Ethnic Peace vs. Ethnic Conflict: A Tale of Two Resorts from Experiences in Tanzania and Ethiopia

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Abstract

While questions of identity more define politics in the twenty-first century than economic or ideological concerns, what leads some nations down a spiral of violence/'ethnic conflict'/ while others can foster peaceful coexistence/'ethnic peace'/ is an unsettled issue. Much has been documented as to the negative impact of ethnicity and its politicization in Africa. But, are any arrangements more likely than others to contain and defuse or reduce the destabilizing political and social tendencies of ethnic pluralism in ethnically-split African societies? This article, by exploring the experiences of two purposefully selected case studies (Ethiopia and Tanzania), strives to locate factors that lead these nations to an opposite outcome in their ethnic pluralism. The study relied on extensive secondary sources and employed an interpretative approach. The study's finding shows that Ethiopia's and Tanzania's marked difference in patterns of violence and instability in Sub-Saharan Africa is not just a coincidence. Instead, the different choices in their ethnicity handling during their critical juncture were pivotal to the opposite outcome. Based on lessons from the two countries, the article made imperative the importance of re-constituting ethnic relations and crafting a civil society to foster peaceful co-existence.

Keywords: Ethnic Conflict, Ethnic Peace, Identity Politics, Social Cohesion, Sustainable Peace

1. Introduction

Since the mid-1960s, there have been prolonged and protracted ethnic-related violent conflicts in Africa (L. Adele, 2007). However, ethnicity's role in motivating and structuring violent conflicts remains an unsettled question,

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mainly due to the fluid nature of ethnic groups and their endogenous development during the conflict. In other words, much of the debate on ethnicity and violence is based on incoherent understandings of ethnicity and violent conflict (Patterson, 2013; Cavanaugh, 2009). A conflict analysis that neglects or simplifies the role of ethnicity runs the risk of being incomplete and missing vital considerations. Such a one-sided approach would possibly suffer from the fact that ethnicity can affect African political behavior variously. It has to be taken into account that ethnic identities may be employed to contrast motives. If we focus our observations on singularly ethnic adherents, the analyses will suffer from being complete.

Different researches express that ethnic diversity presents economic advantages to states with ethnic diversity (Collier and Hoeffler, 2006). Collier and Hoeffler's argument is premised on the assumption that ethnic diversity presents an opportunity for raising diverse productivity skills and valuable knowledge for problem-solving. However, it is an unsettled question whether politicized ethnicity would provide the same advantage. On the contrary, the dominant works on ethnicity in Africa purport that ethnic diversity counteracts development initiatives. Writers like Miguel (2004) suggest that countries with such diversities are expected to experience low macro-economic stability and diminishing growth rates, corruption, and poor public services. These works infer that not every ethnicity affords the same opportunities. Thus, it would be only proper to question what leads some nations down a spiral of violence and sometimes to genocide, while others can foster peaceful coexistence. In other words, the question can appear as saying: Are there any arrangements that are more likely than others to contain and defuse or reduce the destabilizing political and social tendencies of ethnic pluralism in ethnically-split African societies?

The question above appears most relevant because, in a future of uncertainty where violent conflict continues to occur and where nations are in constant danger of slipping into the mud, it is necessary to distinguish what causes 'ethnic conflict' or what causes 'ethnic peace.' This article presents a purposefully selected case study of two East African States, Ethiopia and Tanzania, in terms of their marked difference as to their 'ethnic peace' and 'ethnic conflict' status. When analyzing conflict in general and ethnic conflict in particular in developing countries, it is common for scholars to point factors such as GDP and wealth distribution, religious and ethnic divisions, and employment rates as indicators for states to remain more peaceful (Marshall and Gurr 2005). In that regard, Tanzania and Ethiopia exhibit many factors

that encourage conflict in general and 'ethnic conflict' in particular. Both countries are characterized by extremely low GDP, highly volatile neighbors, a large youth population, and high unemployment (Geda, Shimeles, & Weeks, 2009; Ilana, 2006). Moreover, Tanzania and Ethiopia represent a striking plurality of ethnic and religious groups in their domain. Though the estimation differs, more than 120 ethnic groups exist in Tanzania (Jerman, 1997). Figures put ethnic groups in Ethiopia to more than 80 (Tesfaye, 2012; CSE, 2007). As ethnically diverse they are, in neither country, one ethnic group commands a simple majority (Mrisho, 2014; CSE, 2007). Oromo are the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia and Sukuma in Tanzania (Mrisho, 2014; CSE, 2007). Despite many factors that would seem to encourage 'ethnic conflict' in their domain, Tanzania and Ethiopia demonstrate two opposite examples of the salience and effects of ethnicity. While Tanzania stands as a positive example in terms of the relative 'ethnic peace' debate, Ethiopia, on the other hand, arguably is an example of 'ethnic conflict.' The same can be inferred from the below Global Peace Index rankings about the two countries:

Table 1: Ranking Ethiopia and Tanzania in the Global Peace Index for the Last Five Years (Among 163 countries considered worldwide)

Country	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Source
Tanzania	54	51	54	52	58	Institute for Economics & Peace. Global Peace Index. Measuring Peace in a Complex World (2017; 2018; 2019; 2020; 2021)
Ethiopia	134	139	131	133	139	

Table 2: Ranking Ethiopia and Tanzania in the Global Peace Index for the Last Five Years (Among 44 countries considered in Sub-Saharan Africa)

Country	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Source
Tanzania	9	9	7	7	7	Institute for Economics & Peace. Global Peace Index. Measuring Peace in a Complex World (2017; 2018; 2019; 2020; 2021)
Ethiopia	35	38	33	34	37	

