. But the raging problem throughout the country lacks attention of the government. It is a truism that religious

identities are pervasive and the problems have spillover effect across borders. Unless the government takes the necessary measures, the conflict may flare up throughout the country.

### 3.3.8. The Impact of Globalization and External Involvement

Ephraim (2008:115) argued, "Religious conflicts were fanned by outside forces and interests." Almost all focus group discussants of the Orthodox Christians and informants from the same group agreed that the high involvement of Saudi Arabia, Libya, Pakistan and other Middle East countries is a cause for the religious conflict between the Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Ethiopia in general and Gondar town in particular. Part of the finance for religious activity of Islam is generated from foreign assistance. This has provoked hostile remarks about external Arabs/Islamic influence by the Christians (Hussien, 2006).

In this regard Muluken (Muluken Kassa, 2010), stated:

*The huge money donated from the Middle East and enormous published materials are instruments for achieving the process of Arabization in Ethiopia and creating an Islamic state. The huge donated money is invested in the construction of mosques and religious schools in Ethiopia in general and Gondar town in particular. Those foreign countries are to rebuild Ethiopia as an Islamic state with Islamic political ideology by naming Islamic family, Islamic community and Islamic society.*

Erlich (2007) also confirmed that huge money comes from Saudi Arabia and other Middle East countries. Donations of publishing materials and blasphemous books from these countries are factors fuelling the religious conflict between the two religions. Hence, the involvement of other countries is another cause for the religious intolerance and tension between the Ethiopian Orthodox Christians and Muslims. Besides this, the impact of globalization is also a cause for the inter-religious conflict between the two dominant religions in Gondar town (ANRS report, 2009). What is happening at the global arena has an impact on religious interactions in Ethiopia. In today's globalized world, international issues can easily be changed into national ones. This logic applies to religious issues as well.

Behind the prevalence of peaceful coexistence and religious intolerance, different actors have played a positive or negative role. Thus, the following chapter will assess the major actors of religious intolerance and tension between the two religions.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# MAJOR ACTORS AND MANIFESTATIONS OF TOLERANCE AND INTOLERANCE

Both tolerance and intolerance are phenomena caused by human agency. Tolerance is constructive in the coexistence and cooperation between humans whereas intolerance leads to competition and destructive conflict. Human beings, both individuals and groups, are actors for tolerance as well as intolerance. This chapter elucidates the major actors (groups and individuals) who play a role in promoting tolerance and aggravating intolerance. It also tries to depict the manifestations of religious intolerance.

### 4.1. Major Actors

#### 4.1.1. Religious Leaders

Most informants from Orthodox Christians and Muslims and focus group discussants from both religions stated that most religious leaders always preach about peace, tolerance and coexistence. They explained that in times of the construction of churches, the aged Muslim religious leaders donated finance to the Christians which was also reciprocated in times of the construction of mosques. This aspect of cooperation was a sign of concord that indicated how the elderly were building mutual trust and respect among the people of the two religions.

Religious leaders are so influential to win the attitudes of their followers especially in times of disagreement. Compared to politicians, religious leaders have the power and potential to be heard and accepted. Religious leaders have played a very important role in solving religious problems. Just as diplomats and international relation specialists do, religious leaders can play a more important role in religious peace building (Yilikal, 2009). The practices of religious leaders show that their teachings and advice play a key role in the promotion of inter-religious tolerance and amicable relations between Christians and Muslims in the area.

Nevertheless, some religious leaders are responsible for the conflict between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims in the study area. The teachings of some religious leaders disseminate provocative messages that drive the faithful to a debilitating conflict. The key informants of Muslim religious leaders stated that there are few Orthodox preachers who arouse apathy and intolerance between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims. Similarly, participants in focus group discussion from the Orthodox Christians argued that religious leaders of both faiths attempt to increase their followers not by teaching the truth of their religion but by denigrating other religions.

Mera (Mera Abetew, 2010) explained this as follows:

*There are some religious leaders who have not adjusted themselves to the modern thinking. Rather than preaching what their religion says, they preach the deficiencies of other religions. Moreover, the content of their preaching emphasizes the superiority of their religion and also denigrates and discriminates against other religions. Thus, religious leaders are the actors who promote religious intolerance and tension in Gondar town.*

From the above explanation, it is possible to understand that some religious leaders promote and maintain tolerance, whereas some others aggravate intolerance by propagating vitriolic teachings. Thus, it can be inferred that religious leaders are the major actors in fuelling tolerance as well as escalating religious conflicts.

#### 4.1.2. Religion-based Associations

There are various religious groups and organizations that have played an important role in the escalation and de-escalation of religious intolerance and tension in the study area. On the part of the Orthodox Christians, there are some organizations that have played an active role for the peaceful coexistence of the two religions. For instance, Orthodox Christians who participated in the focus group discussion asserted that *Mahbare Kidusan* and *senbetes*<sup>13</sup> have always tried to cool down the emotions of the Orthodox Christian youth. Mareign (Inspector Mareign Wondeme, 2010), a police officer, confirmed that such organizations have an active role in organizing rituals and ceremonies in collaboration with the peace and security department of the town.

However, the 2010 report of the Amhara Administrative and Security Affairs Bureau has a careful statement which implies a plan to scrutinize *Mahbare Kidusan* and its conduct. The report called for further investigation of the organization. On the part of the Muslims, there are some organizations that have played an active role in the peaceful coexistence of the two religions in Gondar town. Most Muslim participants explained that the *Uluma's* councils and religious schools, called *Medresa*, have always taught ideas that promote peaceful coexistence.

On the contrary, the Muslim League, some extremist followers of *Wahhabism* and *Jematel Tekefir (Kawarja)* are the Muslim organizations that worsen the relations between Christians and Muslims. The Regional Administrative and Security Affairs Bureau has also reported that the Muslim League and followers of *Wahhabism* are the main actors in religious intolerance and tension in the area. Levine (2008) argues that there is an emergence and expansion of new fundamentalist and militant extremist groups within the Muslim and Christian communities.

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13      Senbete is a type of religious organization which deals with the social and spiritual problems of the community.

In the same vein, a newspaper called Fox News<sup>14</sup> quoting Prime Meles Zenawi's statement delivered at a press conference conducted on Saturday, March 24, 2011, accused Jematei Tekefir (Kawarja) for instigating the burning of Protestant churches in Jimma zone as follows:

*We believe that there are elements of the Jematei Tekefir (Kawarja) sect and other extremists who have been preaching religious intolerance in the various areas. In previous times, we have cracked down on Jematei Tekefir (Kawarja) because they were involved in violence. Since then they have changed their tactics and they have been able to camouflage their activities through legal channels. We knew that they were peddling this ideology of intolerance, but it was not possible for us to stop them administratively because they are within their rights. If we can find some association between what they are doing by way of preaching and what happened by way of violence, then of course we can take them to court.*

From this explanation it can be inferred that the doctrines of these three religious groups are endangering the peaceful coexistence of different religious groups because their actions and teachings violate the rule of law. They teach the members of their groups not to pay tax to the government. Both Christians and Muslims admit the existence of some extremist religious groups.

Mohammed (2010) in his MA thesis has also pointed out that these organizations preach to their followers that paying tax to the government is a sin that offends Allah. They claim that obeying the constitution and government officials is incompatible with Islamic principles (Mohammed, 2010). As a result of this teaching, their followers have refused to pay taxes to the government, attend public conferences, and participate in local development activities.

From the above discussion, one can infer that these religious groups are the major actors in religious intolerance and tension between the Orthodox Christian and Muslims.

### **4.1.3. The Role of Federal Government of Ethiopia**

The Federal Government has also drafted a provision on land for religious purposes and burial places. The draft is being evaluated at various levels by government officials, religious leaders, local elders, believers, concerned Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and other stakeholders. Previously, issues related to the provision of land for religious purpose was decided by the respective city municipal officials. In the land leasing process, the urban development office, in collaboration with the administration and security affairs office, is evaluating and assessing its societal impact. After the approval of the proclamation by the Federal government, regional and city councils are expected to implement the provisions on land for religious purposes and burial

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14 Fox News is international news which is published weekly.

places. Regional and city councils can produce their own guidelines to facilitate the implementation of the proclamation. At the lower level, rules and proclamations are enforced by committees supposed to represent the concerned bodies.

The Federal government of Ethiopia has also arranged different kinds of religious forums and conferences in different places. A national dialogue was conducted on the issue of religious tolerance in Hawassa on September 20, 2010. In that seminar, professionals, religious leaders, media personnel from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) and Islamic institutions discussed how to publish religious books, texts, VCDs and DVDs that will not affect inter-religious relations. The Federal government has also been playing a constructive role through the formation of Inter-Faith Peace Building Initiatives (IPBI).

#### **4.1.4. The Role of Amhara National Regional State**

The Amhara National Regional State has arranged a religious meeting entitled “Peace Conference on Religious Equality and Religious Tolerance”. Religious leaders and representatives as well as administrators at different levels were invited. Although religious conferences raise the awareness of the faithful and promote religious tolerance, regular religious conferences, dialogues and workshops were not conducted in this region. It is imperative to realize that conducting dialogues and workshops on regular basis would be helpful to bolster amity among followers of different religions.

Ayele (Ayele Anawte, 2010) states the positive role of the regional state as follows:

*We have established peace clubs in 5 Universities in our regional state in general and in Gondar University in particular. The main purpose of the establishment of peace clubs is to develop the value and culture of peace amongst university communities. The network of early-warning has reached kebeles, the regional state as well as the federal state. Every kebele is expected to send early-warning in their daily report about the daily security of their area.*

The local administrators of the town have sent early-warning in their daily report to the regional state. The daily reports seem to have, however, overlooked the current religious intolerance between the two religions. It was also reported that the regional state has formed peace clubs in various schools and the five Universities in the region although the efforts of the regional state has not gone far enough to address the religious conflicts.

Notwithstanding such efforts, the Regional State has so far become a passive onlooker instead of resolving the confrontation between Orthodox Christians and Muslims in the area. Religious leaders agreed to solve their problems and related issues at the religious

meeting held in Bahr Dar in 2009. At this meeting, decisions were made on eight points. They agreed to: keep the engrained culture of religious tolerance; solve the problem of inter-religious relations; establish religious forum and peace committees; give legal license to the preachers; fight fundamentalism and those people who use religion as an instrument for their political interests; and establish good governance within the religions (ANRS, 2010). However, it has not been practically implemented to this date. Thus, lack of commitment appears to be one of the challenges of realizing the agreed upon promises. Religious forums and peace committees are not yet functional both at regional level and in Gondar town. Religious conferences have not been conducted in accordance with the agreement of the meeting. All of these indicate that the resolution has remained on paper. So far, there has not been any dialogue between the two religions. The controversy over land is still not settled, and the social relations between the two religions are still in problematic.

#### 4.1.5. The Town Administrators

In spite of the efforts made by the City Administration Police Office and North Gondar Zone Administration and Security Affairs Department in addressing the confrontation, the conflict between the adversaries has continued unabated. Now, it seems that all these institutions have either ignored or are not well aware of the current religious intolerance and tension in Gondar town. Unlike these institutions, all study participants from both religious groups have indicated that the discord is not solved yet.

Some of the government officials have contributed to the prevalence of the conflict. Government officials at different positions sometimes aggravate the problems by abusing their power. The society is ravaged by the ensuing destructive effects of the conflicts. Though the town administrators have designed a strategic plan to solve the problem between the two religions, implementation of the plan has not yet started.

The aim of transformational and strategic plan of Gondar Town Administration and Security Affairs Department is to ensure the overall security of the town via community policing<sup>15</sup> and other various mechanisms of the Department. One of the provisions of the plan is to tackle the major security problems of religious intolerance between the two dominant religions of the town. Hence, the principles enshrined in the strategic plan laid favorable grounds for building tolerance between the two religious groups. However, the plan has not been implemented in accordance with provisions in the plan.

#### 4.1.6. Political Authorities

In recent times, it is a customary to hear and observe that some politicians use religion

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Community policing is a system of crime prevention and identification in collaboration with community.

for the accomplishment of political interests (Addis Raiy<sup>16</sup>, 2010). Religious issues are sensitive as they are likely to be based upon a transcendent authority. Anyone could use religion as a pretext to implement his/her agenda. Those people who have carried out a political agenda have always used religion as an instrument for the accomplishment of their mission. 'Politicization of religion' is one of the factors responsible for the religious intolerance and confrontation between the two religious groups' (Mohammed, 2010). Economically depressed and politically charged individuals have a tendency to use religion as an instrument for the accomplishment of their mission, individually or in a group (Yilikal, 2009).

The 2009 Administrative and Security Affairs Report stated that "politicians" who lost their formal political position fuel the conflict by saying Gondar is the center of Christians and showing the imperial flag of Ethiopia. However, the report did not reveal who those politicians were. Some local officials explained that those officials sacked from their position allege that the reason for their dismissal is because they are followers of this or that religion. It is a lame excuse given for the dismissal from their position to hide their weakness. In this regard, both the participants of local and regional administration confirmed this reality with an example in the context of Gondar town. It is thus plausible to argue that some political authorities have played a destructive role by kindling conflicts.

Hence, when a Christian who holds public office favors Christians and abuses his power and vice-versa that finally results in frustration, hesitation and unhealthy competition between the two religions (Mohammed, 2010).

In order to understand the level of religious intolerance, it is important to discuss the manifestations of religious intolerance between the two religions in the area.

## **4.2. Manifestations of Religious Intolerance and Tension in the Study Area**

### **4.2.1. Erosion of Social Ties and Cooperation**

All informants from both religious groups have explained that the historically generated peaceful coexistence is waning. Muslims and Christians were living in cooperation with each other sharing their happiness and sorrow. The present interaction between the two groups, however, is replete with the use of revenge, denial of greetings, termination of participation in each other's religious festival, funeral and wedding ceremonies. These social facts could be taken as manifestations of inter-religious intolerance in

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16 Addis Raiy is a magazine reflecting the voice of Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) published every other month.

Gondar town. Before the conflict, Gondar was known for hosting and accommodating different cultures and religions. However, the 2009 incident brought about a dramatic change regarding the relations between Orthodox Christian and Muslim communities. This actually seems exaggerated for one who knows Gondar before the 2009 incident. However, the mutual exclusion and intolerance is a stark reality that characterizes the Christian-Muslim relations in Gondar town since the incident.

In addition to this, the information obtained from the focus group discussants from both religions showed that accompanying and talking to each other in a peaceful way, joining in funerals, weddings and other social event is fading away at this time even between best friends belonging to different religions. This implies that social relations between members of the two religions are deteriorating.

Yilkal (2009:62) confirms the situation in the following way:

*In a situation where conditions are economically depressing and politically charged, groups and individuals may find it hard to tolerate those who are different from them or have caused them harm. In such cases, discrimination, dehumanization, repression, and violence may occur.*

Hajji Omer (Hajji Omer Ahmed, 2010) presented the dynamics of the current religious intolerance between the two religions in the following way:

*I saluted the children of the village and all of them saluted me with the exception of one child. I asked him why he did not want to salute me. He replied that it was because I am a Muslim. I asked him again who told him this and he said his parents did. Thus it is clear that, the parents of Orthodox Christians teach their children something malicious. This is the reflection of religious intolerance on the part of the Orthodox Christians.*

According to the informants, discrimination, denigration, and religious violence have been the main features of the interaction between the two religions.

Kelemework, (Kelemework Ashagre, 2010) an informant and an Orthodox religious leader, has a different view and said:

*We cannot say that the relation is completely broken because most elderly Muslims and Christians have continued their social life with tolerance. On the contrary, most Muslim youth and very few Muslim leaders do not want to live in peace with the Orthodox Christians. Though we cannot say that the relation has completely been shattered, compared to the past, our current religious tolerance is at risk.*

The two sides live in a state of mutual insecurity. Ezera (Liqe leqawenet Ezera Addisu, 2010) states this as follows:

*We are always hesitant regarding Muslims in Gondar town. We are also ready to protect ourselves. We heard that swords were imported from Egypt and Saudi Arabia which passed through Sudan and Mettema and entered Gondar. At this moment, we have no idea where the swords are. The only chance we have to prevent the occurrence of this terrible incident is to teach our people what is going on around us.*

In line with this, Wessen (Wessen Habtamu, 2010) explained the situation as follows:

*Not only in Gondar town but also in most parts of Ethiopia, most Muslims have opened Wushu or Taekwando<sup>17</sup> training centers. In principle such training centers are good for the physical development of individuals. However, opening a Wushu training center is a sign of preparation to fight with the Christians, which is a risk for the society in general. In this regard, in the context of Gondar town there are some Wushu training centers which are exclusively reserved for the Muslim trainees and the others are quite expensive for non-Muslim trainees.*

From these discussions, it is possible to understand that both Orthodox Christians and Muslim communities blame each other based on their perceptions. The Orthodox Christians feel insecure assuming that the Muslims are armed with swords to attack them.

#### **4.2.2. Exclusionary Business Practices**

A day after the 2009 incident, the Muslims closed their entire business for fear of attack and theft. This caused a severe reaction among Orthodox Christians. They thought the intention of Muslims in closing their business center, health center and bakeries was to punish the Christians and show their economic superiority. The focus group discussion participants said that it may have been to show that Muslims are economically dominant and are in control of business areas like spare parts, bakery, cloths/costumes, and that Christians are weaker in these areas. In response to this, however, the Orthodox Christians started to access commodities by organizing their own business. As Muslim informants and focus group discussants explained, the intention of opening business centers controlled by Christians is to revenge and ostracize Muslims and their business. This has eroded the chance for peaceful coexistence and religious tolerance in the area. Although the Muslims resumed their activity a day after the incident, the Orthodox Christians have continued their discriminatory business practice since then.

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17 Wushu and Taekwando are forms of karate of sports.

### 4.2.3. Boycotting

Most informants in both religions confirm that after the 2009 confrontation, boycotting the commodities of their contending party has been one of the major features of economic interaction between the two religions in Gondar town. This indicates that boycotting of the goods and services of the Muslims is another manifestation of the religious intolerance between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims in the area.

Muslims who took part in the focus group discussion argued that the Orthodox Christians stopped buying goods from the Muslims after the incident of 2009. They buy items from Muslim shops only if those items are not available with their Christian clients. They also added that such discriminatory practice is a kind of punishment for the peaceful Muslims. They also pose a question such as: *Is discriminatory action allowed in Christianity?* Muslims have played a great role in the overall development of the country in various sectors, particularly in the business sector. Hence, this kind of discriminatory business practice could be a hindrance to the development of the country in general and Gondar town in particular.

### 4.2.4. Lack of Dialogue between Religious Leaders

Lack of dialogue between religious leaders is one of the manifestations of inter-religious conflict in the town. According to religious leaders from both groups, discussion forums involving religious leaders and the community are not in place. They have also explained that religious leaders meet at government sponsored meetings that discussed governmental issues, but they never discuss religious matters. Moreover, the existing peace clubs and religious leaders' committees have not yet started functioning properly. As Muluken (Muluken Kassa, 2010) aptly puts it::

*Religious leaders have the responsibility to solve religious intolerance and tension between them. Today, we are losing our respected religious leaders. Losing a great religious leader means losing a library. Leaders should preach to their followers to sustain peaceful coexistence between different religions so that the new generation should sustain the culture of religious tolerance in Ethiopia. The basic problem in today's interaction between these two religious groups is that religious leaders never try to lay a foundation for religious tolerance.*

Thus, the informants revealed that neither of the religious groups is ready to take the initiative to discuss their problems. This implies that, lack of joint forums for discussing shared problems is one of the manifestations of religious intolerance in the town. Although it is difficult to argue that the relationship between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims is completely shattered, it is possible to say that their earlier harmonious relations are at stake.

In a nutshell, different actors have played significant roles in promoting tolerance as well as aggravating religious intolerance in Gondar town. The religious intolerance and tensions have resulted in loose social ties and cooperation, exclusionary business practices, boycotting, and lack of dialogue between religious leaders.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1. Summary and Conclusions

The main objective of this thesis was to examine the nature, causes, actors and manifestation of religious intolerance and tension between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Gondar town. For a long period of time, the culture of religious tolerance was manifested in various spheres of life such as weddings, eating and drinking together, mourning and funeral ceremonies as well as helping each other in times of construction of churches and mosques. Despite this historical fact, the current trend of inter-religious interaction between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims in the study area is characterized by recurrent tension, misunderstanding and confrontation.

Provocative religious propagation, lack of clear legal regime regarding religious matters, religious extremism, lack of understanding and misapplication of freedom of religion, new identity consciousness, lack of good governance, competition over ritual and burial sites, historical factors, national religious problems, globalization and external factors are found to be the causes of religious intolerance between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims in Gondar town. Weakness of the administrative bodies to respond promptly to the tensions has exacerbated violent religious conflicts in the area.

In Gondar town, there are different actors who have a stake in the promotion of religious tolerance between the two religions. Among these, religious leaders, religious-based associations, the Federal Government of Ethiopia, the regional state, and the town administrators and political elites are found to be the major actors promoting religious tolerance or intolerance in Gondar town.

Eroding of social ties and cooperation, exclusionary business practices, boycotting and lack of dialogue between religious leaders are observed to be the manifestation of religious intolerance and tension between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims in the town. Sometimes the conflict between the protagonists has led to loss of lives and property destruction.

Thus, religious intolerance and tension in Gondar town are manifested in violent and nonviolent forms. They have as a result caused pressing social, economic and political problems in the area.

To conclude, the researcher is aware that the review of literature, field experience and the research findings indicate that the current prevalence of religious intolerance in Gondar town and other parts of the country is challenging the long-standing religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence between the two religions. It has also confirmed the researcher's initial worries about religious intolerance in Gondar town in particular and in other parts of the country in general.

## 5.2. Recommendations

One of the principles of religious interaction is the continuation of peaceful coexistence in a society. Working for the achievement of religious tolerance in Ethiopia is the responsibility of all concerned bodies. In order to ensure the continuation of religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence in Gondar town, the following are recommended.

- The Federal Government of Ethiopia should ratify and implement the new policy on the issue of religious problems, specially, issues like providing places for the construction of churches and mosques as well as religious celebrations. This could help to guarantee each religious institution's legal right over the land thereby reducing conflicts that occur because of resources.
- Moreover, the government should enforce the law promptly and effectively to avoid all the atrocities that happen in the name of religion.
- As the request for places of religious celebrations is not resolved yet, the local administration ought to organize discussions with the communities of the two religious groups. Further, joint committees that work towards solving religious conflicts should be formed by government and non-government institutions.
- The government should assign well trained local political officials who are loyal to the constitution of both the Regional and Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE). Those officials who work for personal gains should be questioned for their irresponsible acts.
- Religious leaders have played a very important role in promoting religious tolerance in the area. They should further be committed to organizing regular religious forums and conferences to achieve religious tolerance. Thus, both the initiative and dedication on the part of religious leaders is necessary for achieving peaceful coexistence among religious groups in the study area. In addition to this, religious leaders should abstain from provocative religious propagation and publications.
- Some religious elders have well founded knowledge of their religions. This knowledge and maturity may lay a favorable foundation for tolerance and coexistence. The young generation, on the other hand, is active, hasty and

emotional. They could be utilized like a double-edged sword that can be employed for destructive as well as constructive missions. The youth have a strong potential to translate what they have planned into practice. Therefore, combining the knowledge of the religious elders and the potential of the youth will play a crucial role to foster tolerance and peaceful coexistence in the study area.

- The main objective of the activities of the peace club is to develop the value and culture of peace. This will also help to achieve the peaceful inter-faith relations among different religions. Peace clubs in schools, in universities and different government offices are potential areas that contribute to entrenching peace culture in the society. Hence, in order to enhance religious tolerance in the area, organizing effective peace clubs is of crucial importance.
- The role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CBOs) and faith-based organizations (FBOs) is also very important in promoting religious tolerance. Hence, these organizations should be encouraged to actively participate to facilitate religious tolerance in the study area.

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# Section

# 4

**Trends Of And Responses To  
Terrorism In The Horn Of Africa:  
The Ethiopian Experience**

**Muluwork Gebre Gessesse**

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFRICOM	Africa Command
AIAI	<i>Al-Itihad Al-Islamiyya</i>
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
AQ	<i>Al-Qaeda</i>
ARPCT	Alliance for Restoration of Peace and Counter Terrorism
ASWJ	<i>Ahlul-Sunnah Wa-Al Jam'a</i>
AU	African Union
CJTF-HOF	Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa
EACTI	East Africa Counter Terrorism Initiative
EC	Ethiopian Calendar
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GC	Gregorian Calendar
GPOI	Global Peace Operations Initiative
HoA	Horn of Africa
HSM	<i>Harakat al-Shabbab Mujahidin</i> (Movement of Warrior Youth)
IGAD	Inter Governmental Authority on Development
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NIF	National Islamic Front
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
TFG	Transitional Federal Government of Somalia
TSCTI	Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Initiative
UIC	Union of Islamic Courts
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USA	United States of America
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

## Abstract

The theme of the research is to probe into the nature of and responses to terrorism in the Horn of Africa, with special emphasis on Ethiopia. Using various data collection techniques and the researcher's own field experience, the research has identified multiple causes of terrorism: the collapse of the Somali state, poverty ideological differences, and religion as an organizing principle for terrorist activity. Fuelled by sophisticated international network in financing and technology, fertile grounds for the prevalence of terrorism have been created by loosely controlled and porous borders, conflicts among divided communities, and fire arms. Considering the trends, consequences, and means employed to perpetrate the act, terrorism is a serious threat to the overall well being of the sub-region. Hence, preventive and defensive mechanisms have been recommended in counter terrorism measures.

Key Terms: *Terrorism, Counter-terrorism*

# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1. Background

Recently, terrorism has become a global threat to the well being of humanity. The impact and influence of terrorism is felt in all parts of the world though there are some variations in intensity from place to place. The Horn of Africa is one of the sub-regions of Africa where the impact of terrorism is clearly felt and labeled as devastating. It is known that Ethiopia is at the heart of this sub-region and, hence, it cannot surprise anyone if Ethiopia is among the prior countries affected by terrorist acts. More specifically, it can be said that for different reasons terrorism can be mentioned as one serious threat to the national security of Ethiopia. Its consequences are felt in different economic, social and political aspects of the nation.

As time goes on, terrorist acts are getting more sophisticated through using various technological products, more capacitated in terms of finance and personnel, and broadening their coverage by leaking into different sections of the world community (see, for example, Coll, 2004). These facts indicate that some urgent and tough measures should be taken.

In the Horn sub-region, different terrorist acts have been witnessed at various times. The perpetrators are said to be both local and international terrorist groups. Since recent times, it is abundantly clear that there is a strong network of terrorist groups such as the infamous *Al-Qaeda*. The various organs of this organization are engaged in various activities including but not limited to establishing training centers, preparing plans, and providing all round support and/or sponsorship to various terrorist acts in the sub-region.

To make things worse, the countries in the sub-region do not have a common understanding regarding the so-called terrorist acts and there is visible lack of cooperation on the ground even for issues on which a consensus is reached. This again calls for measures to be taken if the situation is to improve. There are different political, geographical, and social factors that make the sub-region very favorable for terrorist activities. The factors are:

- the sub-region is one of the busiest passages of international trade,
- Somalia, which is divided among different warring factions, is found in the sub-region,

- the sub-region is one of the most poverty stricken parts of the world, and
- the existence of inter-state conflicts in the sub-region can be mentioned as examples;

The situation in Ethiopia, the most populous country of the sub-region, is even worse. The country is believed to be one of the countries that has adopted a strong stand against terrorism. This can be explained by the existence of clear and tough laws on terrorism, the various activities taken by the country on different occasions and its repeated call to other countries to be committed to the fight against terrorism. Moreover, the country is home to various international organizations including the African Union and a number of Embassies. These and similar facts make the country a very viable target for terrorist acts. Some historical facts, which can be real or perceived, have also contributed to this reality. All the above-mentioned problems call for some 'break through' actions to be taken. Conducting a research in search of solution for such global challenges is indeed among the subjects that should be accorded priority.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

Terrorism has posed a serious challenge to the peace and stability of a nation for decades. Whether it is driven by ideological orientations, religious considerations or socio-economic factors or what not, terrorism as an act of violence directed against civilians has to be fought with all means by all peace-loving members of the global community. This research is undertaken with the firm belief that lack of a common understanding of terrorism and disagreement on the most effective mechanisms of addressing the problem have contributed to the ever growing escalation of terrorism in various parts of the world. More specifically, the lack of clear understanding of the root causes of the problem have often made counter-terrorism efforts very complicated sometimes even posing a threat to the survival of countries.

The assumption behind this research inquiry is that terrorism, far from being merely a law enforcement issue, requires a comprehensive approach with a view to understanding its root causes and possible ways of addressing it before it grows to constitute a very real threat to the very survival of a given country. Similarly, the success or otherwise of any effort by law enforcement agents to address the problem of terrorism depends largely on the extent to which these efforts are made on the basis of a proper understanding of the sources of the problem and if sufficient effort is made to bring citizens on board in the overall campaign. The lack of effective cooperation across or within borders because of a variety of factors has also its own impact on the level of success of anti-terrorism efforts. A lot remains to be done both nationally, sub-

regionally as well as globally in this regard.

## 3. Objectives of the Study

### 3.1 General Objective

The general objective of this research is to understand the nature of terrorism in the Horn of Africa and the responses to terrorism, with special emphasis on the Ethiopian experience since 1994.

### 3.2 Specific Objectives

This study aims to:

- assess how terrorism came to constitute a significant threat to the peace and stability of the Horn and efforts exerted to address this problem.
- investigate the trends of terrorism in the Horn of Africa and geo-political, ideological as well as socio-economic factors that have contributed to it as well as the efforts that have been made both at national and regional levels to deal with the problem.
- analyze the prevalence of the actual and potential threats of terrorism that Ethiopia has faced and the multi-faceted efforts that it has made to ensure its peace and stability.
- recommend a set of actions to counter terrorism in the Horn of Africa, with special emphasis on Ethiopia

## 4. Research Questions

This research has tried to answer the following main questions:

- What regional, geo-political, ideological or socio-economic factors have contributed more to the incidence of terrorism?
- What are the major causes of terrorism, trends and its consequences in the Horn and Ethiopia?
- What, if any, efforts have been made to counter this emerging threat in the Horn? What efforts have paid off and which ones have failed and why?
- What normative framework, policies and strategies the Ethiopian Government adopted and the measures taken to raise the level of awareness of the population, and the security architecture to established respond to terrorism?

## 5. Overview of Terrorism

Conflicts have always been part of human society. Terrorism is one form of conflict that is haunting nations globally. In addition, it has long been recognized as a serious foreign and domestic security threat to many countries (Harmony Project, 2006). Such use of unmitigated violence against civilians has indeed been a source of much concern for centuries now. However, the events of September 11, 2001 have single-handedly changed the way the problem is looked at by all people of the world. Today more than ever, the world talks and writes about terrorism persistently. International terrorist networks have caused untold destruction and loss of life around the world, and yet the response by and the reaction to these acts is largely uncoordinated (Harmony Project, 2006). While there is an almost universal agreement as to the dangers posed by terrorism, there is nonetheless a lack of clarity as to its causes and nature as well as regarding the most effective mechanisms to prevent, detect and face its challenges. This has to do with a myriad of factors ranging from ideological to operational renditions. Nevertheless, it is widely acknowledged that anti-terrorism efforts can better achieve their desired results if the impediments to concerted actions are properly addressed through cooperation among various stakeholders both at global, sub-regional as well as national levels.

Different sources have given different definitions to the concept of terrorism depending on the angle from which they look at the problem. While some definitions are based on ideological grounds, still other definitions take into account the operational aspect of it focusing rather on what consequences it has. As the common saying goes, one's terrorist could very well be another's freedom fighter. Otherwise, the word terrorism does not seem to have any precise definition. For example, Webster's dictionary defines terrorism as *'the state of fear and submission produced; terrorist method of governing or of resisting a Government; and the systematic use of terror especially as a means of gaining some political end'* (2003).

Despite the absence of a comprehensive and universally accepted definition of terrorism (Harmony Project, 2006), this study is based on the definition as to whether perpetrators deliberately direct their anger against civilians or not.

There is as much confusion about the root causes of terrorism as in the definition of terrorism. But there is more or less universal agreement that the major causes are ideological, socio-economic as well as religious (compare ICPAT, 2008, p.10). Ideological causes explain the carnage and destruction political groups perpetrate on civilians in the name of some ill-defined political objective such as secession of a certain group or groups of people. The engagement of certain groups in similarly destructive activities

in the name of addressing some kind of social or economic injustice is yet another cause of terrorism. However, more importantly, the great deal of violence that is being visited upon civilians in almost all corners of the world in the name of promoting some religious idea or another is the most potent cause of terrorism today. Depending on what one perceives to be the root cause of terrorism, the responses by governments has also been in one degree or another. One of the most acknowledged enemies of terrorism today, the US Government and its allies have used tools at their disposal, including diplomacy, international cooperation, and constructive engagement to economic sanctions, covert action, physical security enhancement, and military force (Harmony Project, 2006). The efficacy of anti-terrorism campaigns depends on the extent to which the appropriate combination of approaches is followed. More often than not, the approaches employed by many governments leave a lot to be desired because they put undue emphasis on one or another aspect of these approaches.

Globally, a modern trend in terrorism is the undisputed fact that perpetrators belong to a well-organized, self-financed, international network of terrorists. Another trend of terrorism is the emergence of religiously or ideologically motivated agents of terrorism. Radical Islamic fundamentalist groups or groups using religion as a pretext, pose terrorist threats of varying kinds to the interests of various states (Perl, 2004). A third trend is the apparent growth of cross-national links among different terrorist organizations, which may involve combinations of military training, funding, technology transfer, or political advice. As terrorism is a global phenomenon, a major challenge facing policy makers is how to maximize international cooperation and support, without unduly compromising important national security interests of countries (Perl, 2004).

Terrorism as a deliberate use of violence to achieve political ends is not new to Somalia (Fisseha, 2008). In fact, terrorism in Somalia dates as far back as early 1980s when the first open resort to political violence was made by hard line Islamist clerics and their allies from Siad Barre's defunct army brought together like-minded people under the umbrella of *Al-Itihad Al-Islamia*, or better known by its acronym, ALAI. Although launched with the declared objective of establishing a Caliphate in the Horn of Africa, its leaders also sought to rally the Somali people behind their cause by re-introducing the failed ambitions of Siad Barre aimed at incorporating all Somali speaking peoples in neighboring countries. ALAI was from the very outset making open threats to unleash violence in Ethiopia as part of its objective to forcibly occupy the Somali sub region of Ethiopia (Fisseha, 2008).

The rhetoric against Ethiopia was elevated to its next level when in the mid 1990s *Al Itihad* infiltrated its agents through Ethiopia's vast borders and managed to carry out bomb attacks on civilian targets inside many parts of Ethiopia including Addis Ababa,

Dire Dawa and Jijiga, among other places. The explosions had caused considerable loss of life and destruction of property over the years. It had in its ranks hundreds of terrorists from as far away places as Pakistan and Morocco and battle-hardened Mujahedeen from Europe and the Middle East (Fisseha, 2008). While the swift action by the Ethiopian Defense Forces and the relentless efforts of the security forces did succeed in dismantling a significant edifice of AIAI's terrorist network, its leaders nevertheless did never refrain from hatching terrorist plots one after another (Bruton, 2010). With their core leadership and international personnel largely destroyed or captured, the leaders of AIAI were mainly pre-occupied with trying to multiply its followers through numerous tactics. Former leaders of AIAI such as Hassan Dahir Aweys, a former colonel in Siad Barre's army, recast themselves as clerics of Wahabi Islam to mount their fundamentalist ambitions in earnest. Interestingly, opportunity presented itself in the mid-2000s when local clan leaders took it upon themselves to sort things out in their respective localities by forming Islamic courts to manage local affairs (Osman, ND).

The Islamic Courts were largely formed for benign motives due to the fact that most of them were firmly opposed to the debilitating consequences of rampant War-Lordism. The inclusion of some leaders of *Al-Itihad* in the effort to bring together the various Islamic Courts throughout Somalia as part of re-instating some kind of unified authority in the country resulted in unwarranted consequences. The culmination of this effort was the establishment in late 2005 of the Union of Islamic Courts (ICU). Whatever benign motives may have originally been part of the move to bring the Islamic Courts together, they were, however, soon to be rendered obsolete, when the hardliners of the former *Al Itihad* took the reins of power effectively hijacking the ICU's central leadership (Fisseha, 2008). The extremist wing of ICU—the *Al-Shabbab*—launched a ruthless campaign of violence and intimidation against civilians ushering in an era of Al Qaeda style terrorist activities that have now become the preferred weapon of choice of *Al-Shabbab*. *Al-Shabbab* was from the very outset very untypical of Somali militant forces in that it not only adhered to an extremist interpretation of Islam, unusual among the Somalis, but also in its open espousal of violence and terror as weapons to achieve its political ends than is hitherto pursued by other Somali insurgencies. It was mostly led by individuals who had taken part in Jihads elsewhere in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Chechnya (Fisseha,

2008). Its ranks were also swollen by several hundreds of foreign jihadists from all over the world that had from the beginning given its movement an international—rather than local—nature. More importantly, *Al-Shabbab*'s terrorist campaigns were further emboldened by a number of factors that are with few exceptions mainly extrinsic to Somali society.

As mentioned earlier, terrorism in the sub-region is not limited to Somalia. There are also other terrorist groups in other countries in the sub-region mainly in Uganda, Eritrea and Ethiopia. The common thread that runs through most terrorist groups in the sub-region is that they are largely based on religious grounds. Moreover, the fact that the sub-region straddles Africa and the Middle East has had its own contributions in this regard. However, the previous studies on terrorism in the sub-region focus highly on Somalia and some limited causes such as religious issues. It is believed that the causes for terrorist acts in the sub-region are diverse owing to the various compositions of the people in the sub-region and different social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. This research aims to fill such gaps.

## 6. Research Methods

The research has made use of both primary and secondary sources of data and it has largely used qualitative instruments. Apart from consulting the literature on the topic of the research such as books and various internet sources, reference has also been made to documents from relevant bodies such as deliberations of pertinent officials at sub-regional levels, and Government policy instruments within Ethiopia such as policy papers and legislations. In this regard, extensive use of the author's own field experience has been made to inform the study better. Semi-structured interviews have also been made with key informants such as senior law enforcement or security officials as well as mid-level operators to gain first hand information on the subject.

The study participants (key informants) were selected from the Ministry of National Defense, National Security Service, members of the top leadership of ONLF, former members of Parliament of the Somali Sub-regions from National Defense Intelligence Department, Embassies, Federal Police Anti-Terrorist and Contraband Units, Federal Police Investigation Directorate and from IGAD. Two FGDs were also conducted: the first one, with clan leaders and influential people of the Somali Sub-regional State and the second one, with participants of the 'Sahara Berha Operation'. Furthermore, an investigation of cases such as the case of 'Sahara Berha', and the various bombings and shootings that occurred in Ethiopia was made. The eligibility criterion for all the key informants was the level of experience and engagement of the participants in the subject matter. The data gathered through the aforementioned techniques were analyzed using thematic categorization techniques.

## 7. Scope and Limitations of the Study

For the purposes of brevity and focus, this research focused on the trend of terrorism especially since the early 1994. Much of the focus is on the trend of terrorism in the

Horn of Africa and more specifically as it relates to Ethiopia. The research emphasizes on the nature of terrorism, its root causes in broad terms as well as its manifestations in the sub-region and the efforts that have been made to tackle the problem and the extent to which these efforts may have succeeded or if otherwise, what factors might have contributed to either consequence.

## 8. Limitations of the Study

Due to the nature of the subject matter under study and other factors, this research faced the following limitations:

- The very nature of the terrorist acts and their responses, i.e. secrecy could have limited the availability of data.
- Lack of consistent understanding definition and laws governing it in different countries poses a challenge.
- The dynamic nature of terrorism and its actors makes the subject matter difficult to understand. Moreover a terrorist act or a terrorist may change their nature and behavior after some time has elapsed.
- The availability of clearly recorded data is questionable, especially in Ethiopia and this has its own impact on the quality of the research.
- The fact that some places were violent made them inaccessible for research purposes.

## 9. Significance of the Study

The researcher believes that this study contributes to the on-going campaign against terrorism by shedding some light on the deficiencies and best experiences of countries in the sub-region in their endeavors. More importantly, it can help inform policy debates on the issue and enrich the practical efforts of stakeholders both in the sub region and more specifically in Ethiopia. At a more basic level, it serves as a basis for those who are interested in exploring the issue in more detail and depth.

## Chapter Two

### 2. Review of Related Literature

#### 2.1. What is Terrorism?

Terrorism has been described variously as both a tactic and strategy; a crime and a holy duty; a justified reaction to oppression and an inexcusable abomination. Much depends on whose point of view is being represented. Terrorism has often been an effective tactic for the weaker side in a conflict. As an asymmetric form of conflict, it confers coercive power with many of the advantages of military force at a fraction of the cost. Due to the secretive nature and small size of terrorist organizations, they often offer opponents no clear organization to defend against or to deter. Terrorism is a means to an “end” or objective. Tactics may vary from incident to incident but in the review of terrorism during the last two centuries, methods appear strikingly similar in concept. What may be of great concern is the lethality and damage that adaptive terrorists can inflict when armed with expanding technologies and intellect. That is why preemption is more important now than ever before.

However, deterrence and preemption can be difficult against transnational terrorist groups. As stated in an *Al-Qaeda* article in January 2002, “[Deterrence] is completely eliminated when dealing with people who do not care about living but thirst for martyrdom. While the principle of deterrence works well [in warfare] between countries, it does not work at all for an organization with no permanent bases and with no capital in Western banks. How can such people, who strive for death more than anything else, be deterred?”

In some cases, terrorism has been a means to carry on violence without the adversary realizing the nature of the threat, mistaking terrorism for criminal activity. Because of these characteristics, terrorism has become increasingly common among those pursuing extreme goals throughout the world. Nevertheless, despite its notoriety, terrorism can be a nebulous concept. Even within the U.S. Government, agencies responsible for different functions in the global war on terrorism use different definitions.

#### 2.2. Defining Terrorism

The US Department of Defense approved definition of terrorism is

*The calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological.*

For the purpose of this document, this is the standard definition. However, this is not the last or only word on the subject. The researcher did a review of writings on terrorism and found 109 different definitions! Here is a sampling of definitions to illustrate the difficulties of categorizing and analyzing terrorism.

The FBI uses the following definition

*Terrorism is the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives.*

The U.S. Department of State uses the definition contained in Title 22 U.S.C. Section 2656f (d). According to this section,

*'Terrorism' means 'premeditated politically-motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience'.*

These definitions stress the respective institutional concerns of the organizations using them. The FBI concentrates on the "unlawful" aspect, in keeping with its law enforcement mission. The Department of State concerns itself with "politically motivated" actions by "sub-national" or "clandestine" actors, a focus appropriate to the Department's functions of international relations and diplomacy.

Outside the United States Government, there are greater variations in what features of terrorism are emphasized in definitions. The United Nations produced this definition in 1992; "An anxiety inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby -in contrast to assassination- the direct targets of violence are not the main targets." A commonly accepted academic definition starts with the U.N. definition quoted above, and adds two sentences totaling another 77 words; containing such concepts as "message generators" and 'violence based communication processes." A more concise British Government definition of 1974 is "... the use of violence for political ends, and includes any use of violence for the purpose of putting the public, or any section of the public, in fear." There is clearly a wide choice of definitions for terrorism. Despite this, there are elements in common among the majority of useful definitions. Common threads of the various definitions identify terrorism as: political, psychological, violent, dynamic, and deliberate action.

### 2.2.1 Political

A terrorist act is a political act or is committed to the intention to cause a political

effect. Clausewitz' statement that "war is a continuation of policy by other means" is taken as a truism by terrorists. They merely eliminate the intermediate step of armies and warfare, and apply violence directly to the political contest. A U.S. State Department official summarized, "The ultimate goals of terrorism are political... Politically motivated terrorism invariably involves a deeply held grievance over some form of injustice. The injustice may be social or economic, but it is nonetheless blamed on a political authority."

### **2.2.2 Psychological**

The intended results of terrorist acts cause a psychological effect or terror. They are aimed at a target audience other than the actual victims of the act. The intended target audience of the terrorist act may be a population as a whole, some specific portion of a society (an ethnic minority, for example similar to the situation in Kosovo between the Serbs and Albanians), or decision-making elites in the society's political, social, or military population.

### **2.2.3. Violent**

Violence, coercion, and destruction are used in the commission of the act to produce the desired effect. Even if casualties and material destruction are not the result of a terrorist operation, the threat or potential of violence is what produces the intended effect. For example, a successful hostage taking operation may result in all hostages being freed unharmed after negotiations and bargaining. Regardless of the outcome, the terrorist bargaining chips are nothing less than the raw threat of applying violence to maim or kill some or all of the hostages. When the threat of violence is not credible, or the terrorists are unable to implement violence effectively, terrorism fails.

### **2.2.4. Dynamic**

Terrorist groups demand change, revolution, or political change. The radical worldview that justifies terrorism mandates drastic action to destroy or alter the status quo. Even if the goals of a movement are reactionary in nature, they may require action to "turn back the clock" or restore some cherished value system that is extinct. Nobody commits violent attacks on strangers or innocents to keep things "just the way they are."

### **2.2.5. Deliberate**

Terrorism is an activity planned and intended to achieve particular goals. It is a rationally employed, specifically selected tactic, and is not a random act. Since the victims of terrorist violence are often of little import, with one being as good for the terrorists' purposes as another, victim or target selection can appear random or unprovoked.

However, the target will contain symbolic value or be capable of eliciting emotional response according to the terrorists' goals. Remember that the actual target of terrorism is not necessarily the victim of the violence, but the psychological impact on the society or population. This psychological impact is intended to create an environment of fear and intimidation that terrorists can then manipulate to force others to submit or agree to their demands.

### 3. Differences between Terrorism and Insurgency

For the U.S. military, two related concepts that can overlap with terrorism are guerilla warfare and insurgency. Although insurgencies and terrorism have similar goals, closer examination identifies specific differences between insurgency, guerilla warfare, and terrorism. To begin with, an insurgency is a movement, that is, a political effort with a specific aim to overthrow a constituted government. Both guerilla warfare and terrorism can be viewed as tactics available to pursue the goals of the political movement (USA Defence, 2005).

Another difference is there is nothing inherent in either insurgency or guerrilla warfare that requires the use of terror. While some of the more successful insurgencies and guerilla campaigns employed terrorism, and some developed into conflicts where use of terror tactics and terrorism became predominant, there have been other examples that effectively renounced the use of terrorism. The deliberate choice to use terrorism considers its effectiveness in inspiring further resistance, destroying government efficiency, and mobilizing support.

Although there are places where terrorism, guerilla warfare, and criminal behavior all overlap, groups that are exclusively terrorist, or subordinate "wings" of insurgencies formed to specifically employ terror tactics, usually demonstrate differences in their objectives and operations. Disagreement on the intended benefits of using terror tactics, or whether terror operations are to be given primacy within the insurgency campaign, have frequently led to the 'urban guerilla' or terrorist wings of an insurgency splintering off to pursue a revolutionary goal by their own methods.

The ultimate goal of an insurgency is to challenge the existing government for control of all or a portion of its territory, or force political concessions in sharing political power. When employing guerilla tactics in an insurgency, the guerilla try to actually dominate territory. This is a key element in guerilla strategy since control of territory provides the population for recruitment, a logistical base, and the ground and infrastructure for establishing a regular army. Terrorism normally does not contend for actual control of territory, but uses psychological impact of their violent acts to force their will on their targets. Insurgencies require the active or tacit support of some portion of the involved

population. External support such as recognition or approval from other countries or political entities can be useful to insurgents, but is not required.

A terror group does not require and rarely has the active support or even the sympathy of a large percentage of the population. While insurgents will frequently describe themselves as “insurgents” or “guerrillas,” terrorists will not refer to themselves as “terrorists” but often describe themselves using military or political terminology (“freedom fighters,” “soldiers,” “activists”). Terrorism relies on public impact, and is therefore conscious of the advantage of avoiding the negative connotations of the term “terrorists” in identifying themselves.

Other differences relate to the unit size, types of arms, and types of operations. Guerillas usually fight in small-organized formations such as platoon or company size or larger units, whereas terrorists normally operate in small cells. As a sub-regional example, the *Montoneros* of Argentina during the 1970s provide an instance of tenuous distinctions between terrorism and guerrilla warfare. Incidents of kidnapping high profile businesspersons for ransom or assassination of government officials blurred a widening array of terrorist actions that eventually presented organized military-type operations. Cellular and compartmentalized groups gave way to organized unit-type structure for sophisticated attacks against military forces.

One attack against an infantry regiment included Montoneros marshalling their force over 800 kilometers from previous urban enclaves, forming assault and support elements, conducting the attack, evacuating the force with a hijacked airplane, providing medical treatment *enroute* to the dispersal landing field, and vanishing among the population after landing.

Terrorism does not usually attempt to challenge government forces directly, but acts to change perceptions as to the effectiveness or legitimacy of the government itself. This is done by ensuring the widest possible knowledge of the acts of terrorist violence among the target audience.

Terrorists, as a rule, avoid direct confrontations with government forces on the other hand; a guerilla force may have something to gain from a clash with a government combat force, such as proving that they can effectively challenge the military effectiveness of the government. Terrorists may target military or security forces, but will not engage in an engagement resembling a “fair fight.” Terrorists use methods that neutralize the strengths of conventional forces. Bombings and mortar attacks on civilian targets where military or security personnel spend off-duty time, ambushes of undefended convoys, and assassinations of poorly protected individuals are common tactics. Terrorists often expand their groups of acceptable targets and conduct operations against new targets without any warning.

Comparison of Conflicts			
	Conventional War	Guerrilla	Terrorism
Unit Size in Battle	Large (armies, corps, divisions)	Medium (platoons, companies, battalions)	Small (usually less than 10 persons)
Weapons	Full range of military hardware (air force, armor, artillery, etc)	Mostly infantry-type light weapons but sometimes artillery as well)	Hand guns, hand grenades, assault rifles and specialized weapons, e.g., car bombs, remote control bombs, barometric pressure bombs)
Tactics	Usually joint operations involving several military branches	Commando type tactics	Specialized tactics: kidnapping, assassinations, car bombs, hijacking, barricade hostage, etc
Targets	Mostly military units, industrial and transportation infrastructure	Mostly military, police and administration staff, as well as political opponents	State symbols, political opponents and the public at large
Intended Impact	Physical destruction	Mainly physical attrition of the enemy	Psychological coercion
Control of Territory	Yes	Yes	No
Uniform	Wear uniform	Often wear uniform	Do not wear uniform
Recognition of war Zones	War limited to recognized geopolitical area	War limited to the country in strife	No recognized war zones, Operations carried out zones world-wide
International Legality	Yes, if conducted by rules	Yes, if conducted by rules	No
Domestic Legality	Yes	No	No

Table 1. Comparisons of Conflicts

Source: A military Guide to Terrorism in the 21st century: US Army Training Doctrine, USA De  
fence, 2005, USA

## 4. Typologies of Terrorism Activities

Various attempts have been made to distinguish among types of terrorist activities. It is vital to bear in mind, however, that there are many kinds of terrorist movements, and no single theory defines all of them.

There are various classes of terrorism. Those are revolutionary, sub revolutionary, and establishment terrorism. Revolutionary terrorism seeks the complete abolition of a political system and its replacement with new structures. Sub revolutionary terrorism is used not to overthrow the existing regime but to modify the existing political structures. Establishment terrorism often called state-sponsored terrorism is employed by governments against other governments, citizens against factions within the government or against foreign government or groups. It refers to acts of terror, such as torture, killings, mass arrest etc. which are conducted by the organ of state against its own population, whether the entire population, certain segments thereof or population of an occupied country which is aimed at securing and maintaining a desired degree of obedience and loyalty from its citizens.

According to Michael Stohl, state terrorism is divided in to two subtypes. The first sub type is clandestine state terrorism in which the state itself directly participates in acts of terrorism and state-sponsored terrorism, which consist of the state employing other groups to carry out terrorist acts on its behalf.

The second basic category is surrogate terrorism that involves what might be called complicity after the fact in respect of ordinary crimes. State acquiescence to terrorism occurs when state approves or fails to condemn or act against an act of terrorism carried out by a third party. Recently, other new categories of terrorism such as nuclear and cyber terrorism are emerging. Just like the definitions of terrorism, cyber terrorism can also be defined differently, but the most widely cited paper on the issue of cyber terrorism is Denning's Testimony before the Special Oversight Panel on Terrorism:

*Cyber terrorism is the convergence of terrorism and cyberspace. It is generally understood to mean unlawful attacks and threats of attack against computers, networks, and the information stored therein when done to intimidate or coerce a government or its people in furtherance of political or social objectives. Further, to qualify as cyber terrorism, an attack should result in violence against persons or property, or at least cause enough harm to generate fear. Attacks that lead to death or bodily injury, explosions, plane crashes, water contamination, or severe economic loss would be examples. Serious attacks against critical infrastructures could be acts of cyber terrorism, depending on their impact. Attacks that disrupt non essential services or that are mainly a costly nuisance would not.*

Nuclear terrorism is based on the tenet *why should one use an axe when you can use a bulldozer*. That was Osama Bin Laden's question in 1996 to Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the chief planner of the most deadly attack on USA. This was to ensure effects that are more devastating so that their objectives of terrorizing the West could be achieved. What makes the issue more dangerous is control over nuclear and radioactive materials remain fragmentary and uncertain in many states where terrorist groups operate, often with popular support. The list of incidents demonstrating terrorist interest in unleashing nuclear mayhem is growing. In general there are two basic categories of terrorism: individual and/or group terrorism and state terrorism. Most observers agree that most political and ideological groups have under certain circumstances resorted to governmental and non-governmental terrorism. However, whatever the purposes or the classifications, all acts of terrorism are abhorrent; it is a disease that destroys the very structure of global society. State terrorism must be punished and individuals responsible for terrorist acts must be brought to justice (Reta Tesfaye, 2010).

## 5. Use of Terror by Nation-States: Is There a Difference?

A government that is an adversary of the United States may apply terror tactics in an effort to add depth to their engagement of U.S. forces. Repression through terror of the indigenous population would take place to prevent internal dissent and insurrection that the U.S. might exploit. Military special operations assets and state intelligence operatives could conduct terrorist operations against U.S. interests both in a theater and as far abroad as their capabilities allow. Finally, attacks against the U.S. homeland could be executed by state sponsored terrorist organizations or by paid domestic proxies. There are three different ways in which the states can be engaged in the use of terror: State/Government terror, State involved terror and State sponsored terror.

State or government terror, which is also referred to as 'terror from above', is an activity of terror where the government terrorizes its own population to control or repress them. These actions usually constitute the acknowledged policy of the government, and make use of official institutions such as the judiciary, police, military, and other government agencies. Changes to legal codes permit or encourage torture, killing or property destruction in pursuit of government policy. After assuming power, official Nazi policy was aimed at the deliberate destruction of "state enemies" and the resulting intimidation of the rest of the population. Stalin's "purges" of the 1930s are examples of using the machinery of the state to terrorize a population. The methods he used included such actions as demonstration trials with predetermined verdicts on opponents, punishing family or friends of suspected enemies of the regime, and extra legal use of police or military force against the population. Saddam Hussein

also used chemical weapons on his own Kurdish population without any particular change or expansion of policies regarding the use of force on his own citizens. They were simply used as an act of governmental terror believed to be expedient in accomplishing Hussein's goals.

State involved terrorism is activity where the government personnel carry out operations using terror tactics. These activities may be directed against other nations' interests, its own population, or private groups or individuals viewed as dangerous to the state. In many cases, these activities are terrorism under official sanction, although such authorization is rarely acknowledged openly as an official action. Historical examples include the Soviet and Iranian assassination campaigns against dissidents who had fled abroad, and Libyan and North Korean intelligence operatives downing airliners on international flights.

State sponsored terrorism is activity where governments provide supplies, training, and other forms of support to non-state terrorist organizations. This type of affiliation can be state-sponsored or state-directed. One of the most valuable types of such support is the provision of safe haven or physical basing for the terrorists' organization. Another crucial service a state sponsor can provide is false documentation, not only for personal identification (passports, internal identification documents), but also for financial transactions and purchasing weapons. Other means of support are access to training facilities and expertise not readily available to groups without extensive resources. Finally, the extension of diplomatic protection and services, such as immunity from extradition, diplomatic passports, and use of embassies and other protected grounds, and diplomatic pouches to transport weapons or explosives have been significant to some groups. An example of state sponsorship is the Syrian government's support of HAMAS and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Syrian resources and protection enable training establishments in the Bek'aa Valley. On a smaller, more discreet scale, the East German Stasi provided support and safe-haven to members of the Red Army Faction (RAF or Baader Meinhof Gang) and neo-fascist groups that operated in West Germany. Wanted members of the RAF were found to be residents in East Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

### 5.1 Terrorist Planning Cycle

Terrorist operations are typically prepared to minimize risk and achieve the highest probability of success through considering the opponents' strengths and weaknesses. Emphasis is on maximizing security and target effects. In practice, that means the least number of personnel, and the most effective weapons practicable. To accomplish this, extensive planning is conducted, with an emphasis on target surveillance and reconnaissance.

Collection of information against potential targets may continue for years before an operation is decided upon. While some targets may be “soft” enough for shorter periods of observation, the information gathering is still intensive. In addition, operations planned or underway may be altered, delayed, or cancelled entirely due to changes to the target or local conditions. Terrorists plan campaigns to combine successive achievements of operational objectives into accomplishing strategic goals. Even though we refer to a terrorist operation having a physical “objective,” this physical objective is in reality an intermediate objective. The casualties, destruction, or threats thereof that the operation accomplishes must be properly exploited to reach the target audience. The psychological impact on that audience is the true objective of any terrorist operation. While the assassination of a troublesome police official may provide other tactical advantages, it is the psychological effect on the target audience and its ultimate support of strategic goals that is the true objective. This has been seen extensively in Iraq as terrorists targeted Iraqis serving in provisional Government positions in 2004.

Despite the absence of universal “staff school” model for terrorist planning, experience and success has shown terrorists what works for effective plans and operations. Terrorist organizations exchange personnel and training with each other, and study the methods and operational successes of groups they have no direct contact with. Innovation is a proven key component of operational success. Using new weapons or technology, or old systems in innovative, unexpected ways, allows terrorists to defeat or avoid defensive measures. Terrorist operational planning can be analyzed according to requirements common to all operations. The planning and operation cycle is valid for traditional hierarchically organized groups, as well as the decentralized “network” type organizations. The differences between the two organizations are the location of decision making at the various steps of the cycle, and the method of task organizing and providing support for the operation.