Interestingly, less ethnic salience in Tanzania happened to be the case despite the country passing through colonialism's legacy. Had it been to the dominant paradigm as to the effects of colonial heritage, Tanzania should have been

fallen more to the exploitative colonial plan and developed a sufficiently distinct political visibility that attracts ethnic salience. It should have been so because managing ethnic diversity within the unity of the colonial borders is a challenge that most African states cannot wish away. Given the absence of a so-called colonial legacy, Ethiopia is supposed to be better placed to be less developing a sufficiently distinct political visibility to attract ethnic salience. But this assertion seems to defy itself when it comes to the cases of Tanzania and Ethiopia. Ethnic salience in politics in Tanzania is low, whereas the opposite can be said in the case of Ethiopia. Adding to the complexity is that factor related to multi-party politics. Despite the criticism of its practical use, Ethiopia and Tanzania adopted multi-party politics in their constitution in an almost similar period. A decision to make Tanzania a multi-party state was taken in 1992 at the Chama Cha Mapinduzi party national conference's extraordinary national meeting (Juma, 1992). The idea of multi-party democracy in Ethiopia was embodied first in the 1991 Charter of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia and then made part of the constitution in 1995 (Solomon, 2018). And, multi-party politics has been characterized among the factors where ethnic sentiments would gain salience in most African countries, thereby resulting in 'ethnic conflict' (Nicholas and Robert, 2007). However, that is not the case in Tanzania. So, the question would be, why? How far do the manners in which governments handle ethnic questions appear as a significant variable in explaining 'ethnic peace' and 'ethnic conflict' in these two countries?

In drawing its line of argument, the study relied on extensive secondary data materials. So, data were compared from various relevant sources to develop reliable information. Then, by exploring the experiences of the two purposefully selected case studies from existing sources, an attempt is made to compare, explain and make sense of 'ethnic peace' and 'ethnic conflict' through an interpretative approach. The analysis's time frame was set to capture the fundamental shift to handling ethnicity in the two countries (the critical juncture in terms of their ethnicity handling). Against this background, the article locates handling of ethnicity as a valuable tool to explain much that occurred in Tanzania and Ethiopia in post-independence and post-1991, respectively. Tanzania became independent in 1961. So, this article presents that, among other factors, measures taken in post-independence Tanzania have primarily determined the current status of relative 'ethnic peace' in the country. When it comes to the Ethiopian case, the article draws that measures taken in post-1991 Ethiopia, among other factors, have predominantly determined the sentiments of ethnic salience in the country. In addition, the

study laid itself on an exploratory approach to look afresh at the issue at stake, uncover new perspectives holistically, and find plausible explanations towards sustainable 'ethnic peace.'

2. Review of Literature: Situating the Debate on Ethnicity and Conflict

As glimpsed above, violent conflict between ethnic groups constitutes substantial parts, if not the majority, of all wars since the 1960s (L.Adele, 2007; Wimmer, Cederman, and Min, 2009). However, the validity of this claim depends on the definition of ethnic groups and their relation to conflict. Precisely defining an ethnic group, however, poses more challenges than one might expect. Any description from the literature is also tricky by itself to be representative of a specific country or region. Within that limitation, ethnic groups are generally seen as groups formed based on cultural, religious, linguistic, or biological characteristics perceived to be shared by their members (Brubaker 2004; Smith, 1986). The authors' usage of ethnic groups is also based on the above conceptualization throughout this paper.

While a general understanding can be drawn on the definition of ethnic group, its relation with conflict is subject to varied opinions. In these diverse spectrums of views, we have the first argument that ethnicity and 'ancient hatreds' between different ethnic groups are the exclusive basis of conflicts between them (Kaplan, 1993). It even goes as far as to argue that ethnic heterogeneity is conflictive. This argument is based on the assumption of the primordial approach, where it views ethnicity as fixed and the rationale of ethnic violence is ethnic differences. Therefore, where there are multiple ethnicities, there is ethnic violence (Vanhanen, 1999). In addition, Frank P. Harvey (2000: 40-41) explains that according to primordialism, "ethnic ties are inherently more potent (and fit) as an organizing force than…ties based on class or occupation." However, this does not mean that violence or conflict is constant. The history of bitter rivalry, age-old disputes over land, vengeance killings, or preemptive slaughter of populations can easily be attributed to identity. Hence, as per the primordialists argument, ethnic identity is the root cause (Harvey, 2000; Vanhanen, 1999; Kaplan, 1993).

On the same account, Hizkias (2001:18), for instance, depicts most wars waged in Africa and particularly in the Horn during the past 30 years have been described as 'inter-ethnic conflicts', both by the adversaries themselves and by external analysts. He also writes that the civil wars in Sudan have been characterized as conflicts between the Arabized Northerners and African

Southerners, with cleavages along religious, racial, cultural, and linguistic lines. The various civil wars in Ethiopia have been characterized as wars between the Amharas and the Tigrians, Oromo, Eritrean, etc. Somali conflicts have been described as conflicts between the Maraheens and the Issas, or the Darods and the Ogaden, etc. Likewise, the conflict in Djibouti described as a conflict between the Afars and the Issas (Hizkias, 2001). As such, what Hizkias attempted to show in his work is that many people believe almost all conflictual problems in the Horn of Africa and Ethiopia, in particular, emanate from ethnic differences.

One criticism of this approach is that it operates under the assumption that identities are fixed. In other words, it fails to explain, as Lake and Rotchild (1998:5) argue, the emergence of new identities. Accordingly, what matters is not ethnicity purely but politically salient ethnicities, where there is an 'us' against 'them' construction to these identities. This point leads us to the second kind of explanation, instrumentalism. To this end, parties to ethnic conflicts are nothing but "bands of opportunistic marauders recruited by political leaders" (Mueller 2000: 42). According to this approach, group grievances are less convincing conflict-generating factors than individual, rational cost-benefit calculations (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004). Therefore, the likelihood of ethnic violence or conflict depends on whether the overall outcomes benefit exceeds the transaction and coordination costs (Fearon and Laitin, 2003). Thus, ethnicity is not so much an explanatory factor as it is a tool for the elites to manipulate the masses into supporting them in pursuing their personal, material goals (Fearon and Laitin, 2003).

Meaning instrumentalism understands that groups or collectives make a rational choice to most strongly identify with a specific part of their identity for economic or political gain, whether linguistic, religious, or racial differences. When seen from this perspective, ethnicity brings practical advantages such as reducing organizational problems, for instance, by lowering action costs through shared language, culture habits, etc. (Sambanis, 2001). On the level of followers, the individualistic approach argues for a rational cost/benefit calculation that factors in the possible gains from joining a rebellion and related opportunity costs such as expectations of future employment (Sambanis, 2001).

Primordialism generally links violence directly with identity differences; instrumentalism does almost the opposite by citing predominant economic

interests. As implicated above, political elites can and do use ethnic divisions to their advantage in the colonial experience of many European-colonized African states where ethnic divisions were capitalized upon to keep groups from rising against the imperial governments. The Hutu were played off against the Tutsi and more formally separated racially so that one group could oppress the other, leaving the dominant ethnic group dependent on colonial support (Tong, 2009).

One criticism of the instrumentalist approach is its assumption of ethnicity as purely elastic. If ethnicity is purely elastic and instrumental, there would be little for political elites to exploit because conflict would be purely economically motivated (Tong, 2009). Identities need to be politically salient to be useful for exploitation. They fail to recognize the 'passions and emotions' involved in identity-based conflicts. As Connor (1994: 206) pointed out, "Men do not allow themselves to be killed for their interests; they allow themselves to be killed for their passions." Those who put too much emphasis on the objective (resource-conflict) factors often have trouble understanding the role of identity, prestige, social and political status in a conflict. Those who also over-emphasize primordial/identity factors have difficulty understanding that political and economic factors are often part of the political game (Vanhanen, 1999; Keen, 1999).

Moreover, as stated by Francis Fukuyama (2018: 18), "while the economic inequalities arising from the last fifty or so years of globalization are a major factor explaining contemporary politics, economic grievances become much more acute when they are attached to feelings of indignity and disrespect." Therefore, there is something to be said for group identification; it is compelling enough to average citizens to make them riot or mass murder people. It could be that instrumentalism is valid for the elite and the upper class, but it is less convincing in the lower class.

This takes us to the final approach, constructivism. It is essentially a bridge between primordialism and instrumentalism. Based on scholarly arguments regarding the sources of ethnic conflicts, one may presume that both primordial and instrumentalist approaches are a misconception. In bridging the two approaches, constructivism posits that ethnicity is a social identification, not just an individual one. Unlike instrumentalism, constructivism recognizes that ethnicities are not chosen and change as a society changes. However, unlike primordialism, it does not assume that ethnicity inherently leads to

conflict or violence; thus, the onset of violence still needs to be explained. For the constructivist, violence rises from a combination of multifaceted factors than a single trait. As a result, the discussion shifted its focus more on examining the dynamics underlying ethnicity in conflict (Grigorian and Kaufmann 2007; Kaufmann, 2006; Gurr, 1993; Gellner 1983). Among the assumptions embedded under constructivism in understanding the use of ethnicity in violence is to look into the existence or otherwise of narratives that institutionalize ethnic in-group and an out-group (the in-group's opponent). It also appears necessary to look into how ethnic groups are treated regarding a territorial base or a homeland. Generally, it is essential to examine how ethnicity is treated in a country to understand its usage in a conflict or otherwise.

In explaining the ethnic conflict in Africa and Ethiopia in particular, this work ascribes itself to the multiplicity of variables. As such, it boards on the assumption that ethnic heterogeneity by itself does not breed a war, and its absence does not ensure peace. Even if some scholars simply generalize that the above-discussed conflicts in Africa as inter-ethnic, this work takes that these conflicts, which were considered as inter-ethnic, are driven by multifarious complex and interrelated variables rather than pure ethnic hatred and antagonism. In other words, most of the conflict-related problems in most African countries are not merely due to ethnic differences but due to other variables such as political and economic causes that surface the existing ethnic differences. Of course, the existing ethnic differences, as evidenced from the different empirical case studies, could serve as a trigger of conflict but should not be considered a standalone factor in understanding the issue. In other words, this piece springs on the assumption that any examination of identity would have to be inclusive of all assumptions; instrumental, primordial, and constructivist, and how they are intricately linked.

With that assumption, the following sections discuss the varied treatment of ethnicity in the post-1991 Ethiopia and post-independence Tanzania's political landscape and the quite different ramifications.

3. Ethnicity Handling in Post-1991 Ethiopia and its Discontents

One of the oldest nations globally, Ethiopia has more than 80 ethno-cultural and linguistic groups (Tesfaye, 2012). For decades, diversity-related issues such as the right and equality of ethnic and religious groups have been the historic and prevalent questions in the country; ethnic sentiment has arguably

gained salience as never been before since 1991. In consequence, today, Ethiopia stands more as an example of 'ethnic conflict' than 'ethnic peace.' The country ranks among the lowest countries in the Global Peace Index. The question is, therefore, why is this the case?