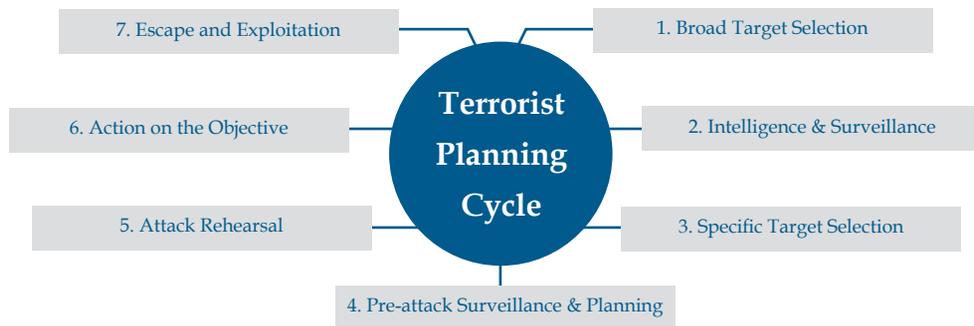


Fig 1. Terrorist Planning Cycle

## 5.2 Forms of Terrorism Attacks

A terrorist group can use threats to coerce or prevent actions through a targeted individual or population. Threats and tricks can dull the effectiveness of preventive or countermeasures when a targeted individual or population loses situational awareness of an actual terrorist target, or disperses finite assets against many possible threats. At the less lethal end of the spectrum, hoaxes can simply be methods to annoy and wear down security forces, and keep the population constantly agitated. Fake bomb threats, leaving suspicious items in public places, and talcum powder “anthrax” attacks bleed time and effort from other security operations, and contribute to uncertainty and fear. Such activities can be used to gain information about the target’s response to a potential attack. Where the occupants go during the evacuation of a building and how long it takes them to exit are useful elements of information in operational planning, and can be obtained through simply making an anonymous phone call or activating a fire alarm. Extortion is one example of a threat that obtains money, material, information, or support by force or intimidation. Extortion is often used during the formative period of a group or by groups that fail to develop more sophisticated financial skills. However, the opportunity to engage in more lucrative money making activities, such as drug trafficking, may eventually replace the need to extort by some groups. Extortion takes the form of “war taxes” or protection money. Depending on the structure of the terrorist organization, the logistics and support cells extort money from local businesses in exchange for protection, which means not harming or bothering the business or its members. Members of the intelligence cells may also extort to collect required information.

Another form of extortion is intimidation. Intelligence cells or a specialized team intimidates people to obtain information on the group’s enemy or to provide resources. Death threats against an individual or his family cause him to provide information or resources to a group with which he has no interest. A terrorist group also intimidates people not to take action. For example, enemy security personnel may not implement required security measures because of intimidation. The information cell of a terrorist group helps create and maintain the fear caused by extortion through its propaganda and deception actions. The power of extortion and blackmail as a means of coercing individuals should not be underestimated. Several terrorist groups have successfully used arson, sabotage, bombing, hostage taking, hijacking, raid or ambush, seizure, assassination, weapons of mass destruction or effect, air transport threats, maritime threat, and suicide tactics.

Arson is a destructive technique using fire, usually in sabotage operations against property. It permits a significant destructive effect with simple equipment and little training. It is one of the most commonly used methods of terrorist attack, ranking

only behind bombing and assassination in total numbers covering the period 1980-1999. Since arson is primarily used against property, it is not normally considered as a casualty producer. However, arson can still result in fatalities, as an intentional or unintentional effect.

Sabotage is the planned destruction of the enemy's equipment or infrastructure. The purpose of sabotage is to inflict both psychological and physical damage. This can result from an incident creating a large number of casualties or from a severe disruption of services for the population. Sabotage demonstrates how vulnerable the enemy is to the terrorist group's actions. Destroying or disrupting key services or facilities impresses the power of the saboteur on the public consciousness, and either increases their frustration with the ineffectiveness of the government, or inspires others to resist. A terrorist group normally aims its sabotage actions at elements of infrastructure, in order to reinforce the perception that nothing is safe. The action can have significant economic impacts, as well as the additional effects of creating mass casualties. Oil pipelines, water purification plants, sewage treatment facilities, air traffic control hubs, and medical treatment or research facilities are just a few examples of potential targets. Terrorist groups use many techniques, such as bombing, arson, cyber, or use of contaminants, to conduct sabotage. Examples of sabotage have been evident in Iraq since the end of major combat operations where attacks have been conducted against power generation facilities and water pipelines.

Bombs are the favored weapons for terrorists for a variety of reasons. They are highly destructive, are flexible enough to be tailored to the mission, do not require the operator to be present, and have a significant psychological impact. To demonstrate their prominence in terrorist operations, 324 out of 482 total terrorist incidents or planned acts in the U.S. during 1980-2001 were bombings, and 119 of 208 international terrorist incidents in 2003 were bombings.

Kidnapping is usually an action taken against a prominent enemy individual for a specific reason. The most common reasons for kidnapping are ransom, release of a fellow terrorist, or the desire to publicize a demand or an issue. The terrorist group conducts detailed planning, especially regarding movement of the kidnapped individual. The risk in kidnapping is relatively lower than in hostage taking primarily because the kidnapped victim is moved to a location controlled by the group. The group makes demands and is willing to hold a victim for a significant time, if necessary. The success of kidnapping relies upon balancing the cost to the government represented by the threat of harm to the victim, with the costs of meeting the kidnappers' demands. Some kidnapping operations are actually assassinations, as the death of the victim is intended from the start. The terrorists intended objective in this case being the intermediate

concessions and publicity obtained during the negotiation process that they would not receive from a simple assassination.

Hostage taking is typically an overt seizure of people to gain publicity for a cause, gain political concessions, political asylum, release of prisoners, or ransom. Many times the terrorists will take hostages with the intent to kill them after they believe they have fully exploited the media coverage from the situation. Unlike kidnapping where a prominent individual is normally taken and moved to an unknown location, the hostages are usually not well known figures in the enemy's society. While dramatic, hostage situations are frequently risky for the terrorist group, especially when conducted in enemy territory.

Hijacking involves the forceful commandeering of a conveyance. Although normally associated with planes, it can also include naval vessels or other craft. There are many purposes to hijacking such as hostage taking activities, procuring a means of escape, or as a means of destruction. While hijacking of aircraft for hostage taking has declined in frequency since the implementation of improved security measures, the use of hijacked aircraft for escape or as destructive devices continues and terrorist groups have a significant amount of information on how to conduct hijacking operations. The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in September 2001 are vivid reminders of the hijacking abilities of terrorist groups and the destructive power of hijacked airliners.

A terrorist raid is similar in concept to a conventional operation, but is usually conducted with smaller forces against targets marked for destruction, hijacking and/or hostage/barricade operations. In these cases, the raid permits control of the target for the execution of some other action. The kidnapping or assassination of a target that has a security force can often require a raid to overcome the defenses. Successful execution of these types of attacks requires extensive preoperational surveillance and detailed planning.

Seizure of a critical element of infrastructure, similar to hostage taking intentions, can be a physical site such as a facility of importance to a target population, or a cyber node that disrupts or precludes use of selected cyber functions.

An assassination is a deliberate action to kill specific individuals, usually VIPs (political leaders, notable citizens, collaborators, particularly effective officials, etc.), versus the killing of common people, which is considered murder. The terrorist group assassinates or murders people it cannot intimidate, people who have left the group, people who support the "enemy/" or people who have some symbolic significance for the enemy or world community. Terrorist groups often refer to these killings as "punishment" or

“justice” as a way of legitimizing them. In 1981, President Anwar Sadat of Egypt was assassinated by fundamentalist Islamists for his support to peace in the Middle East and his relationship with the West. In September 2001, Northern Alliance leader Ahmed Shah Massoud was assassinated in Afghanistan by two suicide bombers, believed to be from Al Qaeda, due to his opposition to the Taliban and Al Qaeda’s presence in Afghanistan.

Listing a category as weapons of mass destruction or effect acknowledges a broad range of capabilities that specific terrorist groups would like to acquire. Once acquired, this capability would allow for catastrophic results through numerous delivery means. These types of weapons include chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high yield explosives.

A significant concern is the attempt by terrorists to shoot down aircraft using some form of man-portable air defense system (MANPADS) or improvising other systems for this use. There are a number of weapons that terrorists can use to down aircraft and they have demonstrated in the past that they can be successful. Although part of military operations, probably the most notable incident by terrorists/insurgents downing U.S. military aircraft was in Mogadishu, Somalia in 1993.

Terrorist attacks against maritime targets are fairly rare and constitute only 2% of all international incidents over the last 30 years. However, there is a history of maritime terrorism and maritime authorities worldwide are increasingly anxious about terrorist attacks on both ports and ships. In fact, some intelligence analysts believe that because land-based targets are better protected, terrorists will turn to the maritime infrastructure because they see these as “softer” targets.

Suicide tactics are particular methods of delivering a bomb or conducting an assassination. They are defined as “An act of terror, employing an explosive or incendiary device that requires the death of the perpetrator for successful implementation.” It involves an individual wearing or carrying an explosive device into a crowded area or other target and then detonating it, or driving an explosive laden vehicle to a target and then detonating the device.

Suicide attacks are different in concept and execution from “high-risk” operations. In a high-risk mission, the *likely* outcome is the death of the terrorist(s), but mission success does not *require* that the participants die. The plan will allow for possible escape or survival of the participants, no matter how slim the chances. Using suicide as a tactic *requires* the death of the participant(s) in order to succeed. (See Military Guide to Terrorism: 2005 Version 3.0)

### 5.3 Future Trends of Terrorism

The future trends of terrorism may take the form of intense motivational extremism, flexible organizational structure, improved operation capabilities, expanded transnational associations, increased weapons system lethality, intended mass casualties, mayhem/ chaos, and exploited mass media marketing.

Terrorism adopts to meet the challenges of emerging societies and governments. Terrorism exploits developments in technology and individual or group belief systems. At least, two overarching trends indicate the direction of terrorism and terrorist groups.

Terrorism is becoming more networking based that encourages a loosely organized, self financed, organizational structure. The motivation of terrorist groups appear to be based increasingly on religious beliefs, extreme ideological absolutes, international or transnational co-operations among terrorist groups which provides them with an improved ability to recruit members, develop fiscal support and resources, gain skill making, transfer of technology and when desired political advice.

Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the spectre of their effects clearly amplify the gangs of a terrorist act; information is readily available on many aspects of chemical, biological, ideological, nuclear and conventional high yield explosives. Material for attempting the construction of WMD is easily accessible in the public domain, the knowledge and technological means of specialists to produce WMD is a shadowy area of science, crime and intrigue available to the terrorists.

## Chapter Three:

# Terrorism in Ethiopia and the Horn: Analysis and Findings

## Somalia: A Failed State

Somalia has been in Civil War for the last twenty years since 1991. Efforts have been made to solve the problem. These efforts were made in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Egypt, Kenya, and Jeddah, which failed. UN Peacekeeping Operations were also unsuccessful during 1993-1995. This was due to two reasons: failure of international community to work and low exertion work to their country's sovereignty by creating national consciousness.

After an integrated effort of IGAD member states and the international community, the Federal Transitional Government (TFG) of Somalia was established in 2004, in Nairobi, Kenya. After its establishment, the TFG was forced to transfer its capital to Jowhar and then to Baidowa because it was difficult to be situated in Mogadishu. The ICU, which was considered as terrorist, has declared a Jihadic war on Ethiopia to establish Greater Somalia. Hence, Ethiopia faced a clear threat, took self-defense measures with, and supported by The TFG. The Ethiopian Army defeated ICU within the shortest period of time and created conducive environment that enabled TFG to administer places freed from ICU.

## Political and Economic Environment

### Political Environment

Somalia has a population estimated to 8-10 millions of which 99% are Muslims. It has been a failed state since 1991. Its population is classified into four major clans and other minorities. They are Darod, Hawiye, Digil Merfle, Dir, and other minorities, which represent 27%, 25%, 22%, 20%, and 6% of the total population respectively. The TFG Parliament was established with 275 seats having a composition of the major and minor clans groups. Darod, Hawiye, Digil Merfle, Dir and minorities represented 61 seats of each major clan and 31 seats from the minorities. Such representation is known as 4.5 systems. This system enables the major clans to have an equal representation and minorities as a group have half of the major clans' representation in the Parliament.

A disagreement arose in inclusion of peace force among Parliament members. At that time, 24 members of the Parliament including former S speaker of the Parliament

Sheriff Hussein had rejected the inclusion of the peace force in the Parliament and started to support ICU. However, after the 24 previous members of Parliament went to Asmara and began a campaign against TFG, the Somali Diasporas campaigned for the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops from Somalia. They also established an opposition forum against TFG and presence of the Ethiopian troops in Somalia.

## Economic Environment

Shebelle and Juba river areas which were not under the control of TFG had economic activities such as agriculture, import and export, telecommunications services, bank services, Air, maritime and road transport including port services. These economic activities were managed and administered by Diaspora fundamentalists. The government was not able to collect taxes, because the government structure was not effective and most areas of the countries were controlled by *Al-Shabbab*. Besides, the Somali currency is illegally printed and circulated in different sub-regions of the country.

In Somalia, there was no access to learn in modern schools, except religious schools for indoctrinating the political matters which were administered by *Al-Itihad*, Al salh, Tiqifer and Tebli- supporters of ICU directly and indirectly. Especially, Al-Salh managed social and economic institutions, Quran and regular schools, health services, money transfer services and other types of commercial organizations in the country. In Mogadishu, there were six money transfers, three telecoms, four air transport services and ships. However, these companies were not attacked by ICU or *Al-Shabbab*.

## Security Forces

- a. Defense: At the time of TFG establishment, there were 10,000-12,000 members of the army and reduced to 2000 because most army members went to *Al Shabbab*, engaged in criminal acts such as robbery and some ministers were organizing their clan-armed force for their protection. This reduced the strength of the TFG Army force.
- b. Police: During the establishment of TFG, there were about 3800 police officers who were working in 16 districts in Mogadishu. Most of them left the organization. The police was organized from Siad Barie regime police officers, clan armed personnel and new recruits. However, they did not respect each other because of their clanism and lack of hope.
- c. Intelligence: Though the intelligence service was organized relatively better, it was ineffective and could not provide, however, any information that enabled the government to take appropriate actions.

- d. Other Security apparatus: Members of the Parliament, ministers and security forces were frustrated from time to time and they got weakened. At this time, TFG controlled only the seaport, airport, palace, some districts and the remaining parts of Mogadishu were controlled by *Al-Shabbab*.

### **Reasons for the Failure of TFG of Somalia that Strengthened Al-Shabbab**

The failure of TFG of Somalia strengthened Al-Shaba'ab due to various reasons. First, all sub-regions of Somalia were not controlled by TFG and this gave an opportunity for terrorists to reorganize themselves due to rejection/no acceptance of TFG by war-lords and clan leaders. Second, some of NGOs operating in Mogadishu were oriented by foreign parties to weaken TFG. Third, Merchants in Mogadishu were also able to trade in a war situation without paying tax. They predicted the strengthening of TFG would result in effective tax collection of the government from them. Based on this attitude they started to oppose the TFG. Fourth, the FM Radio Stations in Mogadishu were propagating against TFG. This is because they were funded for this purpose by external parties. Fifth, Presence of members of the parliaments, ministers and security force chiefs in the TFG who supported and worked for *Al-Shabbab* and fighting against the TFG by disgruntled clans such as Dedeble, Ayer, Mersde and Suleman. Sixth, there were clannish thinking which lead to unity among security forces chiefs who tried to raise funds to strengthen in finance and weapons to protect their clan from any adversaries by regarding government activities. Seventh, the presence of severe poverty that forced the youth to join *Al-Shabbab* as an alternative and they inculcated in the minds of the youth that fighting against Christianity and dying for their religion would lead them to heaven. Eighth, some of the TFG officials were corrupt. Various parties deposited a large amount of money in TFG officials' account abroad to weaken the TFG. Ninth, the absence of trust among TFG officials compelled them to recruit their own guards from their own clans. This created suspicions among them; and lastly, owning more than 3000 km coastal line which it makes formidable to control smuggling fire arms, bombs and other types of weapons used by terrorists

### **Fertile Grounds for the Rise of Terrorism in the Horn of Africa**

Terrorist groups have emerged from every culture and in every historical context in any country. The tendency towards violence is likely to be a universal aspect of political behavior, regardless of socio-economic, geo-political and historical-cultural factors. There is no historical context in which the social or political environment accepts violence as a legitimate means of conducting political and social affairs. There is no culture that permits itself as war-like and therefore allows the use of violence in political conduct. However, the imposition of or domination over indigenous political

social, economic, and cultural aspects accelerate the relative deprivations experienced by disadvantaged groups. This can trigger rebellions, often conducted, using terrorist methods.

### **Geo-Political Situation of the Horn and Its Environs**

The geo-political set-up of the Horn of Africa has been a vulnerable and terrorist prone area. First and foremost, it is located at a strategic route to countries of West Europe, Asia and Australia through the narrow strip of the Suez-Canal and *Babel Mandab*. Hence, big powers have interest in cooperation and *d i s a g r e e* amongst themselves over control and influence over this area. Secondly, there is a political instability and underdevelopment in the sub-region due to unsustainable economic development and existence of failed state particularly Somalia (Rashid, 2001:129-136).

Thirdly, the Horn of Africa is also close to the troubled Middle East, where oil rich and holy places of the Arab states are located, the Palestinian and Israel conflict and external powers with their own vested national interests have been heavily involved. There is a spillover effect of the Middle East problem over the Horn sub-region (ibid). The post-colonial period in the Middle East saw the rise of Arab nationalism together with the ideas of post Arabism, i.e. feeling of Arab brotherhood and solidarity within the community of Arab nations, which also encompasses some states of the Horn/ East Africa (ibid).

However, it is unattainable to bring the intended effect. "The diversity of the various Arab nations, together with their differing alliances, however, ensured that the much vaunted Arab nationalism failed to produce any sort of cohesion in an era characterized by slogans of liberation, development and socialism" (Sidahmed and Ehteshmi, 1996:6-7). Thus, the vacuum left by the demise of pan-Arabism was rapidly filled by the development of religion-based extremism. This was rather aggravated by the failure of liberal regimes espousing to make any real changes to the lives of most ordinary people and they were thus seen as elitist groups who were enriching only themselves.

The defeat of the Arab forces and the failure to regain Palestine in the 1967 (known by six-Day war), had also dealt a shattering blow to Arab nationalist/ populist regimes led by Nasser's Egypt and sowed the first seeds of discontent which would develop as Islamist extremism. This means the defeat caused despair and hopelessness, which in turn led to Islamist extremism in the sub-region. On the other hand, in the Cold War period, the West was supporting countries and groups such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Algeria, Somalia and *Al-Qaeda* as a means of contracting the Soviet expansionism in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa to safeguard their interests. The volatile politics

of both sub-regions, however, saw increasing competition for power and influence and the rising stature of Islamist groups as a counter balance to Western and Marxist influences in the sub-regions, a situation whereby, paradoxically, observed the west lend support to these groups as well.

## The Failed Somali State and the Politics of Destabilization in the Horn

Failed states are fertile grounds for insecurity. "Failed states are tense, deeply conflicted, dangerous and bitterly by warring factions" (Rotberg, 2003:5). "Weak and failed states are a source of international instability and that may become a sanctuary for terrorism" (Shinn, 2005).

Failed states are unable to control their borders, and the regimes may prey on their own constituents. Infrastructures are deteriorating, and other institutions are flawed. In such states criminal violence is on the rise and the government provides virtually no political stability. The executive branch may still be strong because a dictator may have a strong hold over his population. However, the executive is unable to deliver political grounds to the population. Examples of this may be many in Africa, where the citizens have suffered loss of political ground while the executive has maintained a large degree of power over its population (Rotberg, 2003:5).

Failed and weak states characterize reduction in income and living standards and high relative crime rates. According to Brown,

*The influences of criminal organizations in weak states become more powerful and pervasive individual groups within these states feel compelled to provide for their own defense; they have to worry about whether other groups pose security threats [so] the incentives for grounds to make independent military reparation grow (Brown, 2001:6-7).*

Hence, in the absence of effective government which could provide law and order, people felt insecure and thus some groups are motivated to attain their goals through force and terror acts.

The Horn of Africa includes Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia and Sudan. All these six states share social and cultural values emanating from centuries old historical economic and political linkages. Egypt, though physically outside the sub-region, too is not less involved in the issues and processes of the Horn of Africa. Consequently, the political fate of each state in the sub-region has always been and still is connected with that of the adjacent states. "The nature of the state, the way they come to power are all the products of historical contradictions, internal and external policies that they have adopted qualified the sub-region in intensive intra and interstate conflicts (Medhane, 2003:5)

As to the recent geo-political dynamics of the sub-region, it creates fertile grounds for the rise of terrorist organizations. Firstly, since 1989 in Sudan, a military regime took power and is backed by the now discredited National Islamic Front (NIF). More seriously, Sudan served as a junction point for terrorist groups. The Sudanese regime was also covertly involved in the 1995 assassination attempt of the Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarek in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (The African Economist, 2002:26).

The spread of Islamic extremism had the unfortunate consequences to fuel the already extensive conflict inside Sudan. Furthermore, Eritrea and Ethiopia remained alert to contain the Sudanese regime's attempt to promote extremist ideas, practices and groups within their borders.

Somalia, like Sudan, share common border with Ethiopia and border relations are further complicated. However, by the fact that the South Eastern part of Ethiopia, much of which is called the sub-region five, is overwhelmingly inhabited by Ethiopian Somalis, Somalis on both sides of the adjacent areas have for centuries crossed from one country to the other. It has been the official policy of neighboring Somalia since independence in 1960 to incorporate in its territory Somali-inhabited areas in neighboring Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia. This policy resulted in constant border tension between Somalia and Ethiopia and the occupation of the Ogaden by Somalia in 1977 and 1978, which had been backed by geo-political interest of the West and East bloc (Medhane, 2002:27-29).

Furthermore, immediately after the demise of the Said Barre Government of Somalia and Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia, the Somalia Republic disintegrated. Both fell in 1991, providing a unique opportunity for proponents of Radical Islamic groups into Islamic extremism in the sub-region.

*The authoritarian rule of Said Barre completely destroyed the moral fabric of the society. When the people are persecuted and not given a chance to express their grievances, they will look for a mechanism, which enables them to do so. The armed group [extremist] formed, in the end of 1970's, became the means of expression and they started a trend, which was to transform Somalia (Abdiwassa, 1999:1).*

The lack of a central government in Somalia and its largely ungoverned territory and coastline provide fertile grounds for terrorists as a safe haven and as a source of recruitment for extremist Islamic groups. Somalia has played a major role as a transit point for terrorism and it has everything terrorists want because of its unprotected coastline. As such, it is true that Somalia is an Islamic country with radical movements, and not to be blamed for its Islamic fundamentalism, misery and desperation.

Since political Islam is on the rise and terrorists have exploited the state of collapse in Somalia, these situations have been pronounced as expected. This is due to chaotic security environment of a collapsed state controlled by leaders of faction. Rather than being concerned about *Al-Qaeda* bases in North-East Africa the 'vacuum' in Somalia and the weak governance of other countries made them attractive hiding places for *Al-Qaeda* assets; human, military and finance' (De Wall, 2004:235). Hence, Somalia has played a major role as both for transit and hosting point for extremist Islamists that are committed to terrorism in the Horn sub-region.

Yet, there is concern that if Somalia moved from a collapsed state to a weak central state, it could be more vulnerable to terrorists because of the fact that weak, corrupt states are more hospitable to terrorists than collapsed states. Therefore, the absence of central authority in Somalia created a conducive environment for terrorist and extremist groups. In other words, the extremist Islamic groups like *Al-Itihad Al-Islamia* has taken advantage of the prevailing anarchy in the country.

### **SocioEconomic Factors**

Besides the social dislocation caused by forces such as rapid urbanization, the destruction of traditional institutions, social mobility and the expansion of education; the inability of the state to provide basic services to their citizens exacerbated the growing discontent with the existing social order.

Islamic extremist groups, unlike political Islamists, have now become an international agenda for protecting the interest of Moslems everywhere. They create and encourage for the increase of different forms of Islamic extremists.

The contemporary Horn of Africa, particularly Somalia, has exhibited two factors, which in turn are breeding terrorism and the movement of radicalism in the sub region: absolute poverty and the rapid trend of cultural globalization. These two factors exacerbated the socio-economic and political crisis that has been widely observed in the sub-region since independence. In fact, there is a discourse among western scholars and policy makers on whether terrorism is the effect of poverty or not. According to most scholars, poverty cannot cause terrorism. Their simple argument is "most present-day terrorists including Osama Bin Laden came from high and middle class society of the Middle East". For that matter, the United States of America National Security Strategy which was issued under the signature of President George Bush in 2002 states that "Poverty does not make poor people into terrorists and murderers. Yet poverty, weak institutions, and corruption can make a state vulnerable to terrorist networks and drug cartels within their borders" (Shinn, 2005:4).

However, the fact on the ground in the Horn and Somalia reveals that the predominance of recurrent famine and poverty forced majority of the people to be frustrated. This forces them to look for extremism as a means to address their grievances against their respective states, which failed to provide for the needs of people for the last five decades and thus extremist groups became a source of employment to fulfill their basic needs, necessary for daily life. Therefore, the majority of people have turned their face to Islamist parties in their quest for realizing justice, development and good governance in the sub-region and Somalia. Therefore, the argument by Western scholars that "poverty does not affect terrorism" has no relevance to the sub-region. As Shinn argues, the characteristic features of terrorism in Africa are not ostensibly identical with the Middle East, South Asia and Europe.

*Most extremists and terrorist acts in Africa are by those who are stuck in grinding poverty, are politically marginalized and or are suffering significant social and economic equally ... the poverty of an urban center like Addis Ababa or Casablanca offer a hospitable environment for terrorists to exploit (Shinn, 2005:3).*

Even if Wahabism does not equate with terrorism, it is a backbone for the mushrooming of extremist groups in the sub-region. On the other hand, in the areas which are plagued by poverty, Wahabist charity organizations provide the necessary social services for the large section of society such as health care, education, orphanage service and the like. By doing so, they are getting acceptance and paving the fertile grounds for the pervasive trend of extremism in the sub-region (ibid).

A cultural clash with and a fight to retain an identity from the wave of cultural globalization is another factor behind the contemporary social crisis in the sub-region and Somalia. As their history has witnessed, most Somalis prefer to preserve their cultural identity intact and they want to be independent from domination of western culture. A good pictogram for this is their strong loyalty to their respective clan irrespective of their status. Extremist groups, like *Al-Itihad*, are exploiting this ground by politicizing that the involvement of a super power and/or a sub-regional state in Somalia is aimed at undermining Islam and their culture. The Somalis who are disenchanted by the rapid trend of cultural globalization would act fast in response to this agitation of extremist groups.

### **Conflict Trends in Somalia (2010)**

Major combatants in Somalia include TFG, AMISOM ( Uganda and Burundi); *Al Shabbab*; *Hizbul Islam* - Islamic party; and *Ahlul Sunna Wa-al Jam'a* - The people of precedents and consensus.

The terrorists mainly Al-Shabbab, attack civilians and peacekeepers combating, terror-using suicide bombings, assassinations, intra-militia fights, bombings, attacks on

peace-keepers, and use of child soldiers. Al-Shabbab, *Harakat al-shabbab Mujahidin* (Which means Movement of Warrior Youth), is an Islamist insurgency group in the ongoing war in Somalia. The core comprised veterans who fought and defeated the secular Mogadishu warlords of the Alliance for Restoration of Peace and Counter Terrorism (ARPCT). Its goal is to impose a government based on the Taliban model on Somalia and beyond. Thus, they are not true liberation fighters.

The group describes itself as waging Jihad against “enemies of Islam” and is engaged in combat against Somali Transitional Federal Government, AMISOM, Ethiopia, Kenya, Australia and UN and Western NGOs. It has a link with *Al-Qaeda*.

*Al-Shabbab* controls south and central parts of Somalia including a large swath of Mogadishu. Although, Aden Hashi Farah “Ayrow” - Ayr - Habar Gidir and other important leaders were killed by the US air strike, Sheikh Mukhtar Robow (or Abu Mansur)- from Rahanweyn, Sheik Moktar Ali Zubeyr- Aka Ahmad Abdi Godane, Ahmad Abdi Aw Muhammad- Issaq came into the state to lead the faction. The decision of Al-Shabab is passed by a committee comprising Ahmed Abdi Aw Mohamed “Godane”-Issaq; Fuad Ahmed Khalaf “Shangole-Awritable/Darod; Ibrahim Haji Jamaa “Afgani”- Issaq; Bashir Mohamed Mohamud- Murusade; Sudi Arable-Murusade; Sheikh Ali Mohamed Hussein Rage (Sheikh Ali Dheere) - Abgaal- Al Shabaab Spokesman; Ahmed Korgab-Murusade-Military Commander; and Mohamed Fidow Murusade-Principal officer.

Al-Shabbab has also organized itself in dividing Somilia into seven regions and assigned commanders to each region. For Mogadishu, Ali Mohamed Hussein-Abgaal Governor of Benadir and Ahmed Korgab-Murusade-Military Commander; for Hirran, Ali-Galjacel- Governor and Sheikh Moose Kahwo-Hawadle-Spokesperson; for Bakool, Sheikh Muktar Robow -Rahanweyn-Military Commander Bay and Bakool and Mahad Mohamed Karate-Haber Gedir-Governor Bay and Bakool; for middle Shabelle, Sheikh Hassan Hussein-Abgaal-Governor and Abdirahman Hayle-Murusade-Military Commander; for Lower Shabelle, Sheikh Abdurahman Siira-Majeerteen -Governor and Sheikh Sultan-Saleeban-Deputy Spokesperson; for Gedo, Sheikh Moallim Osman Marehan-Governor and Abdullahi Komandos-Ayran-Chief Operation Commander; for Middle and Lower Juba, Hansen Yacub- Spokesperson- Kismayo, Ali Hog- Head of Security Middle Juba and Hussein Gedi-Ogaden- Governor Lower Juba.