In post-1991 Ethiopia, following the restructuring of the Ethiopian state as 'ethnic-based federalism', there has been a transformation process in the country, particularly concerning ethnicity. However, the transformation process cannot be fully understood without locating them within the historical processes of state formation. While much has been discussed on the top-down nature of modern state formation and nation-building in Ethiopia (see Markakis, 2011; Teshale 1995; Bahru, 1991), Ethiopian nationalist groups have shared profoundly different visions of history and identity, each connecting past and present through different political interpretation and, at times, contradictory narrations of various contenders of power at the local level. For that matter, the history of modern Ethiopia was recorded for some as glories of victory and conquest and hence, was all a normal process of 'nation building' (Maimire, 2006; Bahru, 1991; Tekletsadik, 1982), while for some others as the history of exclusion and marginalization (Tekalign, 2004; Markakis, 1998, Abbink, 1998; Clapham, 1994). A few political elites even stated that it must be seen as a form of 'internal colonialism' (see, for example, Assefa, 2002: 43).

While the contention on the understanding of the history of modern Ethiopia stands as it is, modern Ethiopia, as it was created by Emperor Menelik II (1889 to 1913), is composed of several ethno-linguistic communities with different histories, languages, and cultures (Galperin, 1981). However, the monarchy's nation-building process, which used the politics of divine power and Orthodox Christian state religion, had neglected the interests of the bulk of the ethno-linguistic groups. As a result, the various ethnic groups of the country were forced not only to submit to the centralized monarchy's rule but also to adopt the language, culture, religion, etc. of the monarchy (Kymlicka, 2007; Tekalign, 2004; Clapham, 1993; Gebru, 1991; Young, 1996; Strecker, 1994). Therefore, the process of empire building in a manner that did not reflect the multi-ethnic composition of the country had resulted in the formation of ethnic-based political parties. This is evidenced by the political parties established in the names of the major ethnic groups as liberation and secession movements like in the cases of the EPLF-Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front (which has already succeeded in its political program of

independence), TPLF-Tigrean Peoples' Liberation Front, OLF-Oromo Peoples' Liberation Front, ALF-Afar Peoples' Liberation Front, etc. (Bahru, 1991). In 1974 the Socialist Government, Dergue, which took power following the overthrowing of the monarchy, made some political reforms like popular sovereignty, secularism, and land as public property into the nation state-building process. However, it addressed the dissatisfactions of the different ethnic groups through military force until it was overthrown in 1991 by the ethnic-based political parties (Mamo and Papadopoulos, 2004).

The new federal constitution established upon a structural foundation for post-1991 Ethiopia was ratified in 1995. The constitution sets out a new federal arrangement based on ethnic identity, bestows popular sovereignty on ethnic groups, and endows self-determination rights, including 'the right to secessions' to nations, nationalities, and peoples (Assefa, 2007; Chirstopher, 2006; Lovise, 2002). Moreover, the post-1991 Ethiopian political landscape is premised on rectifying the unjust historical relations among the different ethnic groups. Thus, the identity causes /'questions of nationalities'/ are the bases for the creations and struggles of the ethnic-based political parties that formed a coalition under the name Ethiopian peoples' revolutionary democratic front (EPRDF) as well as the other political parties in the country (Asnake, 2002). This identity is also played out in how the Government is structured along with language, culture, ethnicity, regional identity, and religion (Alem, 2004).

The post-1991 Ethiopian political dynamics /inter-ethnic relations/ can, therefore, be characterized by the process of ethnicization of all the state structures, distribution of resources, and political powers. In other words, ethnicity as the principal mode of organizing politics has been installed. Regional states were organized along ethnic lines, thereby successfully creating narratives that define the ethnic in-group and an out-group, the in-group's opponent. This has been exacerbated through group myths and mass hostility sowed based on political exclusion and discrimination by the successive regimes in the country. Alem (2004: 91) describes the same as follows: "[i]n 1991 the Ethiopian government-employed ethnic pluralism as an organizing principle, creating multiple ethnic-based territorial units with a 'right of secession' provision." Following the same, ethnicization of the political culture and the politicization of ethnic identity as the primary vehicle for claims and entitlements to economic resources and political power become the norm (Mamo and Papadopoulos, 2004). Accordingly, the civic basis for

politics was displaced by the legalization of ethnic ideology, the creation of ethnic-based political organizations, the result of ethnic-designated regional states, and the division of the country's territory predominantly along ethnic lines (Mamo and Papadopoulos, 2004). The Party system in the country hardly differs from the assertion made above. In general, ethnicity has been formally institutionalized and got constitutional recognition after 1991, which some would call 'Formal Ethnicity' (Woldesellasie, 2001).

The issue of ethnicity as the primary organizing device of politics in Ethiopia and its impact has been studied extensively from the legal, sociological, and political analysts (Beza and Nigussie, 2019; Asnake, 2013; Beza, 2013; Yonatan and Christophe, 2013; Assefa, 2007; Abbink, 2006; Assefa, 2002). Though each differs in terms of specific assessment of its effect, institutionalization of ethnicity decisively transformed politics in the country, not always with the hoped-for consequences. Empirical evidence demonstrates that the country has remained deeply divided and prone to ethnocultural conflicts, arguably as never before. Though some of the issues are not "invented" by the post-1991 political structure itself and have long historical roots (Asnake, 2013), there is a resurgence of high-level ethnic, religious, and communal conflicts with devastating consequences throughout the country these days.

Incidents of ethnic violence that evidence the problems since 1991 are many. For instance, although there were intermittent conflicts between the 'indigenes' and the 'highlanders' in the Gambella regional state in the past, the conflict escalated since 1991, leading to the loss of lives on both sides (Dereje, 2009). According to Dereje, the new political boundary introduced in post-1991 Ethiopia has reinforced the already existing social boundary, especially between the 'indigenes' and the 'highlanders.' On another front, frequent conflicts between the Oromos and Amharas living in Oromia Regional State have led to the loss of life and destruction of property in post-1991 (Assefa, 2012). Conflicts in Bedeno, Arba Gugu, and Gara Muletta are clear instances for a case in point (Assefa, 2012). In the same year, a violent and bloody conflict between the two ethnic groups was also witnessed in localities such as Horo, Addis Alem, Kiramu, and Northeastern Wollega (Asnake, 2002). Violent conflicts within and between the Somalis and Oromos pastoral tribal groups of Ethiopia's Southern and Eastern parts are also not a new phenomenon (Asnake, 2002). The Silte-Gurage conflict, which manifested itself as Silte ethnic self-assertion based on language and Islamic faith

differences, was another notable post-1991 ethnicity-related violent conflict (Makoto, 2005). Though this very problem was claimed by some writers like Asnake (2002) as based on incompatibility of interests, it is, however, undeniable that identity politics played a role in magnifying the question and bringing it to the forefront as never seen before.

These days also, particularly from the commencement of the post-2018 political space, the country has increasingly experienced a plethora of traumatic ethnic violence (Yonas, 2019; Semir, 2019). More recently, there was ethnic violence in the Oromia and the Somali regional states, especially along the border (Yonas, 2019; IDMC, 2018). Tigrayans were forced out of Amhara Regional State and different parts of Ethiopia; Amharas were expelled from Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz Regional States (Crisis Group, 2019; IDMC, 2018). It was not that long that violent conflicts between the Oromo and Gedeo ethnic groups displaced dozens of people in the western Guji and Gedeo zones of neighboring Oromia and the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region (OCHA, 2018; IDMC, 2018). Many innocent Ethiopians have died in the southern cities of Hawassa and Sodo and Moyale, and Dire Dawa because of ethnic violence (Crisi Group, 2018, 2019). Moreover, civilians were killed in Ashewa Meda, in Burayu town of Addis Ababa in September 2018 (Yonas, 2019) and Kemise town of Oromo Special Zone, Amhara Regional State, by violence with ethnic attributes (Semir, 2019). Scores of civilians from the Gamo and Ghuraghe ethnic groups were also targeted and killed by assailants around the capital city, Addis Ababa, in 2018 (ETV, 2018; VOA, 2018). These crises have led to widespread and intense internal conflicts that have exploited the myth of national solidarity, perhaps putting its influence on the nation's social fabric. The country's national security has been affected more than one; its cumulative effects have been felt in villages, businesses, and investments.

In general, post-1991, Ethiopia has experienced a spate of crisis characterized by violence with ethnic attributes leading to loss of lives, monumental damages of properties, and political instabilities. Ethnicity as the sole instrument of political organization, in this regard, has generated or at least transformed various local, regional or trans-border conflicts along identity lines. At the local level, for instance, the process of devolution of power to the newly created ethno-regional states has been primarily experienced in the form of heightened political competition among the ethnic elites and growing inter-ethnic hostility. The political elite have adopted ethnic strategies to dominate

the new political space and the derivative rewards. They took advantage of its 'formalization' and galvanized the symbolic power that ethnicity has to offer and used it as a tool for pursuing territorial, political, and economic objectives. Furthermore, as Abbink (2006) notes, the post-1991 ethno-linguistic-based regionalization introduced in the country not only led to sharpened ethnic consciousness and difference between the various ethno-regional groups but also a resurgence of local boundaries and a sense of distinctiveness between the major and sub-ethnic groups.

Furthermore, opposition groups, not always within formal parties, have also used ethnic issues to score political points. Of course, that goes in line with the claim that where ethnic politicization and mobilization are high political parties are likely to be organized mainly along ethnic lines. Under such conditions, as Lijphart (1997) and Cho (2007) note, crafting a political system that accommodates the interests and demands of competing ethnic groups becomes highly challenging, especially where some forms of proportional representation and consociational decision-making systems are not in place. Moreover, exclusively regionally based parties, particularly of ethnic-based ones in this context, are risky because unless they are counterbalanced by multi-ethnic-based parties to bridge them at the center, they can lead to a deadlock, as is the case in Belgium, or even to fragmentation, as was the case in the failed communist federations (Assefa, 2012).

So, what characterizes the post-1991 Ethiopian political landscape is that two or more ethnic political organizations emerged with contending claims almost on everything more often than not. Moreover, the political parties are based on the ethnic origin of their leaders rather than on opposing ideologies. Not only that, a number of these organizations grappled with each other either for political supremacy or for realizing a new form of ethno-national identity, and in a few cases, with an explicit or implicit tendency of distinctive statehood (Markakis, 2011). Today, Ethiopia presents a complex of individual and criss-crossing and recursive identities of which ethnicity is salient and the primary basis for violence. The levels of ethnic conflict and violence we are witnessing today in different parts of the country are challenging the historical peaceful coexistence of multi-ethnic groups. The repercussion of institutionalizing ethnicity as a unit of political action and mode of social organization in Ethiopia does not end at the inter-ethnic level. It has also ushered in social fragmentation within the ethnic groups engendering intra-ethnic competition for political power and resources. With all those attributes, it would be only

logical to say that 'ethnic conflict is what defines the current Ethiopian state structure instead of 'ethnic peace.'