*Al-Shabbab's* violent activities

- Assassination of AMISOM peace keepers including Brigadier General Juvenal Niyoyunguruza of Burundi, the deputy head of AMISOM, aid workers and large number of civilians;

- Three ministers killed in the blast, one was a woman- Qamar Aden Ali, the Health Minister. Ibrahim Hassan Adow, the Minister for Higher Education, and Ahmed Abdullahi Wayel, the Minister for education, also died in a graduation ceremony;
- Suicide bombing at the entrance of a hotel in the Somali town of Beled Weyne (the provincial capital of Hiraaan province) killed Somalia's Minister of Security, Colonel Umar Hashi Adan, the former Somali Ambassador to Ethiopia, Abdikarim Farah Laqanyo, and at least 32 others;
- Assassination attempt in Denmark to the Danish Cartoonist- Kurt Westergaard;
- Four men allegedly connected with *Al-shabbab* in Melbourne, Australia were charged over the Holsworthy Barracks terror plot;
- Involvement in Lebanon to fight against Israel;
- Explosives attack in Kampala: Ethiopian Village Restaurant and Kyadondo Rugby Club were attacked at 22h30 local time. During the attack 76 people were killed: 65 Ugandans, four Ethiopians, four Eritreans, one American, one Irish and one Kenyan.
- The attack is a suicide bombing where two heads were found at the terrorist scene; one resembles a Somali and the other an African whose origin is unknown.

Such attacks also continued even in 2010. Some of them are listed below:

#### June 2010 Highlights

- Deadly fighting between AU-backed Government soldiers and Islamist militias continued in Mogadishu.
- At least 17 civilians and two AU peacekeepers reportedly killed on 3'd of June and at least 13 died in clashes between Government soldiers and police in Mogadishu on the 13th of June.
- At least 24 reported killed in early month fighting between *Al-Shabaab* and *Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a* (ASWJ) militia in central Somalia; thousands of civilians reportedly fled. ASWJ on the 6th of June said they recaptured key town of Dhusomareb.
- Political uncertainty continued as three ministers, including Defense Minister, announced resignations on the 5th of June citing governments' failure to restore order.
- President Sheik Sharif on the 17th of June ordered investigation into the use of child soldiers by the army after highly critical UN report.

## May 2010

- Prime Minister Sharmarke and his Government lost vote of no confidence on May 16, 2010, when Parliament met for the first time since December but President Sheikh Sharif on 20th May reinstated Sharmarke after earlier calling for his resignation.
- In Mogadishu at least 30 killed, dozens injured on May 1<sup>st</sup> blasts; at least 14 killed when *Al-Shabaab* insurgents attacked Presidential Palace on 23<sup>rd</sup> of May.
- UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon on 22nd of May urged international support for Transitional Government at UN-sponsored Somalia Conference in Istanbul.

## February 2010

- In Mogadishu, at least 21 civilians were killed in shelling by Islamist militia *Al Shabbab* on 7-11 February. *Al-Shabaab* early in the month began moving hundreds of reinforcements into the capital, and on 12th of February proclaimed “all out war” against The TFG.
- UNHCR: 17<sup>th</sup> Feb reported thousands fled city over previous two weeks.
- Five killed in shootout between security forces over non-payment of salaries on fourth of February.
- Four killed in suicide bomb targeting military convoy and defense State Minister on 15th of February, Minister escaped unharmed.
- *Al-Shabbab* on 28<sup>th</sup> of February ordered World Food Program to halt operations.

*Al-Shabbab* gets financial and military support from Eritrea - serves as conduit, Hezbollah, and Al-Qaeda (See BARAKAT AL-SHABBABA MUJAHIDEEN, 2010)

# Terrorism in Ethiopia and Responses to It

## Overview

For almost a decade before 9/11, Ethiopia suffered successive acts of terrorism. The attacks were mainly by *Al-Itihad Al-Islamia*, OLF, ONLF, *Al-Shabbab* terrorist organizations based in Somalia and Ethiopia. Historically and culturally, Ethiopia is a holy country for both Islam and Christianity. Followers of both major religions have equally significant role in Ethiopian history, which they should be proud of.

Since Ethiopia is a victim of a series of external terrorist attacks, it is natural that other countries that are victims of terrorism would find Ethiopia a genuine ally with its own priority for fighting terrorism. (See Threats of Terrorism, Mehari)

## Radicalism and Terrorism Threats in Ethiopia

Terrorism remains one of the main threats to the security, stability and well-being of nations globally. Terrorists have the determination and capability to strike high profile targets anywhere, using any of the repertoires of methods available to them. Terrorists seek opportunities to undertake operations that would communicate their message. No country is immune to acts of terrorism, but it is clear that they will seek to carry out operations where conditions favor their objectives, and where the impact would be devastating.

Ethiopia is a country which is not new to terrorists and the dangers caused by them. Even before what happened on September 11, 2001 in the US, the country had been fighting and facing different types of terrorist attacks and threats emanating from religious, ideological, ethnic and other differences. According to the participants of the FGD (October 23, 2010), the targets of the terrorists are government officials, civilians, experts in different fields, and different civilian institutions. Among the main terrorist groups that caused tremendous destructions were/are OLF, ONLF, AIAI (*Al-Itihad Al Islamia*), *Al-Shabbab*, *Wahabiyya* and *Khawarja* faith followers.

Generally speaking, institutions and materials related to gas oil exploration, hotels, restaurants, cafes, schools, water pumps, trains, military bases, oil depots, health centers, taxis and buses, cargo vehicles, and construction companies were among the main areas that sustained terrorist attacks (own observation and Federal Police Investigation documents).

The most commonly employed methods to commit the terrorist acts in Ethiopia were/are: land mines, hand bombs, time bombs, and small arms firing (own observation and Federal Police Investigation documents).

Evidences show that the trend of terrorist threats shows an increase rather than a decrease considering the real situation of Ethiopia and its surroundings. Leaving aside the debate whether there is a terrorist threat in Ethiopia or not, the study has endeavored to present the dangers posed by terrorism to Ethiopia due to terrorist attacks and the real and direct terrorist threats faced by Ethiopia and its environs below.

### Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)

OLF, following its withdrawal from the Transitional Government in 1992, has entered into terrorist acts by directing attacks against civilians. Such attacks included bombing hotels, railroads and roads using hand bombs and land mines, damaging public as well as governmental infrastructures, violence against innocent civilians, which caused loss of life and destructions of property. Specially, after the Ethio-Eritrean border conflict,

OLF caused high casualties on life and property at different times and places by committing terrorist attacks with the training and logistics support it procured from the Eritrean government.

According to the evidence collected by Ethiopian Federal Police Investigation department, after OLF had fully entered into terrorist attacks, especially, after 1995 it has committed 106 terrorist attacks at different times and places. The detail of the time, place, and casualties of the attacks look like the following:

- In 1987 E.C., due to a terrorist attack by ONLF in different kebeles of East and West Hararge (using land mines) six people were killed and two wounded;
- In 1988 E.C., in three terrorist attacks in Dire Dawa, Nazareth Dalol Hotel Somalia Shinille area on railway, five civilians were killed and four wounded. In Dire Dawa, the two dead and two wounded were foreign tourists;
- In 1989 E.C., four attacks were launched at West Shewa Jeldu, Hara Belayneh Hotel Addis Ababa Blue Tops and Tigray Hotel terrorist attacks where seven people were killed and 48 people were wounded seriously. Among the dead, 34 were civilians who were on vacation in Tigray Hotel. In addition, property of high value was destroyed in these attacks;
- In 1990 E.C., there was no attack or recorded terrorist attack by OLF;
- In 1991 E.C., two attacks were committed in the Dire Dawa-Shinille railway by a landmine, which resulted in four wounded people, and destruction of property estimated at 850,000 Birr. In the same year, another landmine prepared for an attack in the same way was detonated before it expanded.
- In 1992 E.C., 13 terrorist attacks were committed by OLF. Eight attacks were committed on railways using landmines, which resulted in four dead and three wounded and destruction of property of high value. Two other landmines were diffused without causing any harm at different times. In the same year attacks were committed on Nazareth's Assab Hotet and Dire Dawa's Say and Green Hotels. As a result of these attacks, three people were killed and 32 wounded. Among the wounded, two had suffered very serious injuries.
- In 1993 E.C., three terrorist attacks were committed: one was in Shashemene by a bomb thrown at a hotel in which five people were wounded, and the other two were attacks on a train in which two persons were wounded. Moreover, in these terrorist attacks, property of high value was destroyed.
- In 1994 E.C., three terrorist attacks were committed and all of them were against Dire Dawa "Midir Babur Enterprise". The two bombs caused destruction of property but the third one was diffused in a search.

- In 1995 E.C., around seven terrorist attacks were committed. Among them, on September 11, a landmine caused the death of five and wounded 38 people in Tigray Hotel. The hotel was destroyed with an estimated property value of three million birr. OLF imported 20 landmines to Addis Ababa at that time for committing similar attacks but except the two used for attacking Tigray Hotel, the rest were diffused without causing any harm. The remaining six attacks were committed against trains and the three attacks caused one dead and three wounded, the remaining two landmines and one hand bomb were diffused without causing any harm. Destruction of property was high.
- In 1996 E.C., around 22 attacks were attempted by OLF. Among these, at Shashemene a landmine was used for the attack in which two people were dead, 16 wounded, and destruction of property was high. Others were attacks committed using a hand bomb in the towns of Sebeta, Alemgena, Wolliso, Ambo, Debrezeit, Neqemt (in different secondary and high schools), Dukem, Dilla, and in Addis Ababa University 15 attacks which caused serious damage to life and property. Among such attacks, the two were committed in two private residences at Debrezeit and in Addis Ababa University against students who were watching a TV program. As a result two people were dead and four seriously injured and nine with slight injuries.
- In 1997 E.C., though there was not any recorded terrorist attack by OLF, landmines left at Melkajebdu area were diffused without causing any harm.
- In 1998 E.C., 34 attacks were committed by OLF, and except one, all of them were committed in Addis Ababa. Among them in 10 different attacks, six civilians were killed and 58 people suffered serious and minor injuries. Those attacks that caused serious injuries to life and body were those committed in taxis, minibuses, city buses, cafes, restaurants, bus stations by landmines.
- In 1994 E.C., four terrorist attacks were committed in Addis Ababa city in shops and hotels by a landmine, which resulted in four deaths and two with serious and four with minor injuries.
- In 2000 E.C., eight terrorist attacks were committed by OLF in Addis Ababa and in all those attacks a total of 12 people were killed and 23 with serious and minor injuries. Among such attacks, those against minibuses and gas stations caused the most serious injuries (by landmines).
- In 2001 E.C., there was no terrorist attack committed by OLF. This year, the group was split into two and this may be the probable cause of the absence of such attacks. In total until 2000 E.C., attacks committed by OLF resulted in over 57 civilian deaths and 253 minor and serious injuries against civilians.

Among the many landmines prepared by OLF to cause destruction at different times, most of them were diffused without causing any injury. To mention an example, had the OLF terrorist attacks in Addis Ababa that targeted “Gas Depot” been successful, it could have resulted in high fire damage in the city. The instruments and people used for committing terrorist acts are brought to the mainland through the borders of Ethiopia, Sudan and through Assab (Bure front), Bati and Kemissie, in addition to the traditional Djibouti, Kenya and Somalia lines, according to evidence.

### Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF)

Another terrorist group called ONLF, had been committing terrorist attacks against civilians and foreign citizens and aid organizations working in the area, repeatedly. The structure of this organization constituted a chair person, two vices, and nine specialized committees. The nine committees are: Diaspora affairs, finance department, information department, internal affairs, organizational affairs, legal affairs, foreign secretary, community desk, and military affairs. According to the former leader of this group, the main financial sources of this group were: remittances of the Somali Diaspora, some Arab countries, and later on the Eritrean Government (Salehadin, Oct. 21, 2010). According to him, especially, the support given by the Eritrean Government included: (1) arms supplies, (2) giving various training to the armed members of the ONLF, (3) providing an office in Eritrea and giving different moral and material supports, and (4) preparing operational plans.

Among the main attacks perpetrated by the ONLF are:

5. 1993-1996, ONLF had been committing various crimes of looting and burning vehicles in the Somalia sub-region which is not recorded;
6. In 1998, ONLF committed six terrorist attacks. In the two attacks civilians were killed by taking them out of a car. One foreign citizen including five civilians were taken hostages. In this year, attacks were committed against our defense forces and woreda police stations;
7. In 2000, three terrorist attacks were committed, four people were killed and two were injured. The attacks were committed against civilians travelling (voyage) by firing to death.
8. In 2001, three terrorist attacks were committed, 13 people were killed, and two wounded. Among the dead eight were members of the armed forces attacked at an area called Dengesagso through an insurgent attack
9. In 2002, nine civilians who were travelling from Babile to Jijiga were killed in the town of Fafem.

10. In 2003, in an attack committed twice seven vehicles and one telegraph officer was robbed.
11. In 2007, attacks by ONLF reached their apex. In Fiq zone, in three cafes, and at the end of the year an attack was committed at Abule Gas exploration project, which resulted in serious damage to life and property. Before such attacks, 20 members of our defense forces, one person at Jijiga London cafe, 67 Ethiopians and 9 Chinese, totally 97 civilians were killed, and injuries were sustained by many and destruction of property was estimated in millions.
12. In 2008, three terrorist attacks were committed in Degehabur woreda main road, in East Hararge zone bordering Fiq zone, in Fiq zone Bejmenki woreda at three different times and in such attacks many police officers and militias were killed and in Kebridehar woreda an Engineer was killed, machines for road construction destroyed and aid food looted.
13. In 2009, four terrorist attacks were committed at four different times. In an attack committed in Degehabur, 25 civilians and many members of the defense forces were killed, and lots of property burnt and looted. In Denan woreda, an attack was committed against an NCO and the head was taken. A hostage at the end of the year through attacks committed in Babile and Kebridehar zones eight police men and many members of the administration were killed.

In total, since 1998, through more than 25 terrorist attacks committed by ONLF, 130 civilians and more than this number of members of the defense forces, the police and administrative organs were killed. Most of the killings were committed through sudden attacks on people (civilians traellingt), members of the defense or police and workers in development projects. The Ethiopian defense forces, especially after 2008 together with the sub-regional police and militia had been engaged in deep counter insurgency measures and it was able to kill many of the combatants and leaders of the group in addition to weakening their structure but they are attempting to restructure and strengthen themselves through support from the Eritrean Government.

### **Al-Itihad**

This terrorist group has committed terrorist attacks in Addis Ababa, in addition to those committed in the Eastern part of the country.

To mention the main ones:

- In 2006, Dire Dawa Ras Hotel, Addis Ababa Ghion Hotel, Wabishebele Hotel, bus on the way from Addis Ababa to Mekelle, the then Minister of Transport Dr. Abdulmejid Hussien and in Oromia a train in a place called Berdere were targeted by the terrorist attacks of this group and a total of 29 civilians were

killed and 40 wounded. The property destroyed in the hotels is estimated to be 11 million birr.

- In 1999, in Code town, new military recruits were targeted in a hand bomb attack, which resulted in many dead and wounded. In the same year in the same town in a coffee house, one person was fired to death and four wounded.
- In 2002, in a landmine attack in the town of Jijiga Aedom Hotel a person was wounded.
- In 2009, in Jijiga Andinet Hotel four people were killed in a landmine attack.

In total since 2006, *Al-Itihad Al-Islamia* has committed more than 10 terrorist attacks in different places, towns and more than 34 people were killed, and more than 45 people sustained serious and minor injuries. The destructions of property is estimated in millions. This group's capacity to commit attack is highly weakened due to internal divisions though threats of attack are not totally without some damage.

## **Al-Shabbab**

Terrorists such as *Al-Shabbab* who function in stateless Somalia who have networks with other international terrorists that are causing serious threats not only to our country but also to the whole world have been expanding their control of terrorists and capacities to commit attacks following the withdrawal of the Ethiopian army from Somalia.

The Eritrean Government has strongly intensified its activities against Ethiopia by training all terrorist organizations both in its own territory and in Somalia. It is also providing instruments, war equipments, logistics, and financial support with the aim of devastating and dividing the sub-region and Ethiopia.

Following the call of Osama Bin Laden, his deputy Aiman Al-Zawahiri and others such as Abu Yahya Al-Libi to terrorists to fight the Transitional Government of Somalia, as labeled subservient the westerners to many Mujahidins from all over the world are increasingly entering Somalia.

- The Transitional Government has surrendered majority of the territory of Somalia and it is restricted to 4-5 Kms distance in the area surrounding the national palace. Quite contrary to this, Al-Shabbab and Hizbul Islam have controlled the areas of Bay, Bakoul, Gedo, Central and lower Juba, central and lower Shebelle fully and majority of Benadir, Hiran and areas of central Somalia. In all the areas, except Hiran and Benadir, they controlled they have established Islamic administration.

- In addition to what is mentioned above, they have controlled majority of the key areas of Mogadishu and other strategic areas and they are aiming at attacking the Transitional Government and peacekeeping forces so as to control Mogadishu completely.
- In the areas it fully controlled, Al-Shabbab is giving military, religious and suicide attack training to the youth by Mujahidins brought from abroad. The training includes the use of car mines and belt-worn bombs.
- Leaving aside the widespread killings by Al-Shabbab on daily basis, terrorist attacks are committed by Al-Shabbab using improvised explosive devices. The casualties on September 18, 2006 in an attack that was carried out on the former President of Somalia TFG, Abdullahi Yusuf resulted in the killing of the president's brother and four guards following exhibit the capacity and dangerous charter of this terrorist group.
- On 7 September 2002, Al-Shabbab committed an attack on the Commanders of the Transitional Government and African Peacekeeping Forces who were in a meeting using two armored land cruisers looted from UNDP in Bidowa which resulted in the killing of 17 members of the Peacekeeping Forces, three other people and minor and serious injuries on over 30 people.
- In June 2001, the Ministries of Security of the Transitional Government and an Ambassador to Ethiopia and 10 other people were killed in the town of Beledwoyn by two suicide bomber cars.
- On 19 October 2001 EC, Al-Shabbab committed an attack in the towns of Bosaso, killed 24 people, and injured the same number of people. The attacks in Hargeisa were committed in three different places: Ethiopian Commerce Office, National Palace and the UNDP office. In this attack, three Ethiopians were killed and the office of Commerce was completely destroyed while the UNDP office sustained limited damage.
- In addition to the above, similar attacks were committed in Bosaso. The targets of the attacks were people and institutions established by US and UK Governments working against terrorism, which resulted in the killing of six people.

These attacks were similar to those committed in Hargeisa and Bosaso at the same time and this indicates the capacity of *Al-Shabbab* as boosted by support from Al Qaeda. Following this, many attempts were made by *Al-Shabbab* to attack targets in our country though none of them was successful. Still, there is an attempt to commit attacks. According to Somalia's Ambassador to Ethiopia Said Yusuf, Now-a-days *Al-Shabbab's* agenda is not sub-regional rather it is international and it is definitely a branch of *Al Qaeda* in Africa, especially in the Horn of Africa.

## Other Terrorist Attacks Committed in Ethiopia and the Sub-region that Attracted International Attention

- In 1987, a terrorist group called *Jimat Al-Islamia* from Egypt supported by Sudan attempted to kill the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarek, which resulted in various problems. The members of the terrorist group involved in the attack who were caught alive explained that they were fighting against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and the cost of transportation of Muslims willing to fight in Afghanistan were covered by an organization owned by Osama Bin Laden called Osama Al Bilad.
- In 1998, GC attacks were committed against the Embassies of the USA in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salam, which resulted in the massacre of above 250 people. The architect of this attack who is member of *Al-Qaeda* called Haroum Fazul Abdulla Mohammad is believed to be alive.
- In December 2002 GC, a terrorist attack was committed against an Israeli owned Hotel in Mombassa, Kenya, which resulted in the killing of above 15 people and the complete destruction of the hotel and its accessories.
- At the same time, they attempted to attack an Israeli passenger plane with 261 passenger tourists by firing two missiles though they failed to hit their target.
- The architect of such attacks and the leader of *Al-Qaeda* East Africa Cell Salish Ali was killed in an attack by the US Air force.

## Wahabiyya

It is a radical group that has been established in 1998 in the Western part of Ethiopia. The group's major financial supporters are Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and some local people. The main purpose of this terrorist group is separating Christians from Muslims and Muslims from Muslims. Although its activities seem to have been relatively minimized after the attack of September 11/2001 on the US, it is still active and operational in Ethiopia. As documents indicate, in the metropolis, especially in the areas of Ayer Tena, it has illegally purchased many mosques. It also mobilizes uneducated youth for its own goals.

The group has been recruiting young students at the Secondary and Tertiary learning institutions. It publishes Islamic books, DVDs and other related audio-video materials and disseminates them to the public at-large. As its network indicates its members are distributed in Arsi, Hararge, Jimma, Wollega, Ilu Ababora, Bale, Woldia, Dessie, Kombolcha, Kemisse and in some parts of Tigray by making its base at Karakore.

### Trends of *Wahabiyya* in Ethiopia

*Wahabiyya*, now-a-days has extended its network in almost all parts of Ethiopia. The group has built many *Wahabiyya* mosques, *medresa* schools (Quran) and Islamic NGOs. The terrorist group is converting poor Muslims into *Wahabiyya* by making use of money and free religious education. They also recruit many youngsters and send them to Arab countries for Islamic education.

The doctrine in which the radical *Wahabiyya* operates includes the following instructions:

- Do not send Muslim children to secular schools but to Quran schools
- Do not obey a Christian government
- Don't pay taxes to a Christian government
- Friday should be a day off instead of Sunday
- Females should cover their faces with a veil
- Fight Christianity

### Acts of Terror by *Wahabiyya*

The following damages occurred during conflicts created by *Wahabiyya* by contradicting the longstanding beliefs, procedures and preaching and teaching in different parts of the country. On 14 February 1987, violence occurred between the leaders of the Long standing Islamic religion and followers of *Wahabiyya*, which resulted in the killing of nine people including members of security forces and injuring 63 people, destroying property of high value such as cars and private shops that were burned and property was looted in such a crisis at the Anwar Mosque. In addition to this, in Addis Ababa in Woreda 24 kebele 16 February 18/1993, Zone 2 woreda 24 kebele 17 January 6/1994, Zone 5 woreda 25 kebele 08 and 03 August 18/1993 Quba Mosque and after that, in different parts of Addis Ababa, conflicts that caused death and destructions of property were carried out.

Moreover, it instigated violence which resulted in casualties and loss of life in different parts of the country mainly in Somali, Oromiya, Amhara, and South Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' regional states.

### Khawarjia

The other group engaged in terror activities called *Khawarjia* or *Hewarjia* emanated from the so-called *Wahabiyya*. The leaders of this terrorist group have been actively operational in the areas of Assosa, Wollega, Jimma, Eastern and Western Hararge,

Kemissie, Wolkite and also in the metropolis, especially in Kolfe-Keranio sub city. The unique behavior of this terrorist group is that it uses specialized machine guns and in some areas of the country they kill Muslims who are against them. The Government of Ethiopia had taken crucial measures against this terrorist group during 2006 and at the end of 2008 and demolished their strong base. However, in recent times the group is reorganizing itself. There are documents, which indicate that some members of the group who have been released from prison are also reuniting themselves with the group.

To mention some of their operational methods:

- Their structure is focused based on youth, women, elderly people, and on creating social like money lending institutions for the localities and recruiting local societies. They also preach using religious matters in different mosques, organizing the youth and lending them money for agricultural activities and the like. The leaders of these terrorist groups purchase weapons and arm their members, train them in physical activities, give them know-how to assemble and disassemble weapons for their brave and uneducated youth members and organize them about 5-10 like a hidden political party.
- The leaders of the group bribe prison officials so that their members who are arrested for committing crimes could escape from prison. Majority of the members who joined this terrorist group are former terrorists of OLF and released members of OLF who served their prison term or were released by pardon of the Government. When they are attempting to cause damage on Christians and Muslims, they usually seek the support of *Wahnbiyyas*.
- As mentioned above all terrorist acts are targeting innocent civilian citizens who gather in cafeterias, restaurants, hotels, taxis, buses, trains, schools, public infrastructures, and government officials. Their common attacking styles are bombing, fighting, car bombing, using explosives and the like. (Federal Police Investigation Bureau and National Intelligence Office)

## Counter Terrorism Measures Taken by Ethiopia

### Legislative Definition of Terrorism

Ethiopia has been and is playing a crucial role in combating terrorism not only in the sub-region but also globally. Among the methods of combating terrorism, adopting a counter-terrorism law is one of them.

According to Ethiopian Proclamation of Anti-Terrorism, whosoever intends to advance a political, religious or ideological cause by coercing the Government, intimidates the public or section of the public, or destabilizes or destroys the fundamental political,

constitutional, economic, or social institutions of the country or

- a. causes a person's death or serious bodily injury;
- b. creates serious risk to the safety or health of the public or section of the public;
- c. commits kidnapping or hostage taking;
- d. causes serious damage to property;
- e. causes damage to natural resource, environment, historical or cultural heritages;
- f. endangers, seizes or puts under control or cause serious interference or disruption of any public service; or
- g. threatens to commit any of the acts stipulated under sub-articles (1) to (6) of this article: is punishable with rigorous imprisonment from 15 years to life or with death (See Federal Negarit Gazeta No. 57, August 2009).

### Legislative Measures

Terrorist incidents damage public and governmental infrastructures and pose a negative impact on the country's economy. The brutality of terrorist attacks became more devastating for the Government. In order to control such mishap the Government of Ethiopia has adopted an anti-terrorism proclamation via its parliament. The proclamation is composed of seven parts and a number of articles.

The first part of the proclamation includes the definition of terrorism in the Ethiopian context. The second one deals with terrorism and related crimes. The third part of the proclamation mainly focuses on the preventive and investigative measures of terrorism within the country. The fourth one deals with evidential and procedural rules of terrorism. The fifth part of the proclamation talks about the measures to control terrorist organizations and their properties. The sixth and seventh part of the proclamation focuses on the institutions, which control and follow up cases of terrorism and miscellaneous provisions.

### Measure taken by the Government

Number of Terrorists Who Have Been Convicted by the Government of Ethiopia

From September 2009-December 2010

Name of the Terrorist Group	5-10 years	10-20 years	Life Sentence	Death Sentence
OLF	59	287	22	3
Khawarja	-	8	5	-
Al-Shabbab	-	1	2	-
ONLF	-	-	2	-

(Source: Ministry of National Defense Unpublished Document)

## Administrative and Military Measures Taken by Ethiopia

### Somalia Intervention

When Ethiopia decided to wage its campaign of self defense against the Jihadists of Mogadishu who are also alluded to as the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC), it had five cardinal objectives to pursue. The motivation for its first objective was that the Jihadists posed a real and existing threat to its sovereignty by declaring war on it. Further, they had erroneously tried to project Ethiopia as an island of Christianity, which is hostile to its Muslim neighbors.

Nevertheless, contrary to the above postulation, the truth is that Ethiopia was the first country to embrace Islam and host Muslim refugees more than fourteen centuries ago. Besides, there is overwhelming evidence, which testifies to the fact that Ethiopia is at present a democratic and secular federal state, which treats all religions equally. What is more, Christians, Muslims and adherents of other beliefs have cohabited in Ethiopia peacefully and fraternally for centuries.

A second factor, which motivated Ethiopia to embark on its legitimate campaign of self defense is that the UIC, as underscored by its repeated pronouncements, had articulated that it was determined to expand its brand of extremist Islam not only in Somalia but also in Ethiopia and eventually in the Horn of Africa in general.

Third, according to the report of the arms monitoring group of the United Nations, eight countries were actively supporting the UIC politically, morally and militarily to pursue its vicious objective of destabilizing Ethiopia in particular and the Horn of Africa in general. Naturally, Ethiopia was unhappy about the connivance and vicious plan of the accomplices of the UIC like Eritrea, which were hell-bent on derailing its democratic, and development goals, which require peace and stability for their realization. Paradoxically enough, most of the accomplices of the UIC are countries that have good bilateral relations with Ethiopia as well as countries that have been

victims of international terrorism in the past and likely targets of the future. Hence, it boggles the mind as to why the alleged countries were supporters of the UIC and hostile towards Ethiopia.

Fourth, Ethiopia assumed the responsibility of the campaign of self-defense in order to rescue the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia, which was also one of the primary targets of the UIC. In fact, the UIC had begun to encircle the headquarters of the TFG at Baidoa and its environs. Further, by launching its counter offensive Ethiopia has assumed not only the responsibility of its own self-defense, but also the duty of protecting the TFG, which was vulnerable to external attacks. As a rule, it was the International Community, which had already extended its recognition to the TFG that should have assumed this task. Hence, Ethiopia deserves the praise and admiration of the World Community for shouldering the burden and obligation of all.

Fifth, Ethiopia also had a moral obligation to assist the TFG during its time of great difficulty as it had entered a general understanding of joint defense with it. The request of the TFG for Ethiopian support was, therefore, an additional compelling reason, which made Ethiopia take prompt action. In pursuing the above responsibilities, the Ethiopian plan was to realize the following three goals. One was ensuring its national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Its second goal was to contribute towards the stability of its friendly neighbors and the Horn of Africa in general which has been embattled by various inter-and intra-state conflicts over the last few decades.

As noted above, a third and critical consideration, which Ethiopia took stock of before embarking on its military campaign against the Jihadists, was the desire to assist the transitional process in Somalia, which resulted in the establishment of the TFG after two years of painstaking negotiations in Kenya. Naturally, all friends of Somalia were also anxious to make this experiment work and find a final peaceful settlement to the crisis in Somalia, which had resulted in the prolonged suffering and agony of its people for more than fifteen years. Ethiopia was also fully cognizant of the fact that the TFG was the first legally constituted and internationally recognized Government, which deserved to be assisted. (See Kinfe Abraham, Occasional Papers No.27)

### **Sahara Bereha Operation**

The Government of Ethiopia has defeated domestic terrorist groups at different times via its anti-guerilla war forces. Among these victories, Operation Sahara Bereha over the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) terrorist group is the major one.

The operation was held in Western Wollega zone, Kelem village. The OLF members were stationed in the jungle of the village for their terrorizing objectives. They were having a much reinforced base in the jungle surrounded by great rivers, mountains

as well as wild animals. They killed many innocent civilians, left children orphaned, raped, looted cattle and grains of the villagers several times.

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia gathered information about this terrorist group from the villagers and planned an operation to clear the area of the aforementioned groups.

The responsibility of the operation mainly rested on the Federal Police Anti-Guerilla war division together with the Oromiya Police and the local community in general. These joint forces undertook a long and difficult journey in order to get to the jungle where the terrorists were believed to be located.

This operation took one year and eight months because of the difficulty of the geographical location of the place. However, the operation ended with the joint forces containing the terrorists. Government forces finally forced the surrender of many members of the terrorist group, including Legesse Wogi, who is a central committee member of OLF and is believed to be the mastermind of the bombings of two NOC gas stations in Addis Ababa at different times.

### **Military Measures along the Borders**

The Government of Ethiopia is committed to combat terrorism along its borders and the Horn of Africa in general. The Government forces have defeated terrorist organizations on its borders at different times. For example, the Government fought with the ONLF members in the Somali sub-region and more than 150 terrorists surrendered with their weaponry.

### **The Establishment of a Special Task Force**

In order to defy terrorism and terrorist acts, the Government of Ethiopia had established a special task force. The task force is composed of Crime Prevention Division, Investigation Division and National Security Division. The force is coordinated and assisted by the National Security Division. This special task force mainly has two duties. These are proactive and after crime duties. The first duty of the task force is to make threat analysis. Second, it takes operational and surveillance measures. Almost all terrorists who have made attacks in Ethiopia have been under control on account of the activities of this special task force.

### **Political Dialogue and Reconciliation with Terrorist Organizations**

#### **Negotiation with ONLF**

The Government of Ethiopia plays a crucial role in combating local as well as international terrorism. One of the major methods to combat terrorism is negotiation

with the terrorists for the sake of peace and security in the localities. Thus, the Government of Ethiopia negotiated with a local terrorist group known as Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and came up with a peaceful agreement.

According to Engineer Salahdin Said, former Chairman of ONLF, the first round of talks was held in Belgium. The second round of talks was held in Germany and the third round of talks was held in Washington DC. Finally, the peace accord was signed at the Sheraton Addis in Ethiopia between the Government of Ethiopia and the Ogaden National Liberation Front on 12th of October 2010. The peace accord resulted in the surrender of around 150 members of the group. After signing the Accord, the Chair of this front had the following aims:

- Negotiating with the Government to release imprisoned members of ONLF
- Consoling the people of Ogaden
- Inviting some members of the front to join the peace accord
- Trying to gain loyalty from the locality
- Showing their promises to the Government of Ethiopia and the Somali sub region as well.

#### **Termination of the State of Insurgency**

- a. The state of insurgency, which ONLF had been conducting in the Somali sub-regional State of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, was hereby definitively terminated and peace was established;
- b. The Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia agreed to release the ONLF members who were in prisons
- c. The parties agreed that the constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia should be the basis for all rights demanded by the ONLF.
- d. The parties agreed that both had fulfilled their commitments in compliance with terms of the ceasefire agreed upon in Washington DC, United States of America.
- e. ONLF agreed to abide by the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and all other laws of the country.
- f. The ONLF agreed to work together with the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to bring those of the then ONLF remaining elements, which were not part of this process, into the peace agreement. (For details, please refer to the peace agreement in the annex.) Negotiation with *AI-Itihad AI-Isiamia*

Another victory of the Government of Ethiopia over the terrorist groups is the negotiation that resulted in a peace agreement with *Al-Itihad Al-Isiamia*. The negotiation talks were held in Kenya, Djibouti and Hargeissa at different times. This resulted in the surrendering of more than 200 members out of which 56 members were top leaders and 48 members were members of the Central Committee.

### **Termination of the State of Insurgency**

- The state of insurgency, which UWSLF had been conducting in the Somali sub-regional State of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, was hereby definitively terminated and peace was established.
- The Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia agreed to release the UWSLF members who were in prisons.
- The parties agreed that the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia should be the basis for all rights demanded by the UWSLF.
- The parties agreed that both have fulfilled their commitments in compliance with terms of the ceasefire agreed upon in Djibouti.
- UWSLF agreed to abide by the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and all other laws of the country.

### **Negotiations with OLF**

Negotiation also took place between the Government of Ethiopia and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in Moyale, Kenya.

This peace accord resulted in surrendering of more than 250 ONLF soldiers and their weapons. Out of the mentioned number, six members were top officials of the group and four were central committee members of the front.

### **Social Mobilization and Public Participation**

Mobilizing the society to combat terrorism plays a crucial role to combat terrorism. The Government of Ethiopia, Federal Police, Anti-Guerilla war forces and other related divisions who work for combating terrorism in Ethiopia play a major role by creating awareness about terrorism, terrorist organizations, terrorist attacks, terrorist life cycles and the like.

The society and militia both in cities and rural areas took part by giving vital information to the Government about the activities of different terrorist groups in their respective locations. The society has contributed its share in combating and capturing of terrorists and their allies at different times. For example, the attackers of

Tigray Hotel, Wabe Shebelle Hotel, on President Mubarak of Egypt and other major terrorist members were arrested by the efforts of the public in general. The public realizes the benefits of peace, democracy and development.

## Chapter Four

# Conclusions and Recommendations

## Conclusions

Terrorism is one form of violence. Terrorist acts are different from ordinary crimes, mostly, in the sense that they are committed with the intention of terrorizing the public or violating the rights of innocent people or coercing the Government to do or abstain from doing certain acts so that the ideological, religious and political aim of the terrorist is fulfilled. Besides, the effect of terrorism exceeds that of the ordinary crimes in terms of the effects as it is indiscriminate and it causes a lot of anxiety.

There is as much confusion about the root causes of terrorism as there is about how to define the concept. Nevertheless, there is a universal agreement that the major causes are ideological, socio-economic as well as religious. Ideological causes explain the carnage and destruction that political groups perpetrate on civilians in the name of some ill-defined political objective such as the secession of a certain group or groups of people. The engagement of certain groups in similarly destructive activities in the name of addressing some kind of social or economic injustice is, yet, another cause of terrorism. However, more importantly, the great deal of violence that is being committed upon civilians in almost all corners of the world in the name of promoting some religious ideology is the most potent cause of terrorism today.

A modern trend in terrorism is toward well-organized, self-financed, international networks of terrorists. Another trend of terrorism is the emergence of religiously or ideologically motivated radical Islamic fundamentalist groups or groups using religion as a pretext to pose terrorist threats of varying kinds to interests of various states (Perl, 2004). A third trend is the apparent growth of cross-national links among different terrorist organizations, which may involve combinations of military training, funding, technology transfer, or political advice. As terrorism is a global phenomenon, a major challenge facing policy makers is how to maximize international cooperation.

The efficacy of anti-terrorism campaigns depends on the extent to which the appropriate combination of approaches is followed. More often than not, the approaches employed by many governments leave a lot to be desired because they put undue emphasis on one or another aspect of these approaches.

The Horn of Africa sub-region and Ethiopia have been the target of terrorists because of the geopolitical significance of the Sub-region and because of weak security

infrastructure, porous and unpoliced borders, and collapse of the state of Somalia that dates as far back as early 1980s when the first open resort to political violence was made by hard line Islamist Clerics and their allies from Siad Barre's defunct army that brought together like-minded people under the umbrella of *Al-Itihad Al-Islamia*, or better known by its acronym, AIAI. Although launched with the declared objective of establishing a Caliphate in the Horn of Africa, its leaders also sought to rally the Somali people behind their cause by re-introducing the failed irredentist ambitions of Siad Barre aimed at incorporating all Somali speaking peoples in neighboring countries. AIAI was from the very outset making open threats to unleash violence in Ethiopia as part of its objective to forcibly occupy the Somali sub-region of Ethiopia (Fisseha, 2008).

The rhetoric against Ethiopia was elevated to its next level when in the mid 1990s Al Itihad infiltrated its agents into Ethiopia's vast borders and managed to carry out bomb attacks on civilian targets inside many parts of Ethiopia including Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa and Jijiga, among other places. The explosions had caused considerable loss of life and destruction of property over the years. It had in its ranks hundreds of terrorists from as far away places as Pakistan and Morocco and battle-hardened Mujahedeen from Europe and the Middle East (Fisseha, 2008).

While the swift action by the Ethiopian Defense Forces and the relentless efforts of the security forces did succeed in dismantling a significant edifice of AIAI's terrorist network, its leaders nevertheless never refrained from hatching terrorist plots one after another (Bruton, 2010).

Ethiopia has faced more than its fair share of terrorist attacks at the hands of various terrorist groups both domestic as well as foreign. Historically, Ethiopia has been perceived-wrongly perhaps-as a Christian State and a threat to Islam thus drawing the attention of too many international Jihadists for a long time (Weldeselassie, 2004). *Al-Itihad Al-Islamia* has caused a great deal of terrorist violence in the country since 1991 in the name of both politics and religion.

Nevertheless, the terrorist threat in Ethiopia is not confined to AIAI or to religious grounds alone. Organizations such as the OLF and the ONLF have also been engaged in activities that can legitimately be classified as terrorism because their activities have deliberately targeted civilians. The dozens of bombing plots that have claimed the lives of hundreds of civilians over the years are ample proof that these groups have in fact been involved in terrorist activities. The terrorist activities of these groups are not merely confined to planting explosives in public transport vehicles or in bars and other public places. They are also engaged in other violent terrorist activities to achieve their political ends.

Through it all, the Government of Ethiopia's response has been a combination of approaches (Kinfe, 2007). The fact that measures were made step by step to deny these organizations a source of comfortable support base through political solutions has gone a long way in preventing terrorism and in detecting and following up once these have happened. The participation of the public in various anti-terrorism activities has also had its own contribution in this regard. Equally important, the security architecture that has been developed over the years has helped quite a lot. It is the combination of these factors and many others that the researcher considers will facilitate effective tackling of the trend of terrorism in the sub-region and in the country. Since the actual and potential threats seem to increase, from time to time it is important to investigate the previous measures and approaches and look for ways to improve them.

The Government of Ethiopia has taken the following important measures to combat terrorism at different times:

- Proclaiming an anti-terrorism law,
- Judicial measures,
- Negotiating in search of peaceful resolution of conflicts,
- Establishing anti-terrorist task forces,
- Awareness creation measures for the public,
- Controlling radicalism,
- Attempts to create sub-regional cooperation, and
- Military measures.

In order to keep its environs and borders free from the threats and attacks of terrorism, the Government should strengthen the measures mentioned above in the future.

## Recommendations

### Recommendations on Global Terrorism

- *Diplomacy/Constructive Engagement to Help Create a Global Anti-Terror Coalition Continentally as well as Sub-regionally:* Diplomacy may not always be effective against determined terrorists and for the countries that support them. However, in most cases, diplomatic measures are considered, most likely, to help in minimizing or resolving conflicts and, therefore, they should be given due attention.
- *Economic Sanctions:* Flow of terrorist funds reportedly takes place outside

of formal banking channels (inclusive Hawalla chains of money brokers, untraceable assets such as gold and diamonds). Therefore, there must be coordinated efforts by all countries to stop illegal economic activities.

- *Economic Inducements*: Initiatives include efforts to change economic and social conditions that provide a breeding ground for terrorists. For example, most terrorists worldwide are unemployed *with virtually nonexistent* prospects for economic advancement. Hence, they should be provided with economic opportunities.
- *Covert Terrorism*: Intelligence gathering, infiltration of terrorist groups, and military operations involve a variety of clandestine or government activities. Much of this activity is of a passive monitoring nature aimed at determining the strategic intentions, capabilities and vulnerabilities of terrorist organizations.
- *Rewards for Information Program*: Money is a powerful motivator. Rewards for information have been instrumental in destroying terrorists and their properties in the world at different times.
- *Extradition/Law Enforcement Cooperation*: International cooperation in such areas as law enforcement, customs control and intelligence activities are essential pillars for anti-terrorism course of action. Another law enforcement tool in combating international terrorism is extradition of terrorist suspects.
- *Military Force*: Selective use of military force that, usually, emphasizes the military's unique skills and specialized equipments.

### Recommendations on Combating Terrorism in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa

The Government of Ethiopia knows the brutality of terrorism before 9/11. It played and is still playing a decisive role in combating terrorism. The Government has shown its commitment in the fight against terrorism by forming an anti-terrorism task force, capturing terrorists, and taking legislative measures at different times. The recent rise of *Khawarja* radicalists, which is one of the Wahabiya faith followers, could be a breeding ground for international terrorists and could cause damage on the sub-region's peace and security. They should be seen as potential threats.

The Government should fulfill its role in bridging the gap in controlling of foreigners and refugees who reside in the country. Especially, there are lots of Somali, Southern Sudanese and Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia. Their presence could become a fertile ground for international terrorists.

There should be a systematic controlling mechanism for foreign individuals who enter the country as tourists and business personalities.

As the researcher has observed, the border controlling mechanism is weak. Especially, in the area of Ethio-Somali sub-region, individuals could get out of Ethiopia as well as enter the country without any restriction. Such negligence could pave a path for the terrorists.

Assist sub-regional governments in gaining better control of their borders.

Nowadays, the trend of terrorism is very well organized, intertwined and networked throughout the globe. Even their financial system is hidden. Therefore, the Government should provide its special task forces with continuous trainings so that they could cope up with new trends and developments.

The Government should also pay special attention to religious organizations that are registered under the cover of NGOs due to the fact that they play a vital role in facilitating financial activities for terrorists.

The Ethiopian Government should strengthen its cooperation with neighboring countries in its fight against terror, especially, with IGAD member states. It should also encourage agreement on extradition of terrorists with its neighbors.

The Government should build up its activities regarding negotiations with deviant (terrorist) organizations for the sake of peace and security of the country.

The Government should emphasize on awareness creation about terrorism and the terrorists in the public at large. It is because government bodies alone cannot fight terrorism. Involving civil societies, public associations, religious institutions, NGOs, the private sector, private security organizations, and governmental institutions could play a decisive role in the fight against terrorism.

The Government should take strong measures to control money laundering, illegal *Hawalla* and the like to weaken financial sources of terrorists. Moreover, the government should establish a system that ensures financial transparency in both the private and the public sectors. Illegal economic activities such as contraband should also be effectively checked.

Deter external support of radical groups operating in the Horn sub-region.

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## **Annex A: List of Participants in the Focus Group Discussion**

The Case of Sahara Bereha, Addis Ababa

1. Commander G/Selasse Teffera, D/ Anti Terrorism Brigade
2. Inspector Alemayehu Asfaw, Commando Captain Leader
3. Inspector Fisha T/Maryam, Commando Captain Leader
4. Inspector Demeke Tsehaye, Team Leader
5. Ashenafi Alemu, Camera Team Leader

The Case of ONLF and other terrorist threats in the sub-region, Jijiga

1. Sultan Abdirahman, Absema Clan leader
2. Ali Yesuf, Chidwak Clan, Former mayor of Jijiga
3. Musa Ismael, Yisak Clan, Business Man
4. Nejib Yesuf, Absema Clan, Business Man
5. Ali Abdi Esa, Bertre Clan, Former MP
6. Zeiad Yisak, Absema Clan, Former MP
7. Abdulahi Muhamed Hish, Absema Clan, Former woreda Administrator
8. Ehamaliad Haji, Absema Clan, Government Employee

## **List of Interviewees**

1. Engineer Selhadin Maoo, Chairman of ONLF
2. Mohamed Farah Olouu, Deputy Chairman of ONLF
3. Abdi, Former MP of Somali Sub-region
4. Ahmed Abdi, Chairman of Council, UWSLF
5. General Gebre Della, National Defence Intelligence Chief
6. Commander Teffera, Deputy Leader of Anti Contraband
7. Chief Inspector Retta, Investigation Directorate Director
8. Ambassador Said Yousus Noor, Ambassador of Somalia to Ethiopia



# Section 5

**Ethnic Conflict Management and Conflict Transformation: The Case of Derashe and Konso in Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR)**

**Yidneckachew Ayele**

## Acronyms

CSA	Central Statistics Agency
EC	Ethiopian Calendar
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organizations
JPC	Joint Peace Committee
KI	Key Informant
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
ONLF	Ogaden National Liberation Front
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region

## Glossary of Local Terms

*Chat*: green plant with nicotine content and whose leaves can be chewed

*Debo*: a tradition of working together in a group

*Dejasmach*: field commander as a military title, equivalent to British Earl

*Dama*: Derashe group leader or king

*Erken*: terracing

*Fitawrari*: commander of the vanguard as a military title equivalent to chief of staff of the armed forces, and rank-wise it is equivalent to 'ras'. However, as a civilian title it is equivalent to the British Count and is just next in importance to 'Dejasmach'

*Foura*: traditional pasturing system in Konso

*Helta*: traditional ceremony of Konso *Jala*: friendship or companionship *Kala*: Konso group leader or king

*Kebele*: government structure at grassroots level

*Poqola Tuma*: clan leaders of Konso

*Ras*: literally, it means head and it is equivalent to the British Duke

*Tekilay Gizat*: the feudal governing segmentation equivalent to the status of a province

*Woreda*: part of government administrative structure similar to the status of district

## Abstract

Ethiopia is facing new ethnic challenges regardless of the recognition method of macro ethnic conflict management policy to respond to the challenges of past regimes of ethno cultural justice demands. Some of the challenges include the controversy and conflict in defining the ethnic identity, the process of drawing inter-regional boundaries, socio economic and political entitlement between titular and non-titular with the introduction of a new system, armed secessionist ethnic insurgencies, intra-regional ethnic conflicts over resources, local economic justice, political empowerment and participation. To respond to these new challenges, at micro-level, inquiry need to be made against the employed method of ethnic conflict management. This inquiry needs to be able to state whether the conflict management process is transforming conflicting ethnic groups and their goals to positive relationships or nurturing the existing challenges to reproduce themselves in different local politics.

The main objective of this study was to explore transformative peace building in ethnic conflict management in the light of the recent experience of Derashe and Konso ethnic groups in Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR), and thereby to elucidate the relevance of conflict transformation theory for internal harmony and co-existence of different ethnic groups. To attain this objective, the study employed qualitative approach involving interview, focus group discussion, personal observation and document analysis of secondary sources. The data gathered through primary and secondary sources were thematically organized and analyzed through triangulation to increase the validity and reliability of the findings of the study.

The study found that not only the constitutional macro-political decisions, but also micro-level ethnic conflict management process are relevant to explore and adapt transformative strategy of bottom-up peace building. The study also came up with analytical information about the nature of the conflict between Konso and Derashe ethnic groups, the conflict management process and its transformative dimensions. Regardless of their closeness and interdependence, the Derashe and Konso people were in deadly conflict that resulted from competition over resources and was exacerbated by deep-rooted animosity, competing historical visions, illiteracy, lack of good governance, illegal weapon circulation, harmful learned practices, and the like. The Derashe Konso conflict management process exhibited some intervention approaches such as controlling the conflict, calming the situation, restoring order, creating accountability, understanding the conflict and social context. It also identified the root causes, preconditions and the traditional reconciliation ceremony even though they were not yet addressed. Furthermore, the process was able to exploit bottom-up peace building approach by taking advantage of the potential local peace building capacities and by involving multi-dimensional tracks and actors.

In general, the management process was not able to bring the conflicting parties to a positive relationship, but it initiated basic approaches and ways which require addressing the root causes, the needs and challenges of the local communities, working to expand the connectors and reducing dividers, building trust and thereby enhancing the positive interaction and interdependence among conflicting parties.

Key Words: *Ethnic Conflict Conflict Management, Conflict Transformation*

# Chapter One

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Ethnic conflict is a new phenomenon that exploded worldwide after the end of the Cold War some 15 years ago (Wolff, 2006). Since then, conflict within states has become more prevalent than conflict between states. The recent historical records in Rwanda, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Kosovo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burma, North-South Sudan, Sarajevo, Ethiopia, East Timor, Sri Lanka, Darfur etc, document the human experience in ethnic conflict. Multi-ethnic states, around the world, are struggling to devise structural safeguards within their governments to address ethnic disputes. Newly democratic and developing states that have reformed their political systems in recent years have sought to diffuse ethnic power by creating non-ethnic institutions; others expressly devise ethnic power sharing arrangements; and a number of other states established protection for the rights of ethnic minorities or indigenous groups (Baylis, 2004).

Ethnic problem has been a long and pervasive problem in Ethiopia. The country has gone through a long history of ethnic suppression, discrimination and ignorance (Sara, 2003). The defining features of the imperial system were the exclusion of the mass of the population from the process of government, and the economic exploitation of the producers by an ethnically defined ruling class (Sara and Tronvoll, 2003). The successor of the regime, the military government, had made an effort to build a unitary nation out of many with rhetoric and military.

Nevertheless, the military regime failed due to massive resistance from Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) with the quest for ethno-cultural justice, equality and self-determination of ethnic groups. While EPRDF assumed power, the politicized ethnicity arguably was securitized and the FDRE Constitution has chosen to concentrate on Federalism with the positive elements of ethnicity: its ability to provide a group of people that share language and cultural values with a sense of common identity, collective purpose, advantages which it believes can be usefully harnessed for social, economic, and political development (Sara, 2003). Further, Tsegaye's (2010) argument revealed that ethnic federalism was supposedly preferred to respond to the challenge of ethno-national conflicts that has besieged the former regimes that sought to build one nation out of many. Accordingly, the adoption of Federalism in Ethiopia appears to have been motivated by the problem of finding an appropriate state structure that could be used as an instrument for managing the complex ethno-linguistic diversity of the country and reducing conflicts.

In spite of this, ethnic conflicts are still critical challenges in the country. None of the alleged state structure is able to create an ideal political balance capable of nullifying the risk of ethnic conflict (Baylis, 2004). Though it responded to some demands, it reproduced others by devolving or reducing the conflict from national to sub-national and local levels (Tsegaye, 2010). These included:

1. Federal restructuring and identity conflicts- The central place given to ethnicity in terms of state organization, representation, entitlement, and mobilization has in a remarkable fashion brought the question of ethnicity to the politico-legal realm which in turn resulted in the controversy of defining the ethnic identity of many minority groups (the case of Silte, Donga, Zay, etc).
2. Intra-federal boundary conflicts- The institutionalization of ethnic federalism led to the process of drawing inter-regional boundaries with the premise of making ethnic, regional and in some cases sub-regional boundaries (e.g. the case of Oromia and Southern Nations Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR), Oromia vs. Somali National Regional State, Oromia vs. Benishangul Gumuz National Regional State etc).
3. Intra-regional conflicts over resources, local economic justice, political empowerment, self-governance and autonomy and participation- Such conflicts occurred in almost all the regions like the case of Konso and Derashe, and Sidama and Wolayita
4. Conflict between titular and the non-titular groups- Ethnic federalism in Ethiopia, by placing 'sovereignty' over the ethnic groups, introduced a new system of socio-economic and political entitlement and led to a conflict between the titular (who live in their designated ethnic homelands) and the non-titular groups (who for different reasons find themselves out of their designated ethnic homelands).
5. Conflict between the government and secessionist movements- There still exists a continuation of armed secessionist ethnic insurgencies after the reconstitution of the country into an ethnic federation and the recognition of the right of secession like the case of Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) (Asnake, 2009).

It is not to articulate that efforts for ethnic federalism structure are worthless. On the contrary, devising an ethnic power sharing political system that will provide incentives for positive participation in politics by ethnic groups and balancing ethnic interests is crucial to promote inter-ethnic stability. Nevertheless, the point at hand is that ethnic federalism structure has not proven enough to develop an effective system for coping with those conflicts. Within this framework, we need to look for mechanisms to manage and transform ethnic conflicts to a positive relationship.

This study intends to investigate and inquire beyond the shadow of macro-political policy of managing ethnic conflicts. Taking the case of the Derashe-Konso conflict and conflict management process, this thesis investigates issues related to actors, procedures, measures and mechanisms in ethnic conflict management, thereby elucidating the transformative elements, lessons, potential peace capacities and challenges to transform the conflict.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

By far, reproducing new fashion of local politics, ethnic conflict remains a threat to peace, stability, and prosperity in Ethiopia. Further, ethnic conflicts usually have been treated as political problems rather than as social, economic and legal problems (Baylis, 2004). However, by relying on political solutions, states have failed to exploit the potentials of bottom-up peace-building process to manage and transcend the existing challenges to positive relationships by addressing the root causes of the conflict.

Accordingly, the test of ethnic federalism for the old politics has to be taken to the ground for the new challenges. This is not only to hold together and avoid the protracted large-scale internal conflicts, but also to achieve a reasonably effective compromise of ethnic interests' by transforming the country's ethnic diversity and complexity into an integrative asset, rather than a liability to national survival. Accordingly, at this juncture, it would be vital to raise the following questions: How have ethnic conflicts been managed? Are the existing ethnic conflicts being managed to transform to positive relationships or nurturing the existing challenges to reproduce themselves in different local politics?

Specific to the matters at hand, it has been said that ethnic conflict between the Derashe and the Konso has been managed. These ethnic groups have been in serious conflict since 2008. In the process, the regional and federal military forces, officials and politicians have been involved to manage the conflict. The report made by the SNNPR Security and Administration Bureau to the Regional Council in May 2009 states that "... conflicts that occurred within the region and borders of the neighboring regions have been given due concern for prevention and resolving sustainably..." (Report letter to the Regional Council, SNNPR Justice and Security and Administration Bureau, May

2009:1). Particularly, in relation to the case of the Derashe and the Konso, this report provides, "...accordingly, there has been public discussion, reconciliation, rehabilitating victims, provision of security forces for unstable areas, and providing political and administrative actions against local administrators who have taken part in the conflict" (2-3). Generally, the report revealed that the conflict between the two ethnic groups has been managed and peace has been secured.

However, still there has been unrest and there is a feeling of tension, and to some politicians like a distinguished representative of the Derashe Special *Woreda* in SNNPR Regional Council, the root causes of the conflict have not been addressed (SNNPR Regional Council of fourth round, fourth year and ninth assembly minutes, 2009:50-52). Further, the conflict analysis research made by Hawassa University and the Competency Center in SNNPR revealed that currently individuals in both Konso and Derashe tried to hide their group identity because of *fear and possibility of conflict in the future* and due to fear of revenge, some ethnic groups like Keyama and Onota did not return to their areas (Competency Center and Hawassa University, 2009:19). Furthermore, this study claims that the Joint Peace Committee that included the four special *Woredas*, namely Konso, Derashe, Amaro and Burji, is still in process, but has not been able to maintain positive relationships among the conflicting parties.

Consequently, in peace studies, the alleged peace process has secured only negative peace. The positive peace is not part and parcel of the outcome of the conflict management process. Negative peace is associated with the mere absence of violence, while positive peace focuses on the transformation of negative attitudes, behaviors and contradictions into more positive aspects; empathy, nonviolence and creativity (Galtung 1996). With regard to the case of Konso and Derashe, peace would imply the attainment of a political settlement and mere absence of direct physical violence, and it can be argued that the area is already in a state of negative peace. Therefore, it is central to retain this question: Did the conflict management process achieve its goal in transforming the society to a positive relationship?

Furthermore, how can a society successfully navigate towards peace over the course of many generations? In peace studies and peace building process, terms like conflict management, conflict resolution, and conflict transformation are very common. It is difficult to draw a sharp distinction between these concepts (Miall, 2007). Each term suggests a positive and a progressively larger and more ambitious scope of action. Conflict management aims to regulate and contain conflict. Lederach (1997) alleges that conflict management focuses on those in power with the ability to bring larger scale violence to an end through a negotiated settlement and it has been criticized because mediators tend to concentrate solely on the top leadership of the conflicting parties. Conflict resolution aims to resolve the issue of incompatibility that divides the parties by employing dialogue projects between groups or communities, peace education, conflict resolution training, etc. Yet, the approach has been criticized that its assumptions to work with communities and civil societies at grassroots do not automatically spill over to the national level.

On the other hand, conflict transformation goes further in aiming for a change in the fundamental relationships, social structures and contextual conditions that escalated

the conflict in the first place. Conflict transformation, replacing the word of 'conflict resolution,' has focused on the transformation of deep-rooted armed conflicts into peaceful ones by taking different approaches to peace building (Lederach, 2009). To transcend a conflict, Galtung provides the following major programs:

*Conflict transformation (to loosen up the conflicts), Peace building (against polarization and dehumanization in attitude and behavior), Peace keeping (to dampen the violence with soft methods), reconciliation (healing and closure to break the vicious circle of violence), and Peace journalism and peace pedagogy (to enable the population to enter through dialogue about peace proposal and related issue). And all of these acted out in the tense field between contradiction, behavior, and attitude, with deep culture, deep behavior, and deep structure in the deeper layers of the soul, the body and society ( 2004: 186-187).*

Consequently, recognizing peace as a continuing process, employing conflict transformation theory is to change the goals, structure, parties or context of the conflict, which has the potential to get rid of or transform the contradiction or incompatibility at its heart. Likewise, to take the advantage and significance of the conflict transcends theory to multi-cultural states; it is indispensable to raise this question: How can ethnic conflicts be managed and transformed?

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

Generally, the objective of this study is to investigate and explain how ethnic conflict can be managed and transformed to a positive relationship by considering the case of Konso and Derashe conflict, and thereby to elucidate the relevance of conflict transformation theory for internal harmony and co-existence of different ethnic groups. Specifically, this study is designed to address the following objectives:

- To investigate and explain the nature of conflict and conflict management process between the Konso and the Derashe,
- To identify and explain the achievements and drawbacks of the conflict management process in the intent to transform the conflict between the two ethnic groups into a positive relationship, and
- To examine and analyze potential possibilities and challenges in transforming the conflict between the two groups into positive relationships.