4. Ethnicity Handling in Post-Independence Tanzania and its Achievement

Initially known as Tanganyika, Tanzania acquired its present name, 'the United Republic of Tanzania,' when it incorporated the neighboring island of Zanzibar on 26 April 1964 (Philip and Malcolm, 2007). As most African countries do, Tanzania presents interesting cases of ethnic diversity and language groups. And most of the diverse African countries experiences are marked by violent conflict of different forms, mainly ethnic conflicts. Though much has been documented on the negative impact of ethnicity and politicization in Africa, little is known about countries' experience harnessing 'ethnic peace' despite their diversity. And a pretty necessary explanation for the so-called 'ethnic peace' would be the remarkable experience of Tanzania. Since independence, Tanzania has differed markedly from most African countries (Tong, 2009). It exhibits a striking plurality of ethnic groups that are not ethnically politicized, unlike in many other African States (Bratton, Bhavnani, and Chen, 2011; Weber, 2009). Tanzanians are 'less ethnically politicized' despite having around 120 ethnic groups (Jerman, 1997:34).

Moreover, as implied previously, Tanzania regularly makes up among the ten more peaceful states in Africa. The question would be why Tanzania has managed to remain calm during massive political changes despite a highly diversified ethnic composition. The answer to the question may not be many. Studies cite the significant reasons for same as follows: one, the existence of the Swahili language as a *lingua franca* through which Tanzanians of all ethnic groups can readily communicate with one another and two, policies imposed by Julius Nyerere, the founding president of the dominant party Chama cha Mapinduzi, where he forged a sense of national unity among Tanzanians (Tong, 2009; Mujwahuzi, 2005; Michael, 1996). The following paragraphs will discuss how that has been achieved with an overarching approach.

As to the first reason, it is reiterated widely that Swahili as an indigenous lingua franca in Tanzania does not carry a taint of ethnic superiority and, as such, has provided a significant source of ethnic unity throughout the nationalist and independence periods (Malin, 2012; Jan 1996; Brian, David, and Ben, 1994). Swahili is the widespread national language understood by

nearly the entire population in Tanzania (Laitin, 1992). It is widely aired as the primary reason for Tanzania's great peace. While no observer would suggest that a common language alone could bring about 'ethnic peace,' according to the above writings, it is difficult to believe that Tanzania's culture of 'ethnic peace' would have been possible without it.

Back to its emergence as a unifying force, Swahili became the official language of Government and education from 1964 (Malin, 2012). The former president Julius Nyerere contributed significantly to the consolidation of Swahili while being a teacher of both English and Swahili, he translated (and published) Shakespeare's Julius Caesar into Swahili himself (Malin, 2012; Bamgbose, 1991). He proclaimed the use of the language, and it was during his leadership Tanzania became the first country, amongst the liberated colonies from Europeans, in Africa to make an African language the national one (Malin, 2012; Bamgbose, 1991). When Swahili was declared the national language in 1964, several institutes and organizations were established to coordinate and maintain the language. During the decade following independence, the Tanzanian Government aggressively promoted Swahili as a tool of shared national identity and emphasized its use as the official language of Government and as the language of instruction throughout the country's school system (A.Okion, 1972; Lyndon, 1969). Thus, as a non-European language through which Tanzanians of all ethnic groups could readily communicate with one another, Swahili was a vitally important building block in the construction of an effective and genuinely nationalist movement (Jan 1996). Here, of course, the newly independent Government of Tanzania enjoyed a considerable advantage in having inherited a national language that had been widely diffused by the German system of colonial administration as well as by coastal traders and merchants (Lyndo, 1969). In general, since independence, Swahili has made it possible for civil servants and teachers to be posted to any region of the country, and not just the area where they are familiar with the local language (Brian, David, and Ben, 1994). Lionel Cliffe (1977) and others have suggested that Swahili is the ordinary people's language of Tanzania and not the socially divisive colonial language of a minor, educated elite group.

As to the second, many agree on the socially and politically constructed reality, the product of a set of deliberate and self-conscious policy choices adopted by Tanzania's political leaders in the early years of independence, as another essential explanatory view to the 'ethnic peace' in the country (Tong, 2009). With this respect, it is claimed that the conscious policy choices

adopted by Tanzania's political leaders have made Tanzanians a less ethnically politicized nation 'despite' having around 120 ethnic groups (Jerman, 1997). In other words, Tanzania is recognized as a state in which ethnicity is not politically salient despite being ethnically diverse. But how is the critical question?

The response to the question is embedded within the measures taken by Tanzania's founding father, Nyerere, in his attempt to forge national unity. Among the carefully crafted measures by the founding father of Tanzania include the commitment to the ideal state. As such, Nyerere forcefully downplayed the role of the ethnic association in public life and instead 'accentuated a Tanzanian national identity (Miguel, 2004:337). Moreover, in an act that confirmed his commitment to moving beyond colonially inherited localized identities and taking the state closer to all parts of the country to further the national project, Nyerere relocated the capital of Tanzania from the coastal city of Dare Salaam to the more centrally-located Dodoma in 1973 (Collier, 2009). He also banned tribal unions and the mention of ethnic groups in newspapers and stopped collecting information on ethnic identity in national censuses (Tripp, 1999). The Government's policy of allocating students and teachers to boarding schools and other government officials outside their home of origin was a step in the same direction (Heilman& John, 2012). Other initiatives included compulsory military training that mingled youth from all over the country and political education meant to instill a sense of patriotism, nation-building, and unity (Lupogo, 2001; Green, 2011).