### 1.4 Research Questions

Generally, the study addressed this question: How can ethnic conflicts be managed and transformed? Specifically, the following are key research questions of the study:

- What is the nature of the conflict between the Derashe and the Konso?

- What achievements and drawbacks are sustained from the conflict management process?
- How can the conflict between the two ethnic groups be managed and transformed to positive relationships?
- How can the two ethnic groups successfully navigate towards peace over the course of time?

## 1.5 Research Methodology

### 1.5.1 Research Design

This study employed qualitative approach, which involves interview, focus group discussion, personal observation and document analysis. This approach was chosen due to the nature of the objectives of the study.

### 1.5.2 Data Sources

This study is based on secondary and primary sources. The secondary data was used to review and analyze related studies and documents. The primary data was gathered through interview, focus group discussion, personal observation and document analysis. The methods of data collection are briefly explained below.

### 1.5.3 Methods of Data Collection

#### A. Interview

Based on in-depth interview, data on the nature of the conflict, the process of the conflict management and its relevance to transform the conflicting parties into a positive relationship, the challenges and potentials for sustainable peace, etc. was gathered based on the interview guide (see Appendix 1:1). The interview was conducted with those who were participating in the peace building process, particularly, those who have been members of the Joint Peace Committee established in the region and given the mandate to engage in the management of the conflict between the Derashe and the Konso. Further, it included civil societies, the federal and regional government officials such as the House of Federations, the Ministry of Federal Affairs, SNNPR Regional Council, SNNPR Nationalities' Council, SNNPR Justice and Security Bureau, the two special *Woredas'* Justice and Security Bureau, the two respective *Woreda* administrations, the, SNNPR Civil Society Resource Center and Mercy Corps who took part in the peace keeping and peace building process. The interviewees were selected based on purposive sampling techniques having seen the involvement of the interviewees in the conflict management process. Accordingly, the researcher interviewed sixteen individuals (see Appendix II:1).

## **B. Focus Group Discussion**

The focus group discussion was intended to gather data on the nature of the conflict, the conflict management process, the local people's perception and feeling on the secured peace, the roles of the community in the peace building process, potential values, etc. Participants were selected based on purposive sampling technique due to the need to consider the participant's age, role in the community, participation in the conflict and in the conflict management process. Consequently, there were four focus group discussions and in each, 6 to 8 participants were involved (see Appendix II: 2). Taking their proximity to the conflict and peace building process into consideration, Shilale *Kebele* from Derashe and Segen *Kebele* from Konso were selected based on judgmental sampling technique. In each of these *Kebeles*, two focus group discussions were held with the youth and elders. Focus group discussions were conducted by the researcher based on the discussion guide (see Appendix I: 2).

## **C. Personal Observation**

Personal observation was made on the basis of social interaction and peace talks. In market places such as Wozeka and Gato, the researcher observed the interaction and transactions of Konso and Derashe people. The researcher also observed peace talks in Segen *Kebele* of Konso to examine the parties involved, issues addressed, manner of peace talks, and other activities related to the peace-building process.

## **D. Document Analysis**

The document analysis involved relevant documents such as reports, letters and memos or minutes relevant to the conflict management process. This was designed to investigate how the conflict between the two ethnic groups has been managed, its achievements and drawbacks. Therefore, documents available at *woreda*, zonal and regional levels were reviewed and analyzed.

### **1.5.4 Instruments**

The necessary instruments to gather the data such as organized and framed questions for interview (see Appendix I: 1), organized and scrutinized issues for focus group discussion (see Appendix I: 2), tape recorder, notebook, pen and pencil, etc, were used. Tape recorder was used based on the consent of the research participants selected on the basis of susceptibility and closeness to the area of the conflict.

### **1.5.5 Methods of Data Analysis**

The data gathered through primary and secondary sources were thematically organized and analyzed through triangulation to increase the validity and reliability of the findings of the study.

### 1.5.6 Description of the Study Area and the People

The Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Region (SNNPR) is one of the nine regions of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE Constitution, 1995: Article 47 (1)). The region shares boundaries with Gambella in the west, Sudan in the south-west, Oromia in the north, north-east and the south-east and Kenya in the south (see Map 1.1 below). The region covers 110,931,9 square kms with 15,042,531 population and endowed with 56 nations and nationalities (FDRE Population and Census Commission, 2008). The regional administration is organized in 13 zones and 8 special *Woredas* (SNNPR Nationalities Council, 2009).

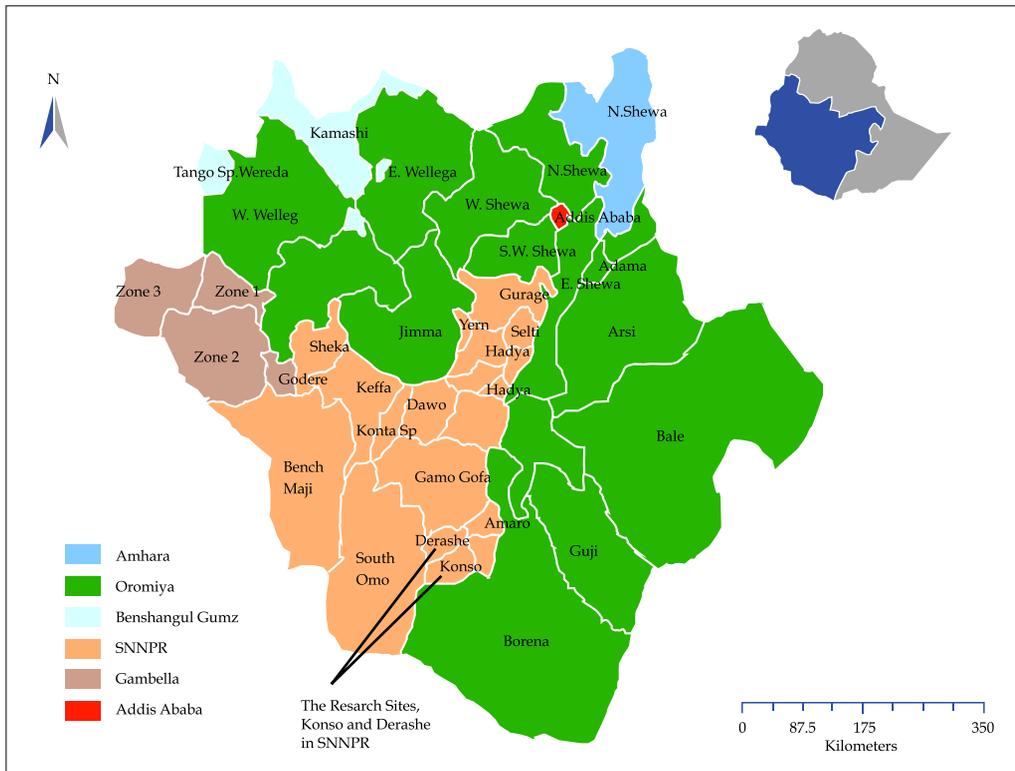
Konso is one of the eight special *Woredas* in the region, located in the south-western part of the SNNPR at a distance of about 590 kms and 361 kms from Addis Ababa and Hawassa, respectively. Karat is the main town of the *Woreda*. The *Woreda* covers

2500 square kms with a total population of 234,987 (FDRE Population and Census Commission, 2008). It shares boundaries with Derashe in the north, Oromia in the south, South Omo in the west and Amaro and Burji in the east (see Map 1.1 below). The dominant and major ethnic group in all 50 *kebeles* of the *Woreda* is Konso and their language is called Afan Konso, which belongs to the Cushitic language family. The Konso people are famous for their agricultural system. Although the land is very sloppy, dry and unsuitable for agriculture, the people have developed an incredible sustainable environmental friendly agricultural system called *erken-* terracing. The most important crops include millet and maize, but coffee, cotton, soya beans, cassava and *chat* also grow in the area (SNNPR Nationalities Council, 2009).

Derashe is also one of the eight special *Woredas* in the region located at a distance of about 550 kms and 320 kms from Addis Ababa and Hawassa, respectively. Gidole is the major town in the *Woreda*. The *Woreda* shares boundary with Gamogofa in the north, South Omo in the west, Konso in the south, and Amaro and Burji in the east (see Map 1.1 below). The *Woreda* is organized in 28 *kebeles* with the total population of 142,678 having five major ethnic groups (Derashe, Mashole, Mosiye, Kusume and Ale (Debose)) (FDRE Population and Census Commission, 2008). The livelihood of most of these ethnic groups depends on agriculture and livestock (SNNPR Nationalities Council, 2009).

Both ethnic groups have nine clans believed to have come from Borena, Liben and Gowanda. The clans in Derashe are Kolayat Argamayita, Elayta, Malet, Kansit, Kalayt, Karit, Karchit and Keetay, whereas those in Konso are Sawudata, Arkamayita, Eleyta, Mehaleta, Tikesyeta, Keerta, Tokmelita, Esha and Pasanta. These clans used to count their line of descent from the same father and do not usually marry within their clan members. In Konso, each clan has a leader called Paqola Tuma thus having nine

Poqola Tumas altogether. On their *Helta* traditional ceremony, they used to elect *Kala*, the traditional leader of Konso, based on capacity and good behavior. In Derashe, there had been a traditional leader called *Dama* from Titipa family, who used to control and govern the religious and administrative activities. Succession to the throne was based on lineage (blood relationship) than on election like in Konso. The researcher's observation shows that *Kala* is still functional in Konso, but in Derashe, *Dama* has been forgotten and is now only a history.



Map 1.1 The Administmive Map of the South Western Ethiopia (including the SNNPR) Source: CSA (2007:48)

## Chapter Two

### 2. The Derashe-Konso Conflict

#### 2.1 Historical Relationship between the Derashe and the Konso People

Borena and Liben are alleged to be the source of the Derashe and Konso people. Hansemo (2001) substantiates this by contending that most of the Derashe clans came from or through Borena and Liben at different times and movements. The SNNPR Nationalities' Council Portrayal of Nations and Nationalities profile confirms that the source of Derashe and Konso is Borena and Liben (SNNPR Nationalities' Council, 2009 EC).

In both ethnic groups, there are nine clans considered to have come from Borena, Liben and Gowanda. Derashe and Konso are names for the respective clans as a group. Kala and Titipa are the traditional kings of Konso and Derashe, respectively. In legend, it has been stated that both were from the same family, the Mato People. They are said to be the children of Mato. The legend further explains the competition made between Kala and Titipa to hold the throne and adds that they eventually agreed to call the name of the land and consented that the one to whom the land responded would be the king. It is said that the land responded to Kala. From there on Kala remained in Konso and Titipa moved to the Derashe lowland areas. It is further alleged that with this incidence, Kala and Titipa were separated and this through time led to the birth of the two ethnic groups, Konso and Derashe (Interview, KI (Key Informant)-1, 10 November 2010, Karat).

Similarly, but with a different justification, the SNNPR Nationalities' Council Portrayal of Nations and Nationalities' profile put the above tale in plain words. It says, while searching for a better place for survival, the two brothers Kala and Titipa found Konso. However, with the passage of time, their family members increased and started competing for land and they felt that one of them had to leave the area. Accordingly, Kala and Titipa agreed to call the name of the land and decided that one to whom the land responded would remain there. Kala made a secret hole in the ground and put a woman in it to respond to his call. As a result, he won and remained in Konso and Titipa left for the present place called Derashe (SNNPR Nationalities Council, 2009). Though the myth is too far-fetched, currently, the community, the elders, the clan and ethnic group leaders, and *kebele* and *woreda* leaders say and believe that the Konso and the Derashe have blood ties- brothers.

However, there is a controversy about their brotherhood. Some assumed that both were twins born with gold in their hands to be kings. Others assume that both were brothers, Titipa was the younger and Kala was the elder. These claims and their traditional interpretation created a competition between these two groups. They understand in brotherhood the younger should submit to the elder. Therefore, if conflict of interests arises, Derashe had to surrender to Konso. The Arba Minch Peace Conference, held on 2-3 August 2009, discovered this fact which initiated a hot discussion. At the conference, one of the panelists claimed that Derashe was the younger and Konso was the elder brother and this provoked a warm applause from the Konso side and jeering from Derashe (Interview, KI-7, 28 October 2010, Hawassa). At this Conference, an elder from Kusume Kebele of Derashe special Woreda said, 'While both Derashe and Konso communities share a lot in common, yet they are in deadly conflicts. I live between Konso and Derashe. What I know about both communities is that they are one' (Arba Minch Peace Conference Minutes, Arba Minch, 2009:4). Despite the controversy, the Conference underlined the existence of blood ties between the Derashe and the Konso.

The only differences between these two groups are their language and ways of dressing. However, though they speak different languages, they communicate with one another without an interpreter, and both can understand Afan Konso and Derashita which belong to the same language family, Cushitic. In addition, they share similar traditions. Their traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, food and agricultural systems, etc, are similar. Such similarity and relation can explain the deep-rooted communication and interaction between the two ethnic groups. Moreover, they share the same livelihood status, infrastructure, schools and public utilities in their border areas.

Between the Derashe and the Konso there had been a connecting traditional system called *Jala*. The *Jala* system is a mechanism of making friendship with someone from the neighboring ethnic groups thereby sharing joy and sorrow. The Konso and Derashe people have *been Jala* or friends and at times of joy and sorrow they share and visit each other. This has been the longest traditional practice not only between the Derashe and the Konso but also among most ethnic groups in South-West of Ethiopia. Ato Adama Tandayo, a panelist, in his presentation on 'the nature of relationship and similarities between Konso and Derashe communities' at the Arba Minch Peace Conference, substantiated that both communities have been inter-dependent, have inter-married and originated from the same lineage, can understand each other and communicate without an interpreter, have been sharing joys and sorrows, etc (Arba Minch Peace Conference Minutes, Arba Minch, 2009:5).

The Konso and Derashe have been assisting each other to resolve their internal matters. The current Konso leader, Kala, substantiates that when a dispute arises in

Konso among clans or *kebeles*, literally it is too difficult to manage without support from the Derashe. The Konso used to say, '*dhina Derashe dhiya*,' which means 'Therapy comes from Derashe' (Interview, KI-1, 10 November 2010, Karat). This implies that they have been assisting and mediating between each other at times of internal conflict.

In Derashe *Kebeles*, the people classify some of the traditional values as Konso tradition and others as theirs. Pertinent to this, they abandoned one of their own *kebeles* called Keyama because residents in the *Kebele* practice some Konso tradition, and consequently, the Derashe felt that the *kebele* was on the side of Konso and against the Derashe (Interview, KI-7, 28 October 2010, Hawassa). Even on the side of Konso, according to an informant, the people claim that one of the ethnic groups, Kusume, in the Derashe special *Woreda* belongs to the Konso (Interview, KI-9, 27 October 2010, Hawassa). In this regard, in a traditional ceremony, the Konso people swore that Kusume is one of the deserted Konso clans.

Historically, the Derashe and Konso had a common political system and administration. Under the control of *Fitawrari* Habtegiorgis, during the Minilik era, *Fitawrari* Wolde making Gardula his center, administered Borena, Algude, Derashe, Konso, Zayise and Gumayide. In 1956 E.C. the center was shifted from Gardula to Chench. Then in 1964

E.C. *Dejazmach* Amiro Silase established the Garno Gofa *Tekilay Gizat* by incorporating Amaro, Burji, Konso and Derashe with Garno Gofa (Hansemo, 2001). Until 1987 E.C., the Burji, Amaro, Derashe and Konso ethnic groups made a *woreda* called Gato in Garno Gofa (Interview, KI-9, 27 October 2010, Hawassa). In the past regimes, their ethnic identity and self-administration had been ignored (Arba Minch Peace Conference Minutes, Arba Minch: 2009). However, after the introduction of the FDRE Constitution, with the acknowledgement of ethno-cultural justice and self-administration, these ethnic groups formed their respective Special *Woredas* based on their special merits (SNNPR Nationalities Council, 2009).

In the past, there have been competition between the two communities over land, water and myths, but for the first time in 1969 E.C. the competition took a form of violence. Before that, these people had lived together peacefully but since then they fought in 1984, 1985, 1994 and 2001 E.C. The 1985 and 2001 E.C. conflicts were so grave in terms of complexity, number of parties involved and consequences observed.

## 2.2 The Conflict between the Derashe and Konso

### 2.2.1 The Nature of the Conflict

As discussed earlier, historically, the first violent incident between the Konso and

Derashe took place in 1969 E.C. and then they fought in 1984,1985,1994 and 2001 E.C.

The starting point of the 1969 E.C. conflict was between two individuals in Derashe *Kebeles*. A young boy from Keyama *Kebele* asked a girl from Onota *Kebele* to marry him. The girl replied she would marry him if he proved he was a hero by crossing the border to Lake Chamo and bringing green grass from the Lake. Then the boy crossed the girl's *Kebele* and went to Lake Chamo. However, on his way back, people from the Onota *Kebele* did not let him pass through their land and he was killed there. This incident created a hostile relationship between the two *Kebeles* and finally they went into violent conflict in which the Konso people took part (Interview, KI-2, 2 November 2010, Arba Minch).

The 1984 E.C. conflict was over land and this scenario was repeated in 1985 E.C. The Konso people, forced by environmental degradation and population pressure, were searching for land. Specifically, they were looking for pasture and water in an area where the Derashe claim the right of holding right, specially in Onota *Kebele* (Interview, KI-8, 7 November 2010, Derashe Shilale *Kebele*). Then to defend their interest, people from Onota *Kebele* requested those from Keyama *Kebele* to give them a hand in the fight against the Konso. However, they refused because they had a grudge against the Onota people since the 1969 E.C. incident. Due to this fact, the Onota in collaboration with some Derashe *Kebeles* destroyed the Keyama *Kebele*. The people then fled to Konso *Kebeles*, Malega and Dhugaya and Segen Genet for shelter and support. Then the Konso stood on the side of Keyama to pursue their land and water demand, which led to a violent conflict between the Derashe and Konso (Interview, KI-3 6 November 2010, Gidole).

The 2001 E.C. conflict had a similar character with the 1985 E.C. one. It was on a natural forest and resource area called "Abulo Alfacho" in Amaro special *Woreda*. Some *kebeles* from all three special *Woredas* claimed this resource area. From Derashe side, Onota, Holte, Haybena, Keyama, Shilale, Walesa and Atiya *Kebeles* had claimed ownership of the land. From Konso side, Garche, Segen Genet, Lultu, Malega and Dhugaya, and Addis Gabare *Kebeles* demanded the land. From Amaro, three *Kebeles* Buniti, Alfacho and Abula claimed ownership (Derashe and Konso Special *Woreda* Need Assessment Report, Mercy Corps, 2009).

While the Amaro *Kebeles* demanded ownership of the land, the Derashe *Kebeles* wanted it for agriculture and pasture, and the Konso and Haybena *Kebeles* wanted it for pasture. Finally, when people from the Konso *Kebeles* made for the area looking for pasture and water for their cattle, they found the passage to Lake Chamo was closed by farmlands and most of the grazing land was being ploughed by people from the Derashe *Kebeles*. This made competition fierce and tensions build day by day as

the Konso *Kebeles* needed the land for pasture and passages to Lake Chamo to water their cattle. However, the Haybena *Kebele* from Derashe believed that the land was being ploughed for farmland, and that the way to Chamo was closed. Further, minor incidents kept occurring in Derashe *Kebeles* and between the Konso and the Derashe. In the process, due to their common interest, the Haybena *Kebele* from Derashe and the Konso created an alliance (Conflict Assessment Report, SNNPR Justice and Security Bureau, 2001EC).

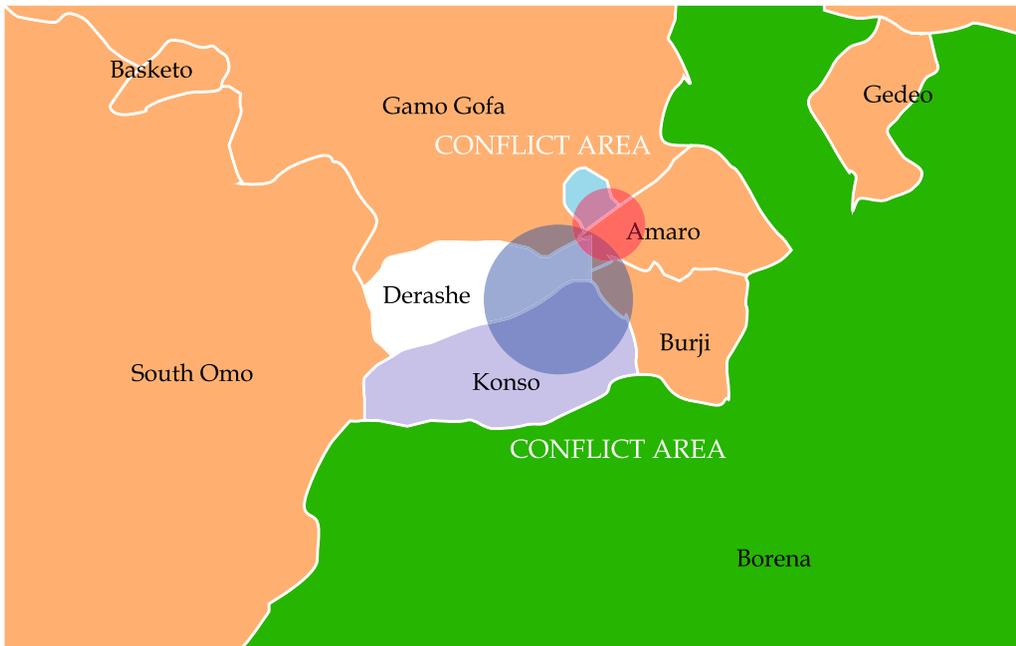
On the other hand, in 2008, although the farmland borders with Onota and Keyama *Kebeles*, crops belonging to the Onota were burnt in the field and hacked repeatedly while those on the Keyama farmland remained safe. Thus, the Onota people suspected a disguised conspiracy by the Keyama and Konso. The Onota people insisted that their crops in the field were burnt down and chopped by Konso people with direct assistance from Keyama people who helped in identifying the Onota farmlands. Later, strategically, the Onota people requested alliance from the Keyama to fight the Konso, but the Keyamas refused to cooperate. While they were in this situation, the Regional Government, through the Justice and Security Bureau, intervened and invited the two groups for reconciliation in Gato *Kebele* on December 6, 2008 (Interview, KI-7, 28 October 2010, Hawassa).

The Gato reconciliation was a kind of ceremony which did not address the root causes of the conflict and social conditions. At the ceremony, a woman from Onota *Kebele* asked, *“How can we forgive? On what condition are we required to show forgiveness? VVwho are we forgiving? VVwho destroyed our crops? Why were our crops destroyed? Without any compensation for the losses incurred, without any regret on what has been done to us,... how are we required to forgive?//* (Interview, KI-2, 2 November 2010, Arba Minch)? The woman raised these questions because the process failed to deal with parties in the conflict, the wrong doer, the root causes of the conflict, the social conditions, the local capacity to make peace, and the existing challenges.

These critical issues were ignored, and the reconciliation process went on. They required both parties to shake hands as a symbol of forgiveness, but each party, especially people from Onota *Kebele*, shook hands with people from their own *Kebele* rather than with those from the other side, the so-called “enemy”. According to a key informant, *the reconciliation was in the canopy of peace and was closed with inquiries* (Interview, KI-6, 8 November 2010, Karat). In addition, another respondent confirmed that *the reconciliation was unable to identify the wrong doer, in effect, to respond to the conflict and ended by producing animosity among the people* (Interview, KI-3, 6 November 2010, Gidole).

A week after the reconciliation ceremony, on 14 December 2008, the Onota people and the rest of Derashe *Kebeles* like Shilale, Holte, Walesa and Atiya destroyed the

Keyama *Kebele* in 9 hours. Then Keyama fled to Konso, Segen Genet and Malega and Dhugaya *Kebeles* and to some Derashe areas, Haybena and Gidole town. Currently around 800 households of Keyama *Kebele* remain displaced and live in Haybena, Segen Genet; and Malaga and Dhugaya while around 100 households are in Gidole town (Derashe and Konso Special *Woreda* Need Assessment Report, Mercy Corps, 2009). Following this incident, the Keyama, with Haybena from the Derashe side, created an alliance with Konso to pursue their common interests. Though the matter was initially an intra- Derashe conflict, it became a conflict between two groups, i.e., Derashe and Konso. From the Konso side, Malaga and Dhugaya, Segen Genet, Garche, Lultu, Addis Gabare and Birbirsra *Kebeles* took part directly (See Map 2.1 below). The violence went on from 14 December 2008 to the second week of January 2009. The area that forms the boundary between the Derashe and the Konso became unsafe and the road from Arba Minch to Konso, South Omo and Jinka was closed.



Map 2.1 The Conflict Area Map

Sources: Developed from the Administrative Map of SNNPR CSA (2007: 48)

Many have lost their lives, their homes, their cattle, etc. Both groups, especially from Konso side, were well armed with high weapons (Conflict Assessment Report, SNNPR

Justice and Security Bureau, 2001 EC). Due to the conflict, the whole Keyama *Kebele* was burnt down and turned to ash. Further, most parts of Shilale, Holte, Onota, Walesa, and Atiya *Kebeles* were burnt down. Above all, almost all crops in the bordering fields were also burnt down. Though there is no comprehensive data on the number of victims in the conflict, too many were wounded and lost their lives. For instance, from Shilale *Kebele* alone, 3013 females and 2936 males were displaced due to the conflict (Report Made by Shilale *Kebele* to the Woreda Administration, June 2009). Furthermore, the report revealed that 82 males and 68 females had lost their lives from the same *Kebele* alone. In addition, though it was not possible to obtain an accurate figure on the number of victims in the conflict, the assessment report revealed that too many were wounded, lost their lives, their homes and their property (Conflict Assessment Report, SNNPR Justice and Security Bureau, 2001E.C.).

### 2.2.2 Causes of the Conflict

Behind the conflict, there are various and complex factors. Initially, the conflict was an intra-Derashe conflict, among Derashe *Kebeles*. The climax of the intra-Derashe conflict invited the involvement of Konso (Interview, KI-4, 6 November 2010, Gidole). Here, the major issues are: What are the factors contributing to the fragility of internal cohesion among the Derashe people? What factors made the Konso people get involved in the internal matters of the Derashe?

The intra-Derashe conflict was between Keyama, on the one hand, and Atiya, Shilale, Onota, Holte and Walesa, on the other. The animosity among these *Kebeles* has been there since the 1969 E.C. incident. The Keyama have been in deep animosity with the Onota since then. The rest of the Derashe *Kebeles* had also mistrust against the Keyama for various reasons. One, they blame them for reflecting Konso values. Two, they used to suspect that they are in effect on the side of the Konso because they repeatedly rejected the call to fight the Konso together with the rest of the Derashe *Kebeles* (Interview, KI-2, 2 November 2010, Arba Minch). This was clearly seen during the 1985 and 2001 E.C. conflicts of intra-Derashe *Kebeles* and Derashe against Konso *Kebeles*. Though the Regional Government intervened through the Gato reconciliation, it failed to address the root causes, peace challenges and social conditions.

After the destruction of 14 December 2008, the Keyama appealed to the Konso and Haybena *Kebeles* of the Derashe for alliance. For various reasons, both *Kebeles* responded positively and the violent conflict went on destroying many of the Derashe *Kebeles*, their crops in the field and many lives (Interview, KI-6, 8 November 2010, Karat). Here, the principal issue is why the Konso took part in the internal matters of the Derashe. Different complex reasons were forwarded on both sides. The Derashe present the following for the involvement of the Konso in their affairs:

- The primary cause is competition over natural resources. The Konso have scarcity of arable and pasture land. The environment is highly degraded and the fertility of the land is very low. As a result, they had to look for fertile land for agriculture and pasture, and this was a potential cause for conflict with the Derashe. They claim that this has been exhibited in different ways. One was the traditional land lease contract between the Konso and the Derashe people in which the latter assumed the land eventually belonged to them. Annually, some Konso farmers lease farmland from Derashe people but usually a dispute arises on the terms of the contract and this led to land holding claims and betrayals. The other was that the Konso crossed the boundary to graze their animals in Derashe farmlands and hack their crops in farmlands for pasture (FGD with elders, Shilale Kebele, 6 November 2010).
- Another cause is the motive to control benefits from public infrastructure particularly the road to south Omo, Jinka. There has been a lot of tourist flow from Arba Minch to Jinka by crossing the Konso capital town, Karat. Karat has been benefiting by hosting tourists. However, with the urban development policy of linking rural *woredas* and towns, the new road plan from Arba Minch to Jinka changed its former direction and was diverted to pass through the capital town of Derashe, Gidole. This plan did not satisfy the Konso people because they suspected that tourists will prefer Gidole to Karat as it has better climate and water than Karat. They disclosed their dissatisfaction by intervening in the matters of Derashe on different occasions (Interview, KI-4, 6 November 2010, Gidole).
- Another reason is that the Konso people have been intending to expand their boundary by incorporating some *kebeles* from Derashe. For instance, they decided that Kusume, one of the ethnic groups in Derashe special *Woreda*, was a deserted member of the Konso (Interview, KI-9, 27 October 2010, Hawassa). On the other hand, the Derashe claim that the Konso do not share boundary with Amaro, but claim land by crossing the border. The Derashe believe that this shows their plan to expand their territory (FGD with youth, Shilale Kebele, 6 November 2010). On territory the Konso side, they justify their intervention in intra-Derashe conflict by raising the following factors:
- Some Konso people argue that residents from Derashe *Kebeles* disrespected them because they chased and attacked Keyama while they sheltered in Konso. According to a respondent, Konso took it as an insult and responded violently (Interview, KI-7, 28 October 2010, Hawassa).
- Traditionally, there is *Foura* system, a traditional mechanism of pasturing cattle. In this system, a group of people graze cattle in a pasturing area and the cattle remain there, and they will not get back to the village and each Konso

*Kebele* pastures the cattle in shifts. Usually, some *kebeles* from Konso such as Malega and Dhugaya, Segen Genet, Addis Gabare, Lultu and Garche let their cattle to *Foura* in Amaro special *Woreda* around Abulo Alfacho area. They have been watering their cattle in Lake Chamo. However, they claim that the grazing land has been changed to farmland and the passages to Lake Chamo have been closed by some Derashe *Kebele* farmers. In addition, their cattle need water and grazing land. In a focus group discussion, a farmer from Segen *Kebele* stated “our livelihood depends on our cattle, and our cattle depend on the grazing land and Lake Chamo. Hence, ensuring the existence of grazing land and passage to the Lake is unquestionable// (FGD with youth, Segen *Kebele*, 12 November 2010).

- From the Konso side, there has been a tradition of assisting each other in times of difficulty and when a Konso *Kebele* fought with other ethnic groups, the rest of the Konso *kebeles* stood on the side of their ethnic group (Interview, KI-1, 10 November 2010, Karat). Consequently, unlike the Derashe *Kebeles*, internal cohesion at times of conflict is stronger in Konso. However, people from the Derashe *Kebeles* act and group themselves with one another based on their own strategic interest than on group identity.

To sum up, discussion with key informants and FGD participants on the reasons behind the conflict between Derashe and Konso revealed the following major causes:

- The competition is to control a resource area;
- The existence of deep-rooted animosity and hatred is exacerbated by harmful practices learned;
- Poverty, population growth, shortage of farm and pasture land, drought and limited social services such as water have their own contributions;
- Lack of immediate responses to ethnic conflict aggravates the conflict;
- Incapable *woreda* and *kebele* leaders with poor governance and management skills are involved in the dispute;
- High circulation of illegal weapons and competition to demonstrate superiority with arms over one another; and
- Hiding and cooperating with criminals have the potential to aggravate the conflict because when a criminal is not handed over to the government, the other party pursues revenge. In both communities, there is a culture of it being a safe haven for criminals.

### 2.2.3 Parties in the Conflict

Though the conflict is between Derashe and Konso, primarily it is an intra-Derashe conflict. It was between Keyama and the rest of the Derashe *Kebeles*, with the exception of Haybena. Finally, Haybena and Keyama from the Derashe side formed an alliance with Konso and fought against Derashe, and since then it has been considered as a conflict between the Derashe and the Konso. Though Amaro Special *Woreda* has an interest in the resourceful area, Abulo Alfacho, which is part of its territory, the *Woreda* did not take part in the conflict directly (Interview, KI-6, 8 November 2010, Karat)

The youth are active and in the front line of the conflict. The communities consider and let the youth as a source of guarantee for the security of their *kebeles*. Elders aggravate the conflict by encouraging the youth to take action, to retaliate, to be heroes, etc, by giving blessings. Women also took part in the conflict by encouraging their husbands and brothers and they assisted them by exchanging information. A key informant from Derashe *Kebele* explains the role of women in the conflict as, "After men fight and chase the enemy from his or her house, women loot crops, house utensils, goats and sheep; and finally they set fire to the enemy huts" (FGD with youth, Shilale *Kebele*, 6 November, 2010). They also played a role in cooling down the conflict. For instance, in Konso a woman was killed because she refused to give food to those fighting the Derashe (FGD with Youth, Segen *Kebele*, 12 November 2010).

Furthermore, *woreda* and *kebele* leaders from both sides took part in the conflict. A respondent revealed that *kebele* leaders were acting like "war-lords" (Interview, Ato Tesema, 28 October 2010, Hawassa). Some key informants claim that a lot of armed men came from Konso main town, Karat, in an Isuzu van and took part in the conflict (Interview, KI-8, 7 November 2010, Derashe Shilale *Kebele*). There have been some *woreda* administrators, especially from Konso, who took part in the conflict and are ethno-nationalists (Interview, KI-6, 8 November 2010, Karat).

### 2.2.4 The Dynamics of the Conflict

Currently, there is no violent conflict except for minor crimes and killing in bordering areas. Leaders of the two *Woredas*, the joint peace committee, border committee, the technical advisory committee on the natural resource management, etc, with technical, financial and material assistance from Mercy Corps, Arba Minch Project Office, are working on managing the conflict. However, at present, the following are major challenges in the area:

- Poverty, lack of alternative livelihood, shortage of water, scarcity of resettlement areas;
- Lack of farmland holding rights, disagreement among neighbouring *kebeles*;

- Eviction of the Keyama people (not being reinstated yet), shortage of funds/ budget for the rehabilitation program including building trust among the conflicting parties;
- Lack of decision and settlement with regard to ownership of forest, farm, passage and pasture- This has remained a challenge to peace in the area;
- Absence of demarcation and protection of the Woyesa forest- There are still a lot of people who are settled in the forest;
- Closure of the way to Lake Chamo- The Konso people are insisting to re-open the passage and to prosecute those who closed the passage;
- Displacement of the Keyama people -This remained a challenge to the rest of the people of the Derashe *Kebeles* because the Keyama people attack them when they go to their farm land.

In general, the Derashe-Konso conflict was primarily an internal matter of Derashe *Kebeles*. However, with various complex factors, the Konso people were involved in the conflict by making alliance with some Derashe *Kebeles*. The Gurr's relative deprivation theory explains the principal cause of the Derashe-Konso ethnic conflict. According to Gurr's relative deprivation theory, as explained by Irobi (2005), group survival depends on the results of economic and political competitions for access to power and economic resources. The conflict between the Derashe and the Konso to have upper hand in the Abulo Alfacho area shows the competition to secure economic resources, which are the means for the survival of the two groups. This was exacerbated by factors such as deep rooted animosity and hatred, culture of heroism and harmful traditional practices, poverty, population growth, shortage of farm and pasture land, drought, illiteracy, lack of awareness on governance and rights, high circulation of illegal weapons, etc.

## Chapter Three

# 3. The Derashe-Konso Conflict Management Process

## 3.1 Introduction

Commonly, the management of ethnic conflict began with macro-political strategies via institutional arrangements, rules, mechanisms and procedures. Scheckener acknowledged three major methods to manage ethnic conflict: '*elimination, control and recognition*' (Wolf and Scheckener, 2004:18). Elimination and control strategies are unilateral policies pursued by the dominant group and aim at suppressing and denying cultural or ethnic differences within a state to achieve a greater homogeneity of society. On the contrary, recognition strategy pursues the goal of sustainable peaceful coexistence between various cultural groups by giving recognition to their culture, identity and rights. The basic principles in this strategy are *selfrule* and *shared-rule* (Wolf and Scheckener, 2004:18). The *self-rule* principle enables groups to determine and administer their own socio-cultural and economic matters to a certain degree, and the *shared-rule* lets ethnic groups to have representation and to share political power. Roper's (1995) analysis on the realms of the state and societies of ethno-political conflict regulation substantiates Scheckener's view of recognition strategy at macro level in the realm of the state.

In managing ethnic conflict, as a macro ethno-political conflict regulation, the 1995 FORE Constitution adopts the recognition strategy. Having ethnic federalism, the Constitution recognizes diversity and ethno-cultural justice among nations and nationalities. Accordingly, it provides all ethnic groups the right for *selfrule* in administering their economic, social cultural and political matters; and the right for *shared-rule* by representation and participation in federal and regional governance. However, the macro-political policy in managing ethnic conflict, especially in the areas of resource based ethnic conflict, is not by itself effective. The recent violent conflict between Konso and Derashe has shown the existing challenges at the grassroots level. Thus, the management of such conflict requires not only a macro-political policy, but also detail guiding mechanisms, procedures, actors, etc. to realize the macro ethno political strategy of recognition.

In relation to the Derashe-Konso conflict and its management process, the following matters will be discussed: procedures, responses and mechanisms of the conflict management, actors in the conflict management and some potential lessons drawn from the management process with specific reference to Derashe and Konso conflict.

## 3.2 Procedures in Managing the Conflict

The Derashe-Konso conflict management process started with containing the conflict, which required military intervention of the responsible organ. After the conflict was the Regional Justice and Security Bureau, the Regional Police Force, SNNPR Nationalities' Council and the administration of the two Special *Woredas* were engaged in calming, investigating, and looking for criminals. In this process, clan and community leaders, NGOs, *kebele* leaders, religious leaders and communities took part. Further, these actors went on assessing the conflict and maintaining discussions. Then based on the input gathered through discussions and assessment of the conflict, the management process went on the addressing the root causes and preconditions. At the end, a reconciliation ceremony was expected (Interview, KI-2, 2 November 2010, Arba Minch). In short, the conflict management process gives the following picture:



Figure 3.1 The Conflict Management Process  
Source: Field Note (October 25-November.14, 2010)

### 3.2.1 Containing the Conflict

The primary responsible organs to intervene in the conflict and help ceasefire are the regional government organs like the Regional Police Force, Justice and Security Bureau and the regional special force. There is a controversy as to who should intervene to contain the conflict. The regional officials contend that the regional government with the regional special force was involved in controlling the conflict. The community at the grassroots level (FGD with elders, Shilale *Kebele*, 6 November 2010) and the *Woreda* administration (Interview, KI-3, 6 November 2010, Gidole) claim that the regional government failed to respond to the conflict promptly. However, after a huge loss, unarmed force- not more than 30 men- were sent by the regional police. This force went back without making any difference (Interview, KI-8, 7 November 2010, Derashe Shilale *Kebele*).

Though it was very difficult to contain the conflict because both parties were armed with heavy guns like snipers, the federal police intervened and controlled the conflict. Later, after six months, the regional special force replaced the federal force, since

then the regional force remains there to watch the situation closely (Interview, KI-4, 6 November 2010, Gidole). Some allege that the failure of the regional government to respond to the conflict quickly has led to the loss of many lives and the destruction of properties (Interview, KI-3, 6 November 2010, Gidole).

### 3.2.2 Calming, Investigating and Looking for Criminals

The Regional Justice and Security Bureau, the Regional Police, the SNNPR Nationalities' Council, the Federal Police, the Mekane Eyesus Church, the Orthodox Church, community leaders, Disaster and Preparedness Commission, Mercy Corps and the Red Cross Society took part in calming the situation. An informant said,

*Too many lost their home, their property, and their family; too many were injured and were in pain. So, too many were in need of medical care, shelter, food, etc. However, most of them were too difficult to be controlled since they felt that they have nothing but only to die taking revenge (Interview, KI-6, 8 November 2010, Karat).*

The *woreda* and *kebele* leaders, community leaders, elders, etc. were told to calm their respective community. The Disaster and Preparedness Commission, Mercy Corps and the Red Cross Society were engaged in emergency service by providing food, clothes, house utensils, plastic tents, etc. Further, *kebeles* which were burnt down in the conflict were reinstated and resettled with the exception of Keyama *Kebele*. Religious institutions took part in calming the situation by giving spiritual services. Though both the Protestant and Orthodox Churches were burnt down in the conflict, they tried to settle, stabilize the situation, work to heal the traumatized victims and build trust among the conflicting parties (Interview, KI-2, 2 November 2010, Arba Minch). Here, the following decisions were made by the Regional Government (Interview, KI-9, 27 October 2010, Hawassa):

- i. Settling the displaced community in a specific place, providing basic necessities for those displaced, and organizing peace committee
- ii. Creating means by which those responsible for the conflict take accountability and criminals who instigated and took part in the killing and looting be brought before the court of law,
- iii. Thoroughly examining the situation and based on the results, making decisions against those who instigated and took part in the conflict. This was to be headed by the *Woreda* administrators.
- iv. Giving due attention and taking measures to control illegal weapon circulation.

Accordingly, rehabilitating victims, looking for criminals, conducting investigation and prosecuting them, addressing governance problems and controlling illegal weapon

circulation became part of the activities in the conflict management processes. However, there have been several challenges in catching criminals and controlling illegal weapon circulation because members of the local people have their own interest in the problems (Interview, KI-5, 6 November 2010, Gidole).

### 3.2.3 Assessing the Conflict and Conducting Discussions

In managing the conflict, the other major activity was to assess the conflict and conduct discussions with *Woreda* and *Kebele* leaders, elders, clan and community leaders, and the community at large. At different levels and directions, public discussions and trainings were held. In this regard, Mercy Corps, with government follow up and supervision, was given the mandate to intervene in the process, facilitate and build capacity on sustainable peace building, work on the need assessment of the two *Woredas*, conduct conflict assessment, assess preconditions with the Regional Justice and Security Bureau, Nationalities Council and with the two *Woreda* administrations (Mercy Corps, Project Plan on Social Peacebuilding through dialogue among conflicting parties between Derashe and Konso, 2009).

Primarily, discussions were made with the two *Woreda* administrators and this helped to identify their roles in the conflict, the weaknesses observed, the major parties in the conflict, the roles of the *Kebeles* in the conflict, etc. Then each *Woreda* was given the task of conducting internal evaluation. Then ethno-nationalists and those who were pro conflict were dismissed from government positions. The discussion went down to *kebele* level and each *kebele* identified parties that took part in the conflict, the root causes of the conflict, the position of the *kebeles*, the problems around *kebele* leaders, roles of *kebele* leaders, etc. *Kebeles* were also given the mandate to discuss with the community on the conflict. As a result, several public discussions were held on different issues like investigating the crime, looking for peace, teaching the local people on how they can handle their dispute, handing over the criminals and looted properties, creating mutual understanding, establishing peace committee, abandoning violent acts, etc. (Interview, KI-7, 28 October 2010, Hawassa).

A two-day peace conference that involved stakeholders was organized by the Arba Minch field office of Mercy Corps, Ethiopia and was held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2009 in Arba Minch. The conference, as an initial peace process, was aimed at eliminating suspicion over security issues of the two communities, mobilizing the community for peaceful development, highlighting the underlying issues of the conflict and setting a proper ground for a prolonged peace process through discussions and peace talks at various levels (Arba Minch Peace Conference Minutes, Arba Minch: 2009).

The conference highlighted the following concerns to be worked on:

- developing means for community interaction
- facilitating dialogue and communication between the two ethnic groups to manage their dispute
- working on socially inter-dependent bonds and fostering brotherhood
- creating awareness on violence to let conflicting parties sense the wrongs they did and thereby developing genuine remorse so as to strengthen the reconciliation process
- addressing the root causes, especially in the area/land where the violent conflict took place
- teaching the local community about peace, rule of law, etc.

The Conference was able to establish Joint Peace Committee (JPC) in which Border Committee was established, and others were formed later in October and November 2009. though the committees, discussions at community level were conducted at different times. (Interview, KI-4, 6 November 2010, Gidole).

Then in December 2009, the JPC organized a peace conference in Haybena *Kebele*. In the peace conference, all *kebele* elders, representatives of ethnic groups, and government organs from *kebele* to regional level took part. At the end, the parties agreed on reconciliation to take place after six of the following preconditions are met (Interview, KI-2, 2 November 2010, Arba Minch):

- The regional government should take over the management of the natural resource area in Amaro Special *Woreda*, around Lake Chamo. In the process, each party's interest and protection of the natural forest should be taken into consideration. Thus, matters related to access to Lake Chamo, the pastureland, the farmland and the forest were given to the government.
- The government should hunt and bring the criminals to the court of justice.
- Private and government properties that were looted must be returned.
- Shelters/houses must be constructed for each of those displaced.
- Measures should be taken to rehabilitate Keyama.
- Each side has to forgive the other with deep compassion

### **3.2.4 Addressing the Root Causes and the Required Preconditions**

To address the root causes and meet the required preconditions, the following activities have been undertaken:

### I. Managing Competitions over the Resource Area

The JPC, composed of both conflicting parties and neighboring special *Woredas* like Amaro and Burgi and relevant government bodies, established the Border Committee to realize community discussions, demarcate borders, provide passage ways, and handle lease contracts of farmland (Interview, KI-12, 11 November 2010, Karat). The Border Committee is directly responsible to the Joint Peace Committee and is assisted by a Technical Committee composed of a civil engineer from the Rural Road Authority, an expert on natural resource management, an expert on land and soil utilization from the Rural Land Administration Authority (Interview, KI-10, 10 November 2010, Arba Minch). The Technical Committee was organized to give technical advice to the JPC and Border Committee on how to manage the resource area for the common good of conflicting parties and protect the environment (Interview, Ato Solomon, 8 November 2010, Karat). The forest area has been demarcated but too many people have settled in the forest and the passage to Lake Chamo has also remained closed. Further, the farm and pasture land has not yet been demarcated (FGD with elders, Shilale *Kebele*, 6 November 2010).

### II. Working on Bonds

To establish more interaction and strengthen bonds among the Konso and Derashe people, some measures were taken. Common Markets such as Wozeka and Gato have been reestablished. Specially, Mercy Corps has worked hard to create and extend common markets (Interview, KI-2, 2 November 2010, Arba Minch). The researcher's observation on 6 November 2010 shows that all bordering *Kebeles* of Konso and Derashe were exchanging goods in the market. Common social service centers like clinics, schools, etc. have been reopened and were being used by the conflicting *Kebeles* together (FGD with youth, Shilale *Kebele*, 6 November 2010). The JPC has been trying to establish forum of interaction like football tournaments among youth from both *Woredas*. This was to develop group interaction, understanding and peaceful co-existence (Interview, KI-2, 2 November 2010, Arba Minch).

### III. Working on Peace Capacities

A peace committee was established in every *kebele* by involving different actors like *Kebele* leaders, elders, youth and women representatives, etc. They were trained and provided with guidelines to function as peace agents in handling minor incidences and private disputes. Further, they have a mission of functioning as early warning agents, teaching and developing peace dialogues, etc (Guideline on the Powers and Functions of *Kebele* Peace Committees, SNNPR Justice and Security Bureau, 2002). They were also mandated to control illegal weapon circulation, create community awareness on peace and peaceful interactions, and hold discussions and trainings with the community,

*kebeles* and peace committees. The discussion with community members and among the communities was intended to build trust among the conflicting parties. Further, there have been sustainable development programs, which are helping to advance the socio-economic power of the conflicting parties, peacebuilding activities, rehabilitation programs on immediate needs. These include resettlement and rehabilitation programs of the Keyama *Kebele*.

### 3.2.5 The Reconciliation Ceremony

Originally, the reconciliation was planned to be held before May 2010. But it was put off to July, then to September, then to December 2010, then to January 2011. The postponements were due to challenges of resettlement and rehabilitation of the Keyama *Kebele*. The challenges were mainly financial because almost nine hundred households were displaced. Besides, there was deep-rooted animosity had developed and it was too hard to build trust among these communities. Issues related to managing the farm, pasture, forest and passage ways to the lake were delayed (Interview, KI-10, 10 November 2010, Arba Minch).

In general, the figure below shows the procedures taken to implement the conflict management process. The “Y” axis represents conflict situation and the “X” axis represents peace situation. Though it is difficult to determine the relationship of the two variables in the figure, due to military intervention to contain the conflict, calm the situation, control criminals and rehabilitation of the victims, more peace has been secured. In addition, if the root causes and preconditions are addressed adequately and if the reconciliation is conducted within the social context, a more sound peace can be achieved. Here, it should be remembered that peace is an ongoing process and it has no definite end. With conflict transformation activities the curve can remain constant in its path and the curvature asymptote, which can help us to understand the mechanisms and systems that can reduce violence and contribute to the culture of peace (see Figure 3.2).

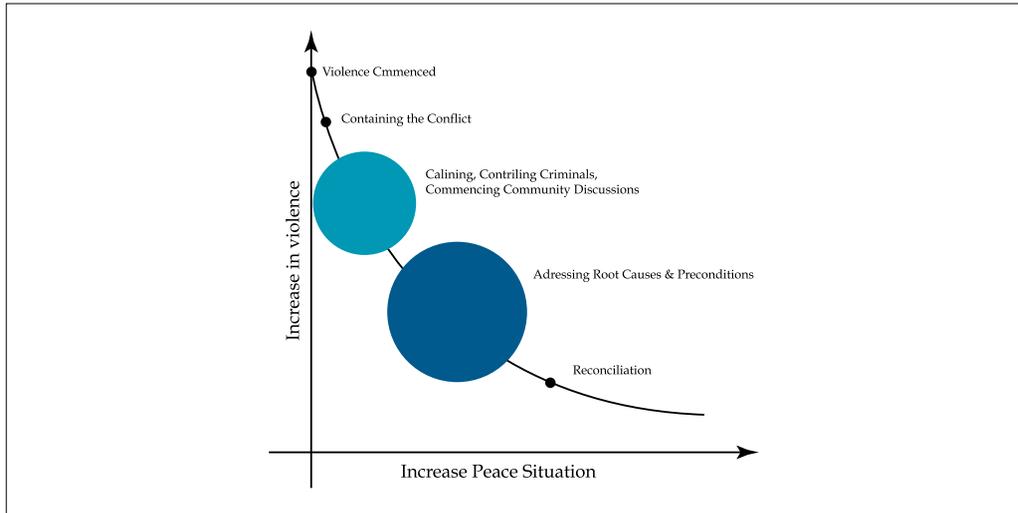


Figure 3.2 The Peace Process of the Derashe-Konso Conflict Management  
 Source: Field Note (October 25-November.14, 2010)

Therefore, containing the conflict, calming the situation, restoring order and creating accountability have to be the primary activities of the conflict management process. Then peace talks and discussion among the conflicting parties at the community level and assessing the conflict to identify and understand the root causes, major actors, peace challenges and social conditions should follow. In addition, before calling parties for reconciliation ceremony, addressing the root causes and the required preconditions should be realized. However, this by itself cannot achieve the transformation of the conflict. It rather begins the work on conflict transformation and creates the ground for the process. Hereafter, transforming the conflict requires working to consolidate the bonds and reducing dividers, dealing with peace challenges, addressing the needs and challenges of the communities, and building trust and interdependence among conflicting parties.

### 3.3 Mechanisms and Responses in Managing Ethnic Conflict

In relation to the mechanisms and measures taken in the Derashe-Konso conflict management, by taking of Roper's (1995) dimension of regulating ethno-political conflict, measures taken at macro and micro level on the part of the state and the society are analyzed below.

### 3.3.1 On the Part of the State

At macro-level, states' commitment to regulate ethno-political conflict is to secure institutional reform and reproduce democratic structure, to secure rule of law and look for options in terms of sustained peace and development (Roper, 1995). Further, Scheckener's recognition strategy helps pursue the goal of sustainable peaceful coexistence between various cultural groups by giving recognition to their culture, identity and rights.

As a macro political measure, the 1995 FDRE Constitution encompasses ethnic federalism to respond to the past injustice and secure ethno-cultural justice, equality and self-determination and thereby contain the possible occurrence of ethnic conflicts (Tsegaye, 2010). David Turton (2006:1) views this political structure as '*both radical and pioneering*'. This is due to the fact that constitutional guarantee of self-determination and ethno-cultural justice for 'Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia' has been taken as the fundamental organizing principle. It recognizes the existence of various cultural groups among nations and nationalities, their identity and rights.

A mere glance at the preamble of the 1995 FDRE Constitution shows ethnic federalism as macro political tool to manage the ethno-political conflict. Tsegaye (2010:53) affirms that the constitution incorporates ethnic federalism' *...to respond to the challenge of ethno national conflicts that beleaguered the old Ethiopian state from the time it has been built into a multi-ethnic empire often seeking to build one nation out of many*'. Further, Seberu (2006) verified that Ethiopian federalism empowers smaller ethnic communities by diffusing ethnic conflict and transforming the country's ethnic diversity and complexity into an integrative asset rather than a liability to national survival.

At micro-level measures include every kind of negotiation between the affected ethno political leaderships, agreement in which the interests of the majority and the minority are newly balanced against one another, the creation of special advisory bodies to watch over the interests of minorities, measures for implementing human rights, the rule of law, and regulations that ban discrimination and ensure equality, etc. (Roper, 1995). In general, the activities are crisis intervention adhoc programs to improve the situation of disadvantaged groups, minority representation, etc.

In the Derashe-Konso conflict, the primary measure at micro-level in the realm of the state was military intervention. There was military involvement to contain the conflict and to respond to the security crisis in the area. Since the consequences of the conflict were worse in the area, intervention was not only limited to containing the conflict but also to calming the situation and responding to immediate needs. Too many people had lost their houses, their families and properties and they were in

need of food, shelter, clothes. Above all they were and still are traumatized and need help. With peace talks and discussions, ad hoc programs and bodies were realized. The following objectives were identified in the ad hoc programs: to evaluate *Woreda* leaders in relation to the conflict, to conduct discussions with the *Kebele*, to respond to some land related problems in the border areas, to conduct discussions at community level, to manage the problems raised in the Abulo Alfacho area, to resettle the displaced *kebeles* including Keyama, to continue the search for criminals, to establish and train peace committee, to work on bonds to develop brotherhood between these two groups, to work for genuine remorse and reconciliation, to teach the community about peace, rule of law, etc. To realize these activities, an ad hoc Joint Peace Committee (JPC) was established and through this broader committee, technical committee and *kebele* level peace committees were organized.

### 3.3.2 On the Part of the Societies

At macro-level, on the part of societies, Roper (1995) contends that for constructive conflict-regulation, working for revealing the real extent of multi-ethnic interconnections and loyalties, and encouraging those who represent them is helpful. The measures involve developing professional codes of conduct for groups and institutions having to do with conflict, institutionalization of conflict culture, mobilization of social actors from peace constituencies, and strengthening of multi and trans-ethnic identities.

The Derashe-Konso conflict management process was able to identify local capacity and structures for peace. The local capacities like elders, clan and group leaders were involved in the process. They were recruited, trained and functioned as peace actors and also operated as social institutions based on their cultural settings and served on peace committees in the government structure.

Further, the process has been able to look for some capacities to strengthen multi and trans-ethnic identities. It has been claimed that both Derashe and Konso have blood ties-brothers, similarities in cultures, values, language, etc. The process was to strengthen these ties and advance trans-ethnic identities between the two people. The planned reconciliation ceremony also reflected these social settings and values.

At micro-level, on the part of societies, the activities included empowerment of the disadvantaged groups, improvement of multi-ethnic conditions of life, fostering multiple identities, and problem-solving workshops which require the involvement of the local people and NGOs working at grassroots (Roper, 1995). Peace-building activities are multi-dimensional tasks. Communities' involvement at large and assistance of civil societies at grassroots level in the peace process can characterize the Derashe-Konso conflict management. In the process, the role of NGOs was encouraging. Further, the communities have been major peace actors throughout the peace talks.

### 3.4 Actors in Managing Ethnic Conflict

Peace building is a multidimensional task. It requires the involvement of a broad range of actors, who make use of a wide repertoire of practice (Miall, 2004). Critical inquiry on actors under track I, track II and track III, can help to observe and evaluate the multi dimensional approach of the conflict management process.

Track I actors are government bodies which include officials, and political and military leaders (Lederach, 1996). These are among the most influential of all the actors as their practice impinges most directly and powerfully on the conflicting parties (Miall 2004). As regards the case at hand, while the Derashe-Konso conflict went on to its climax, the major issue in the minds of so many was who should intervene to contain the conflict. The

1995 FDRE Constitution requires the regional government 'to maintain public order and peace within the State' (Article 52 (g)). In the event of the situation where the regional government is unable to maintain peace and order, at the request of the regional administration, the federal government may intervene and 'deploy federal defense forces to arrest a deteriorating security situation' (FDRE Constitution, 1995, Article 51 (14)) apparently, the regional government has the right and the responsibility to intervene, specifically, in the Derashe-Konso conflict.

The House of Federation may also be involved in different ways. Primarily, it may give orders of intervention of the Federal Government if the regional state 'endangers the constitutional order' (FDRE Constitution, 1995, Article 62 (9)). It may also be involved 'to find solutions to disputes or misunderstandings that may arise between States' (FDRE Constitution, 1995, Article 62 (6)). The other relevant organ to intervene in the management of the conflict is the Ministry of Federal Affairs. Under Proclamation No.471/2005 Article 21, which defines the powers and duties of the executive organs of the FDRE, the Ministry is required to 'cooperate with concerned federal and regional state organs in maintaining public order, facilitate the resolution of misunderstandings arising between Regional States, upon requests of Regional States, devise and implement sustainable political solutions for misunderstandings and conflicts that may arise within Regional States'.

Hierarchically, for the case at hand, the intervention should start from *kebele* leaders and go on to the *woreda*, zonal and regional government. However, *kebeles* at the grassroots were the major actors and for some they were acting as 'war lords' in the conflict (Interview, KI-7, 28 October 2010, Hawassa). Further, the two Special *Woreda* Administrations were not free from involving in the conflict (Interview, KI-6, 8 November 2010, Karat). Due to this fact, they were not in a position to respond and contain the conflict. This situation invited the involvement of the regional government.

Despite the massive need for the involvement of the regional government, lately, it did but only with some unarmed regional forces that left without making any difference (Interview, KI-3, 6 November 2010, Gidole). Though it was late, armed federal forces finally intervened and contained the violence. Here, the crux of the matter was responding to the situation before it escalated. The delay resulted in the destruction of human, social, economic and political assets.

Predominantly, the conflict management process has been run by the JPC organized from the two special *Woreda* administrations and the two neighboring special *Woredas*, Burji and Amaro (Security Task Implementation Action Plan of Joint Peace Committee in Derashe and Konso Special *Woreda*, June 2001 EC). This committee has been directly assisted and guided by the Regional Justice and Security Bureau, the SNNPR Council of Nationalities, and the Regional Special Force which replaced the Federal Force. This committee was able to organize the Border Committee and the Technical Committee.