In unpacking the ethnic socio-economic differences in the country during the colonial period, the Haya, the Chagga, and the Nyakyusa ethnic groups are perceived as having enjoyed disproportionate educational advantages during the colonial epoch, which consequently led to an occupational benefit of the members of these ethnic groups in post-colonial Tanzania (Nyang'oro, 2004). On the same note, Jerman (1997) argues that the Haya and Nyakyusa dominate white-collar employment in Tanzania while the Chagga conquer private enterprise (Jerman, 1997). However, these perceptions of prejudice and discrimination have never been strong enough to manifest themselves and affect inter-ethnic relations in social and political domains. The same is explained as that belief among Tanzanians that the disproportionate benefits in question are a product of colonialism. In contrast, the socialist state has attempted to address the inequalities through equitable distribution of public goods (Nyang'oro, 2004).

In general, Tanzania's exception to the patterns of violence and instability in Sub-Saharan Africa is not just a coincidence. Instead, the post-independence Government's social, political, and economic policies have created a political culture that is mainly responsible for Tanzania's current relative 'ethnic peace.' A self-perpetuating set of norms, values, and institutions has fostered widespread acceptance of national identity and less salience of ethnicity in politics. Under such circumstances, it would be logical to expect politicians striving more to sustain an ethnically inclusive posture than relying on their ethnic base.

5. Towards a Sustainable 'Ethnic Peace'

Identity, as it is controversial, is everywhere. Ethnic identity should be viewed within this general assertion. In line with that, Fukuyama (2018) notes that in many democracies, the left focuses more on promoting the interests of a wide variety of marginalized groups, such as ethnic minorities, immigrants and refugees, women, etc. The right, meanwhile, has re-defined its core mission as the patriotic protection of traditional national identity, which is often explicitly connected to race, ethnicity, or religion. Hence, identity politics in the modern world is inescapable, though it is also widely criticized.

Moreover, there is not much evidence in western democracies that demonstrating democracy, economic prosperity, and personal tolerance would lead to the abetment of ethnic mobilization (Kymlicka, 2002:82-83). On the contrary, ethnic demands have increased throughout western and non-western societies. Instead, it is argued that the achievement of democratization, prosperity, and tolerance have direct implications for increased ethnic-group mobilization (Kymlicka, 2002). In line with that, Post-Cold War developments and empirical evidence from multicultural societies hint that identity in general and ethnic identity, in particular, does not necessarily vanish from the face of the political discourse (Wendt, 1999; Smith 1991; Horowitz, 1985). This happens to be the case even if political and economic situations are favorably accommodative, let alone when it is a state target of destruction under the guise of 'nation-building.'

On top of that, as stated repeatedly, ethnic difference is neither a threat to stability nor necessarily a cause of conflict. Wolff (2006), in particular, observes that ethnicity on its own does not cause conflict as several factors are always at play in each conflict situation, arguing that identity is a fact of human existence and that it is what people make of it or to what use they

deploy it that makes the difference between ethnic cohesion, harmony or conflict. In other words, it is not ethnicity *per se* but the role of ethnicity in the political process, that is, the politicization of ethnicity, which explains social conflict and democratic breakdowns (Wolff, 2006; Posner, 2005; Miguel, 2004; Chandra, 2004; Zartman, 1995; Horowitz, 2000).

The political salience of ethnicity is linked to increased ethnic favoritism (Posner, 2005; Chandra, 2004) and low inter-ethnic cooperation at the local level (Miguel, 2004). In other words, what ties the ethnic violence in many African countries are claims and counter-claims over ethnic identity as a basis for determining who is excluded or included from decision making as well as access to opportunities and privileges under the 'us' versus 'them' formula (Ghai and Cottrell, 2008; Wolff, 2006).

Hence, how activists define the in-group and out-group relationship (the 'us' versus 'them' sentiment) is crucial in conflict dynamics. Accordingly, the more confrontational the definition is, the more it will lead to conflict. The same is that ethnicity-based loyalties quickly become a source of mobilization when conflict over resources and power leads to antagonistic rivalries.

The Ethiopian experience can be put as falling within this trap. Ethnic differences were activated at the expense of complementary group elements by ethnic entrepreneurs for political instrumentality, which negatively impacted ethnicity. Accordingly, while the roots of ethnic and other identity conflicts in Ethiopia have been linked to multiple factors, it would be safe to argue that such conflicts are rooted in the politicization of ethnic identities, the competition, and the battle for political power by the ethnic communities. Thus, such conflicts are due to the deliberate manipulation of ethnic sentiments either by leaders of ethnic groups (ethnic elite) or by a government to secure economic and political advantages. In particular, as captured by Ahmed (2004), the role of an educated, literate intelligentsia in creating and propagating a pan-ethnic consciousness is crucial in this regard.

Therefore, the question should be how to accommodate the national and ethnic differences in a stable and morally defensible manner in multicultural societies like Africa. Though some magnify Tanzania's move after independence as the only option in terms of depoliticizing ethnicity and harnessing 'ethnic peace' in a nation-state, the approach, however, can hardly be said a welcome note by all. Some would argue the system to suppress identities, be it ethnic or

religious identities. With that regard, Laakso and Olukoshi (1996:29) has noted that:

> Ethnic and religious identities are certainly not necessarily detrimental to national unity, and this is a message which needs to be repeated at this crucial stage in Africa's political development. The path to a sustainable national unity project is not to suppress these identities; rather, the state itself will have to be re-constituted to embody the various identities of the groups within its boundaries.

Thus, it could be argued here that the interpretations of re-constituting a state and suppression of ethnic identity need to be revisited to reconcile the two sides of the argument. While speaking re-constituting the Ethiopian state, for instance, re-defining the ethnic relations in the country appears essential. Conflict from an ethnic perspective erupts when ethnic relations are defined with confrontational sentiments, and hence, varying groups feel threatened by the activities of other groups (Karl and Stefan, 2009). It has been posited that there are two major types of sources of this category of tension in Ethiopia, namely that associated with the character of the relationship between the so-called 'settlers' and their 'host' community; and that related to perceptions of how relatives are being treated in distant locations, which attracts reprisal attacks or sentiment (Assefa, 2012; Dereje, 2009).

In line with Lijphart's (1997) argument, one of the leading causes of violent ethnic conflict in Ethiopia is that most minority groups have remained permanent minorities, while the majority groups are the permanent majority. This trend has profound implications for inter-ethnic relations among the diverse ethnic identities in the country. In this way, cooperation, consensus, and compromise incentives have been undermined. Various ethnic groups are forced to co-exist in an environment of mutual mistrust, apathy, and suspicion. Besides, identities in general and ethnic identity in particular in the country are constructed along exclusive and conflictual attributes contributing to intolerance and hostility. As a result, it poses an enormous challenge for building sustainable peace.

Moreover, as Ghai and Cottrell (2008) put it, in countries where the ethnic identity has been institutionalized, the social bondage that was binding society has been eroded and replaced with a very narrow ethnic identity. This is so because, since ethnic politics assumes differences, it pays little attention to shared history, thereby serving as a fertile ground to be easily activated by

conflict entrepreneurs. What follows, therefore, is that violent ethnic conflicts have become a method of collective action by diverse ethnic groups jostling for political power. Ethnic politics has also increasingly become instrumental for ethnic entrepreneurs to mobilize their respective groups for power-sharing (both political and economic) through playing the fertile ethnic salience. Past experiences also teach us that conflicts that begin politically based frequently assume ethnic dimensions in the country.

Therefore, re-constituting the ethnic relation in an inclusive and non-confrontational manner appears vital. Two sides of descriptions can be forwarded about how to achieve the same. The first is a description by Smith (2000), which focuses more on political liberalization, and the second is by Varshney (2002), which focuses more on associational forms of civic engagement. Smith's description on the issue is that political liberalization will first lead to an increase in violence, and once democratization occurs, there will be a decrease in ethnic violence. Smith (2000:25) used liberalization to mean political control being taken down, such as allowing freedom of the press, getting rid of arrests without charges, freedom from torture, or the "institutionalization of procedures for popular government." Hence, as per his argument, when there are viable political institutions for individuals and collectives to express their interests, the violent reaction to interest-based factors is reduced because there are democratic outlets for these concerns.

However, Varshney (2002:38) challenges institutional explanation about 'ethnic peace,' saying: "it fails to explain the regional difference in 'ethnic violence." Varshney (2002) reasons that though cities and regions share the same institutions, some cities and regions experience numerous riots and killings while others are entirely or relatively peaceful. Thus, he posits that the actual make it or break it factor for an 'ethnic peace' is not an institution but rather civil society. Hence, civic engagement (that is, organized networks bound together by working trust across ethnic groups, such as business associations, labor unions, and organized clubs) and social cohesion determine a given community's peaceful experience or otherwise. Though this article may not avoid the importance of political liberalization and democratization discourse in reducing ethnic conflict, it challenges the market and democracy as a panacea to the problem. Furthermore, as implied in the discussion above, there is not much evidence in western democracies that demonstrating the achievement of democracy and economic prosperity would lead to the abetment of ethno-groups mobilization. In line with that, Ronnie (1998, 1998: 67-68) notes that:

> While political liberalization is thought to provide the wherewithal to all individuals to participate equally in the economy, the levers of economic and political power in many countries are to be found in the hands of some dominant group that is better placed and able to take advantage of the new conditions created under economic liberalization. The result is growing disaffection among disadvantaged groups, whose identity is often defined in ethnic or sectarian terms.

Thus, while envisaging an 'ethnic peace' in a given country, building a cohesive society appears vital. The importance of a cohesive community is not only for the stable functioning of society but also for the consolidation and improvement of democratic institutions. A cohesive society reflects everyday civility and respect and protects the rights of all. A cohesive community relies on an all-inclusive social contract that requires attention to the relationship among all groups in society, including the most vulnerable ones and those previously discriminated against. This is as opposed to some understanding that vision social cohesion as, for instance, forced assimilation of minorities, sub-national identities, and differences. It also happens to be different from conventional thinking that focuses more on political settlements that reflect power agreements among elites.

So, the most important task should be building trust and interdependence among all groups in the society, which are core attributes of cohesion. With that regard, in countries like Ethiopia, where societal divisions pose a greater risk for the integrity of the state, making progress towards greater social inclusiveness appears vital. Saving its varying definition, social inclusion, in general, can be described as a "multidimensional process aimed at lowering economic, social and cultural boundaries between those who are included and excluded, and making these boundaries more permeable" (Therborn, 2007:2). And to achieve the same, it is essential to establish an appropriate structure, a structure that can be seen as a social contract to work together towards the benefits of collective action. Social cohesion is influenced by structural factors such as unequal stratification in society and power acquisition (Cederman, Wimmer, and Min, 2010). And an eroded social cohesion, in turn, can lead to violent ethnic conflict, as evidenced in different empirical works. That is precisely why an appropriate structure that forges social cohesion has become imperative for the twenty-first century and should be presented as the determining factor in building a sustained 'ethnic peace.'

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