Second track actors are informal conflict resolution experts and international and local NGOs working in the areas of conflict resolution (Lederach, 1996). They are development and humanitarian agencies increasingly drawn into restoring the war torn societies, and responding to the acute damage that resulted from armed conflicts targeting development programs specifically peace building (Miall, 2004). After the conflict was contained, in addition to the governmental response through the Disaster and Preparedness Commission, NGOs like Red Cross Society and Mercy Corps were engaged to address emergency needs. They were able to provide shelter, food, clothes and house utensils. Further, while some *kebeles* were getting resettled, the Red Cross Society was providing plastic tents. Prominently, Mercy Corps Arba Minch Field Office played an important role in the conflict management process, particularly in activities that included material, human, technical and capacity building (Project Plan on Social Peace building through dialogue among conflicting parties between Derashe and Konso, Mercy Corps, 2009).

The third track invites grassroots or indigenous actors. In this regard, Miall (2004) argued that most importantly, the local actors themselves have the greatest responsibility and the greatest opportunity for transforming their own conflicts and in opening channels of dialogue. The Derashe-Konso conflict management process has been participatory among stakeholders. The process is able to engage not only the government but also civil societies, Peace Committees, religious institutions, group and clan leaders, elders and the communities at large. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Mekane Eyesus Church have been involved to calm the situation and are working to heal the trauma of the conflicting parties (Interview, KI-2, 2 November 2010, Arba Minch). Both religious institutions are preaching peace, calming the conflicting parties and helping victims to

deal with their traumas. Further, community leaders and elders were involved in the peace talks. The existing and functional traditional leaders especially from the Konso side were involved. For instance, the Konso traditional king, *Kala*, has been active to calm and counsel his fellows. From the Derashe side, though community leaders were not yet functional, elders helped in calming and counseling their communities (Interview, KI-1, 10 November 2010, Karat).

At grassroots level, peace committees were established in all conflicting *kebeles*. These committees were organized to function as early warning mechanism by gathering conflict signals and reporting them, facilitating peace talks, identifying suspected criminals, and taking immediate action on individual conflicts (Guideline on the Powers and Functions of *Kebele* Peace Committees, SNNPR Justice and Security Bureau,

2002). The guiding manual provides that the peace committee is chaired and co-chaired by the *Kebele* chairperson and the manager. The rest are from militia, women's and youth associations, school representatives, elders, and clan, community and religious leaders. Regardless of lack of full confidence among the communities in members of governmental bodies, the peace committee has been active and functional as an organ for early warning and peace building at the grassroots level.

In general, the Derashe-Konso conflict management process has been participatory among stakeholders. The process involved not only governmental organs but also civil societies, Peace Committees, religious institutions, communities and clan leaders, elders and the communities at large. In short, it involved multi-dimensional peace-actors.

### 3.5 Achievements and Drawbacks of the Conflict Management Process

The conflict management process was able to establish relative peace and stability with better security. In the first place, actors involved in the process have been too eager not to repeat past mistakes of the Gato Reconciliation. Despite many questions to identify and address conflicting parties, wrong doers, root causes of the conflict, social conditions, local capacity to make peace and existing challenges to peace, the Gato reconciliation went on under the canopy of peace. However, it was not able to secure peace and within a week, a series of big picture violent actions took place. Now, the ongoing conflict management approaches and procedures give the impression that stakeholders have learned from past mistakes.

Principally, before the conflict management process started, a kind of mini-study and need assessment was made by Mercy Corps Arba Minch Field Office. The study was designed to understand the conflict, the community relationship and needs to

be addressed based on conflict and mapping tools for natural resource and internal relationship (Mercy Corps, Derashe and Konso Special *Woreda* Need Assessment Report, 2009). This study and discussion with the community revealed conflicting parties, root causes of the conflict, the relationship between the two communities, the social conditions, and potentials and challenges for peace. The output of the study has been used as an input for intervention and management approaches to the conflict.

In addition, the peace talks which included the *Woreda* and *Kebele* leaders, and the conflicting communities on the ground, added some important values for restoring peace and creating better conditions for sustainable peace (Interview, KI-1, 10 November 2010, Karat). Principally, the discussion helped them to understand each other, the importance of peace, their relationship, the function of government bodies, rule of law, consequences of breaching rule of law, etc. (FGD with Youth, Shilale *Kebele*, 6 November 2010).

Accordingly, the conflict management process was able to realize and secure relative peace with some potential for sustainable peace. Social activities like the movements of both groups crossing their boundaries, transacting in common markets, visiting a *Jala*, attending the same church and funeral ceremonies, ploughing land next to each other, engaging in *debo* to assist each other, sharing the same transportation and infrastructures like clinics, schools, etc, demonstrate the achievement of relative peace and the potential for sustainable peace (FGD with Youth, Segen *Kebele*, 12 November 2010). In addition, the willingness of a displaced *Kebele*, Keyama, to return to their *home* destroyed by their neighboring *Kebele* explains the success of conflict management in building trust.

Further, the management was able to secure consensus and political commitment among the four Special *Woredas* (Amaro, Burji, Derashe and Konso). They agreed to come together to form a Zone and administer it jointly and thereby manage their respective *Woredas* and pursue their common interests (Interview, KI-9, 27 October 2010, Hawassa). This consensus and political commitment will transform the conflicting parties to administer their resources together by maintaining cooperation rather than competition.

Generally, the conflict management process has made the conflicting parties, Derashe and Konso, consider their greater bonds and interdependence rather than differences. They share similarities and bonds with a lot of interaction and interdependence. The conflict management process has explored, appreciated and employed these potential peace capacities. Further, the dialogue forum started between the two communities and *Woreda* and *Kebele* leaders, the role of the peace committee, football tournaments, etc. have potentials to transform the conflicting parties goals of to a better positive relationship.

Despite these achievements, the conflict management process could not escape some criticism. Predominantly, it has been alleged that the failure to respond promptly to the violent conflict and thereby contain the violence has led to loss of human, socio economic and political assets (Interview, KI-3, 6 November 2010, Gidole). If necessary interventions had been made before the escalation of violence, the conflict would not have caused the loss incurred.

In addition, though the process identified the root causes in some respects, it failed to address them fully. The identified main root causes - the competition for the forests, paths to Lake Chamo, the farm and pasture land was not addressed (FGD with elders, Segen Kebele, 12 November 2010). These competitions are the core and principal sources of the conflict. Regardless of their challenges, the process did not deal with some harmful practices. Still there are challenges for peace in connection with some harmful activities in both groups, which were not identified and addressed (Interview, Ato Tesema, 28 October 2010, Hawassa).

Moreover, some maintained that the process develops an "expectation" among the communities (Interview, K.I-12, 11 November 2010, Karat). The communities expect a lot from the government and civil societies. Some of the indicators for this are the frequent request made by Derashe and Konso *Kebeles* seeking the special force to permanently function as police, the usual precondition by the people of Keyama *Kebele* for peace reconciliation in requiring full rehabilitation, etc. For some, the rehabilitation program did not consider the social conditions. For instance, for every household of Keyama *Kebele*, a home will be made with iron-steel because they have lost their traditional huts. However, if they get an iron-steel house as a replacement of the lost traditional hut, it implies that they are encouraged to fight and destroy properties and thereby get a better home (Interview, KI-7, 28 October 2010, Hawassa).

Above all, despite its significant success, the conflict management took more than two years. However, the traditional reconciliation ceremony is not yet conducted and it has been postponed a number of times (Interview, KI-10, 10 November 2010, Arba Minch). This delay happened because the root causes were not addressed and the preconditions were not fulfilled. In this regard, one of the critical limitations is the challenge of coordination and time limitation (Interview, KI-2, 2 November 2010, Arba Minch). The organized and functional teams, committees and civil societies have not networked efficiently. Follow-up, coordination, evaluation of the progress, looking at the challenges and potentials are key to exert a concerted effort in managing conflicts and building sustainable peace.

## Chapter Four

# 4. The Derashe-Konso Conflict Management in and under Transformation

## 4.1 Transformative Dimensions of the Conflict Management Process

The central point of conflict transformation, as Lederach (2003:4) asserts is *giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures and respond to real life problems in human relationship*. The change it inquires about rests on the changes that occurred as a result of a conflict and the changes seek to transform the conflicting parties and their goals in four categories: personally, relationally, structurally and culturally. Here, by employing the conflict transformation framework developed by Lederach (2003), changes required and resulted personally, relationally, structurally and culturally in the Derashe-Konso conflict and conflict management process are examined below.

### 4.1.1 Cultural Dimension

With respect to the cultural dimension of conflict transformation, the following three questions are the major concerns to be addressed. (1) Is there conflict in culture and a need to change it? (2) Did the process identify and recognize cultural patterns that contribute to the rise of violent conflict? (3) Did the process identify and build upon resources and mechanisms within the cultural setting for constructive response and handling conflict?

Predominantly, there is no culture related conflict between these two ethnic groups. However, most Derashe *Kebeles* accuse their own Keyama *Kebele* for reflecting some Konso traditional values (Interview, KI-2, 2 November 2010, Arba Minch). This fact, to some, has contributed to the fragility of internal cohesion within the Derashe ethnic group. Partly, the process identified and recognized cultural patterns that contribute to the rise of violent conflict like culture of revenge, culture of being a safe haven for criminals and undue role of traditional leaders. Traditionally, it has been learned that the elders or clan leaders have been giving blessings to the youth to take violent action.

In this regard, the process identified the challenge of a deep-rooted culture of revenge among the two groups, the undue roles of the community leaders, clan leaders and elders in instigating violence and giving blessings for violent actions.

In the process of the conflict management, some of the core community discussion issues were taking on the awful trend of revenge developed through time. Further, the process included these community leaders who took part in different trainings, community discussion forums, peace committee, handling some individual-based disputes, etc. However, despite their presence, their role is limited and has challenges. For instance, in peace committees, they are members but they are dominated by the function of the *Kebele* leaders (Guideline on the Powers and Functions of *Kebele* Peace Committees, SNNPR Justice and Security Bureau, 2002). This is the reason why the community lacks full trust in the peace committee. On the other hand, the presence of community leaders in peace committee has challenges. The response made by the Konso traditional leader, *Kala*, shows that some community leaders act partially, fail to recognize truth, and sometimes act as spoilers (Interview, KI-1, 10 November 2010, Karat). Further, despite the need to maintain accountability against criminals in the conflict, there is on both sides a tradition of giving cover to criminals. Most criminals hide in their own communities that assist them to escape (Interview, KI-4, 6 November 2010, Gidole). Regardless of this, there are some cultural challenges that the process failed to identify and address. Some of them are harmful practices. Specifically, from the Konso side, there are some harmful practices related to wizards (Interview, KI-3, 6 November 2010, Gidole). The process tried to respond to these challenges within the cultural settings. Public discussions and peace talks were used to reflect the cultural settings of the two communities. To provide illustration, peace talks and conferences start with blessings by elders, clan leaders and ethnic group leaders. The Arba Minch peace conference was commenced with the tradition of blessing (Arba Minch Peace Conference Minutes, Arba Minch: 2009).

Though it was not effective enough, the Gato peace conference encompassed the indigenous mechanism of conflict resolution. It encompassed the ceremony of breaking the spear and burying cattle while they were alive. Further, the last activity of the conflict management reconciliation ceremony, has a plan to realize it with the indigenous mechanisms of conflict resolution with the ceremony of breaking the spear and burying cattle alive (Security Task Implementation Action Plan of Joint Peace Committee in Derashe and Konso Special *Woreda*, June 2001 EC).

#### 4.1.2 Structural Dimension

In transforming a conflict, the structural dimension strives to look for the change made in addressing the root causes, social conditions, promoting the non-violence mechanisms and thereby minimizing or eliminating violence and fostering the development of structures to maximize substantive and procedural justice (Lederach, 2003). Accordingly, the following inquiry should be made against the conflict management process: Did the process address the root causes of the conflict and social conditions? Did the process

promote non-violence mechanisms and thereby minimize violence? Did the process foster the development of structures to maximize substantive and procedural justice?

The process identified the social conditions and root causes. Some issues have been addressed except the critical one, i.e., managing the resource area, which is found in Amaro special *Woreda* of Abulo Alfacho area (Security Task Implementation Action Plan of Joint Peace Committee in Derashe and Konso Special *Woredas*, June 2001 EC). The process identified the competition over this area as a principal source of the conflict and for this a technical committee, composed of different experts, was organized to assist the JPC in managing and settling issues like land for pasture, farm, forest and passageway to Lake Chamo. However, the JPC or the technical committee has done very little to manage these issues (FGD with Youth, Segen *Kebele*, 12 November 2010). They remained as peace challenges in the area.

In the process, peaceful mechanisms of handling disputes or grievances were given due concern. For this purpose, public discussions, trainings and peace talks were highly concerned with the introduction and development of peaceful handling mechanisms of incompatible interests. Intervention of the Federal and Regional forces to stop violence, intervention of the legal procedures to hold criminals accountable for their action, intervention of the relevant organs to pursue dialogue and peace talks, etc, bring peaceful mechanisms of handling differences and thereby reduce conflict. Yet, relatively speaking, it is hardly possible to say that positive peace has been secured, but it is more than negative peace.

Further, in the process, new structures emerged to develop and foster substantive and structural justice. The new structural changes include the restoration and strengthening of rule of law, creating temporary and permanent committees, and the plan to organize a new *Zone* among the four special *Woredas*, namely Amaro, Burji, Derashe and Konso. Before the conflict, to some informants, rule of law was at stake and it was totally shattered in the conflict (Conflict Assessment Report, SNNPR Justice and Security Bureau, 2001 EC). Now, restoring governmental structures, procedures and functions are ongoing, however; rule of law is not sufficiently secured.

The established JPC and border committees have functioned to address the critical challenges that resulted from the conflict like border issues, rehabilitation, resettlement, returning looted properties, etc. (Interview, KI-12, 11 November 2010, Karat). The peace committees established in every *kebele* had potential peace capacities to address the needs and challenges at grassroots level. They can serve as an early warning tool for immediate responses or they may handle the matter before its escalation. Above all, the political commitment to form a new zone between the conflicting parties and their neighbors may transform the competition to cooperation over the resource area. This

decision will translate into a joint zonal administration and let the *Woredas* share resources jointly, which will simplify the management of the area.

### 4.1.3 Relational Dimension

The relational dimension focuses on the change required and made in minimizing poorly functioning communication, fostering understanding, reduction of fears developing hopes and increasing interdependence (Lederach, 2003). The process identified some potential interaction capacities such as blood tie language, market, *Jala* system, common cultural values, common public utilities like school, clinics, transportation, etc., which have the potential to foster communication and understanding (Interview, KI-2, 2 November 2010, Arba Minch). Taking the myth of brotherhood as twins rather than elder and younger to reduce competition over visions in histories, the process has been working to foster positive relationship between these two groups (Arba Minch Peace Conference Minutes, Arba Minch: 2009). The process was able to use the advantage of language, common cultural values, *Jala* system, shared public utilities, common markets to increase interdependence and positive communication. Now these two ethnic groups interact each other to visit their *Jala*, transact in common markets, share public utilities, send their children to the same schools, use the same transportation, plough adjacent farmland, etc. Especially, the ongoing plan to hold football tournaments among neighboring *kebeles* would help to promote interaction and strengthen positive relationship.

However, still the process did not foster complete trust among the conflicting parties. Particularly, people of the Derashe *Kebeles* do not trust one another and the Keyama still lack full confidence in secured peace. Due to this, they still hesitate to return to their former area for fear of being encircled by the rest of the Derashe *Kebeles* which will put their survival in danger. Thus, the process has not yet been able to build trust and hope in the area.

### 4.1.4 Personal Dimension

The change required in personal dimension is to reduce the negative effects of social conflict and capitalize on the potential growth and well-being of individual human beings at physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual levels (Lederach, 2003). So, what are the achievements of the conflict management process in minimizing the destructive effects of the conflict and maximizing the potential growth and the well-being of individuals?

Participants in the focus group discussions confirmed that the process was able to restore peace and normal relationship, let the conflicting parties concentrate on their own business, realize freedom of movement, make people transact in common

markets, visit their families and *Jala*, attend their respective churches, etc. It let people in the conflict area take care of and run their own day-to-day activities and social life. However, there still are challenges for individuals in the areas where the competition over the resources started. Presently individuals have settled in the forest, most areas have been cultivated, and the way to Lake Chamo has been closed. This means individuals still have problems of pasture land, access to water points, and hacking of crops in the farmland, in particular.

## 4.2 Potential Peace Capacities for Conflict Transformation

In transforming a conflict, the key approach should be looking for the mechanisms to end something destructive and build something desired (Lederach, 2003). These mechanisms require the ability, skill and creativity to look beyond the existing challenges (Lederach:1995). However, as practical necessity, in ethnic conflict matters they should consider the social and cultural settings of the conflicting parties. In other words, such mechanisms, as Galtung (2004) argued, should emanate from the systems, mechanisms and capacities developed within the cultural settings of conflicting groups.

For many, it is astonishing to find the Derashe and Konso people in deadly conflict while their bonds are more than dividers. Among these people, there are potential peace capacities like shared values, bonds and interaction mechanisms which require due exploration, appreciation and usage. These peace capacities can help to end something destructive and build something desired and assist the conflicting parties to navigate toward sustainable peace over the course of time. The following are potential peace capacities to transform the conflicting parties and their goals.

### 4.2.1 Shared Histories and Brotherhood

Hansemo (2001), SNNPR Nationality Council (2009), Arba Minch Peace Conference, interview with key informants, and participants of FGD confirmed that the Derashe and Konso are kins- brothers. In the myth, it has been stated that both Konso and Derashe are from the same family, Mato. As discussed in Chapter Three, Kala of Konso and Titipa of Derashe are the children of Mato, who came from Borena and Liben. For some, they are twins and for others Titipa is the younger brother of Kala. This blood tie has been strengthened by cross-marriage as these two ethnic groups still marry one another.

According to Spencer (2006), in an ethnic group structure, ethnic identity is a term for collective identity, shared values, beliefs and the self-definition of a group 'we' in differentiating with 'they'. In the self-definition and differentiation process, the

construction of more relations with 'they' would help a group to rethink their relation to the extent of understanding 'they' as 'we'. Further, the understanding of primordial list explains attributes such as common origin and history for a categorization of human population in a group with other groups (Hussein, 2005). Devoid of hesitation, it holds true to conclude that the existing blood ties and common ancestor with the same source lineage can let these two people to relate with one another, which directly affects their relationship positively. Therefore, the existing blood tie and brotherhood with the lineage has the potential capacity to promote peace to enhance their relationship and transform the conflict.

### 4.2.2 The Jala System

For Galtung (2007), conflict transformation is a process of diagnosis and prognosis of the conflict; and provision of therapy. Accordingly, in the process of ending something destructive and building something desired provision of necessary therapy by considering '*underlying pasterns and context within a cultural setting*' is unquestionable (Lederach, 2003: 27). One of the cultural settings and input to maintain positive relationship between the Derashe and Konso people is the traditionally developed *Jala* system. In the culture of most ethnic groups of South Western Ethiopia, making *Jala* from another ethnic group is common among the youth, elders and women. It is a gesture of friendship thereby sharing the joy and sorrow, visiting each other and exchanging gifts. This practice has been common among the Derashe and Konso people. Thus, working to strengthen this mutual bond can offer an opportunity to reduce destructive social interaction and build more positive relationships and interdependence to foster peaceful coexistence sustainably.

### 4.2.3 Common Values and Mechanisms

Further, conflict transformation requires working on common values to advance interaction and interdependence between conflicting parties (Miall, 2004). Hence, in conflict transformation, looking for common values and mechanisms to cultivate interdependence, understanding, trust and communal security is fundamental. Common markets, common public utilities, shared language and common religion are some of the common values and mechanisms to foster potential peace capacity.

In common market places, like Gato and Wozeka the Konso and Derashe people transact and exchange without the intervention of any one. Most Konso are in need of cereals from Derashe and most Derashe are in need of cattle from Konso. In these agro-pastoralist communities, market places are not only places to transact, but they are also meeting places to discuss, interact, exchange greetings and information, and eat and drink together. For peace pedagogy intervention purpose, they may serve as a forum for the local government and civil societies. To this approach, language

advantage will be supportive. Both groups can understand and speak *Afan Konso* and *Derashita*. Common public utilities like schools, clinics, road and transportation would hasten the interaction and communications. Specially, schools may serve as forum for interaction, understanding and developing trust among the youth. Further, with the expansion of Christianity, most of these two people became Protestant and Orthodox Christians. Hence, these common and shared values and systems can affect the conflict transformation work positively.

#### 4.2.4 Customs and Traditional Values

Across most ethnic groups in the area, there are helpful customs and traditions for peace initiatives. The value of listening to and respecting elders, ethnic group and clan leaders is common. Elders, clan and ethnic group leaders have been peace actors and their decisions have been given due respect. The value of solving problems through negotiations, the value of calling neighbors to mediate internal matters like the request of Konso people for the Derashe's assistance as "*dhina Derashe dhiya*" literally means 'Therapy comes from Derashe,' the value of abiding by the outcomes of negotiations, telling the truth and respect for the seniors are most important values that require appreciation, exploration and exploitation.

#### 4.2.5 Developing and Building Peace Agencies

Over the course of time, navigating toward peace requires institutional commitments (Galtung and Webel, 2007). Institutional responses through peace agencies allow for the organization of peacebuilding activities and ensure the progress of the society in the desired direction. The peace agencies should function to lead communities toward an enduring path of peaceful development and trust, and creation and sustenance of peace education. The established peace committees within the Kebeles of Derashe and Konso can function as peace agencies to foster the culture of peace. Their essence and function at the grassroots level have immense opportunities to lead conflicting parties to sustainable peace. Thus, in the process, the composition, role and capacity of peace committees ought to be given due concern.

### 4.3 Potential Peace Challenges

To transform conflicting parties and establish positive relationship among them, there are potential peace challenges. The primary challenge is the culture of being a safe haven for criminals. Both communities hide such people (Interview, KI-4, 6 November 2010, Gidole) but on the other hand, the culture of revenge and deep-rooted animosity is a potential challenge (Interview, KI-2, 2 November 2010, Arba Minch). Hence, when criminals are not handed over and prosecuted in the court of law, the other party tends to pursue revenge against the so-called "foe". In turn, this will challenge

the secured peace. Further, low level of community awareness about government structures, their functions, peaceful co-existence, etc, are the challenges to peace. In addition, in Konso there are harmful practices and structures which praise those who raid and loot someone else's property (Interview, KI-3, 6 November 2010, Gidole). These practices are potential challenges to establishing sustainable peace.

## Chapter Five

### 5. Summary and Conclusion

#### 5.1 Summary of Major Findings

The Derashe and Konso people, who are said to be brothers, originate from Borena and Liben. They share common borders, cultural and traditional values, common assets, social services, etc. Despite their commonalities and interdependence, the two groups were in violent conflict since 1969 E.C. in more than four incidences. The recent 2008 and 2009 conflict ended with a permanent scar. Predominantly, this conflict has the character of natural resource competition over resource areas in Abulo Alfacho, Amaro Special *Woreda*. *Kebeles* from the Konso and Derashe side have been in dispute over farmland, pastureland, passage ways to Lake Chamo and the natural forest. Factors such as deep rooted animosity, competing historical visions, illiteracy, lack of good governance, illegal weapon circulation, harmful practices, etc. played significant roles in aggravating the situation.

Primarily, the conflict was within the Derashe *Kebeles*, but the process and the basic issues in the conflict invited some Konso *Kebeles*. At the end, it took the character of a conflict between two ethnic groups (Konso and Derashe). Despite their ties through clans, the two conflicting parties form their group in the line of *kebele* and strategic common economic interests. In terms of *kebeles*, Onota, Shilale, Holte, Walesa and Atiya from the Derashe side conflicted with Malaga and Dhugaya, Segen Genet, Garche, Lultu, Addis Gabare and Birbirsu from the Konso side. In terms of strategic common economic interest alliances, Keyama and Haybena from the Derashe side created alliance with Konso and took part in the conflict directly.

The Derashe-Konso conflict management process involved military intervention to control violence, calm the situation, control criminals and help victims rehabilitate. Finally, addressing the preconditions and root causes followed. In addition, before calling conflicting parties for reconciliation, addressing the root causes and considering preconditions needed attention. However, the process failed to address the root causes of the conflict and was unsuccessful in achieving the preconditions.

The process was supported by a need assessment of Konso and Derashe people and a mini-conflict study. The need assessment gave a full picture on the socio-economic challenges of the Derashe and Konso people while the mini study enabled actors in the conflict management process to see the conflict and the relationship of these two groups. As a result, issues on peace talks, topics to be addressed, and parties

involved in the conflict management process were identified. Accordingly, the conflict management, process involved governmental and local actors, civil societies, and the conflicting parties. The Regional and Federal police force, the SNNPR Justice and Security Bureau, the SNNPR Nationalities' Council, the Federal Disaster and Preparedness Commission, the two special *Woreda* administrations, and others directly took part in the process. In addition, civil societies such as Mercy Corps and the Red Cross Society were involved. Local elders, clan and community leaders also contributed to the management process although their role was dominated by *Kebele* leaders and political organs.

To count some of the achievements, primarily, the conflict management process which was predominantly led by JPC was successful in ensuring comparative peace and stability with better security. Social interactions such as the movements of the two groups by crossing their boundaries, transacting in common market places, visiting their *Jala*, attending the same church, attending funeral ceremonies, farming their land, sharing the same transportation and infrastructures, health centers, schools, etc, signify the achievement of relative peace and some potential possibilities for sustainable peace. In addition, the process promoted understanding of the conflict, the community relationship, and their needs as shown by the study of the conflict. Political commitment to join together to form a zone and administer the zone jointly and thereby to pursue their common interests was another success of the process. Above all, the process gave an opportunity for the two ethnic groups to discuss their concerns in order, to understand each other and to consider their greater bonds and interdependence than their differences. However, the conflict management process failed to respond promptly in controlling the violence and identifying the root causes.

Despite some cultural patterns, there is no cultural conflict between the Derashe and the Konso. Even, patterns like revenge, being a safe haven for criminals and the undue role of community leaders were identified and addressed within the cultural setting. However, some cultural patterns such as harmful practices which misguide the local people to violent actions were neither identified nor addressed. In addition, restoring and strengthening the rule of law, creating temporary and permanent committees, and forming a new Zone among the four special *Woredas*; namely Amaro, Burji, Derashe and Konso are some of the structural changes that resulted from the process to maximize substantive and procedural justice. Besides, some potential interactions such as blood ties, language, common market, *Jala* system, common cultural values, common public utilities like school, health centers, transportation, etc. have been identified and explored. Moreover, the conflict management process was able to restore relative peace and normal relationship allowing the conflicting parties to concentrate on their own business, to secure freedom of movement, to exchange in market places, to visit

their families and *Jala*, to attend their respective churches, etc. Nonetheless, there still are challenges for individuals residing in the areas where competition over resources started. Nowadays people have settled in the forest, most areas have been cultivated, and the way to Lake Chamo has been closed. Hence, individuals have problems to pasture their cattle, water their animals, and farm their land.

## 5.2 Conclusion

The constitutional arrangement of ethnic federalism serves as a means to contain the nationwide potentials of ethno-political conflicts by addressing the past mistakes and historical challenges of ethno-cultural justice. However, as the premises of this study provide, despite this macro-political decision to address past challenges, currently with the change of the character more in local terms and fragmentations, ethnic conflict has been a challenge in Ethiopia. In turn, the frequency and scale of these ethnic conflicts convey the insufficiency of macro-ethno-political management policy of federalism to manage and transform ethnic conflicts. Hence, looking for detailed and process oriented ethnic conflict management mechanisms at micro level is inevitable.

Considering the Derashe-Konso conflict management process, it is hardly possible to give a conclusive remark on the methods of ethnic conflict management. However, the following points can be drawn: First, although the conflict management process was not able to bring the two ethnic groups to a positive relationship, it secured more than negative peace. Comparatively, it ascertained the restoration of the rule of law, positive social interactions and activities with better security and stability. Nevertheless, the critical root causes remain to peace challenges in the study area. Second, at micro-level the Derashe-Konso conflict management process shows some activities to be carried out in the ethnic conflict management process such as controlling violence, restoring order, creating accountability, responding to needs, etc. Furthermore, the process observed existing social context and historical relationship. Above all, it underlined the importance of understanding the social context or the social condition, the needs and challenges of the conflicting parties, the potential local peace building capacities, challenges for peace building historical relationships, social interaction and interdependence mechanisms, nature of the conflict, root causes, actors, dynamics, etc, in the conflict management process. However, the process failed to react promptly to control the conflict, address the identified root causes and some preconditions, and conduct the traditional reconciliation ceremony based on the plan. Third, the process also recognized the multi dimensional task of peace building activities. It involved not only governmental actors but also the conflicting parties, the communities at grassroots, potential of traditional institutions, civil societies, and the like. Accordingly, relevant peace building stakeholders took part within the realm of

the state and societies or under track I, II and III. These actors have the potential capacity to engage in and continue the peace process in building something desired and ending the undesired situation.

Fourth, in the process, emphasis was given to activities such as minimizing the destructive effects of the conflict, maximizing the potential growth and well-being of individuals, minimizing poorly functioning communication, fostering understanding, reducing fear, developing hopes and increasing interdependence. Finally, the process identified some basic peace building potential such as shared history and kinship of the two people, the *Jala* system, common values and mechanisms, customs and traditional values, etc. These capacities have the potential to foster communication and understanding and thereby to transform the conflicting parties and their goals. However, these potential possibilities by themselves cannot realize the transformation of the conflict. Rather, they have begun the work on conflict transformation and have created the ground for the conflict transformation process.

Despite this fact, this study is not conclusive. Further investigations need to be conducted on the issue at hand. However, this study implies that managing and transforming ethnic conflict requires efforts to expand the connectors and reducing dividers, dealing with peace challenges, addressing the needs and challenges of the communities, building trust and interdependence among conflicting parties.

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