Is Ethno-linguistic Based Federal System a threat or an opportunity for Ethiopian National Unity? A Critical Analysis of the on-going Discourses

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Abstract

Even if Ethiopia is left without a single choice other than introducing the federal political system; it did not escape of criticisms. Especially, as far as national unity is concerned, there are strong opposing views; the pro-unitary state and the pro-multiethnic federal system. This study is aimed to examine whether the so far ethno-linguistic federalism experience of the country has been contributing to or not in attaining national unity as well as national consensus. To this end, the study relied on secondary sources. Based on a thorough analysis of relevant sources, the following findings are obtained. Though, the proponents of pro-unitary system are of the opinion that the current federal system which constitutionally gives equal footing to ethnic groups is against the national unity of Ethiopia, this study shows that it is not ethnic federalism that is a barrier to national unity but there are diverse factors. These factors include but not limited to unbalanced interest, inadequacy of commitment to federalism principle, lack of constitutionalism and misconception of ethno-nationalism by some elites. It is true that the popular struggle for real autonomy and self-rule has continued, so also is the division and/or confusion regarding the Ethiopian national unity. This study suggests that acknowledging past injustices, practicing federalism principle genuinely and foresee reciprocated fate are imperative for building national unity in Ethiopia where all ethnic groups’ identity treated equally.

Key Words: Unity within Diversity, ethno-linguistic federalism, State Building, National Consensus, National Unity

1. Introduction

Global historical evidence demonstrates that self-rule has been the leading political ideology in guiding the political and cultural actions of territorially or culturally defined human groups
that see its common destiny as a people or a nation.\(^1\) The struggles for self-rule/ self-determination and popular sovereignty emerged in opposition to political totalitarianism, cultural dominance and economic exploitation on the global level. For this purpose, it is widely accepted in contemporary theory and practice of democracy and conflict resolution that one of the most effective ways to accommodate ethno-linguistic diversity is through the practical application of federalism in the institutions of self-government, power-sharing, and decentralization that are commonly associated with federations.

In multicultural state, the major target of federalism is to save a state from civil war, devastation and disintegration with spices of social capital for the process of nation building/national integration and diversity management.\(^2\) To achieve national unity, federalism devotes it’s time to develop systematic management formula in a diverse people. As such, scholars\(^3\) state that the most common typical cause to form a federal state structure is to set up peace and security.\(^4\) Based on this concept, national unity in federalism refers to the process of building unity within diversity by bringing together culturally and socially discrete groups in respect of differences to eliminate sources of internal conflicts.\(^5\) In this regard, the main objective of federalism is accommodating diversity, maintaining unity and sharing power among different groups. These principal values are the basic instruments for national unity in ethnically plural society like Ethiopia.\(^6\)

Based on this assumption, federalism in Ethiopia\(^7\) was founded upon the conviction that the unitary state institutions and the coercive homogenization attempts by the previous regimes

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\(^1\) As far as Ethiopia is concerned, one of the dominant features of its political history, particularly since World War II, has been the struggle between the forces of centralization and unity, on the one hand and ethno-regional minorities that sought equal recognition of their cultural-political representation and participation, and, most of all, territorial autonomy on the other. This struggle precipitated a civil war involving numerous armed liberation movements organized along ethnic lines.

\(^2\) In Ethiopia, there is no side clear that focus is given to either diversity or unity or both. Practically, it seems that one ethnic group identity, Abyssinian continued dominating other nations and nationalities under the current regime led by prosperity party.


\(^4\) For instance, Kincaid (2011: xxiv)


\(^6\) Ibid

\(^7\) The origins of the current federal option are in the ethno-nationalist liberationist rhetoric of the post-1991 era of Ethiopian history, led by the EPRDF.
were failures instructive of a fundamental shift. In line with this, the federal constitution suggests that the federal project was one of putting the state apart and reconstructing it using the various ethnic groups as the building blocks with the result of the ascendancy of ethnic nationalisms directly supported by the state. The federal constitution also depicts that the political project had the objective of making the primary locus of the Ethiopian national and political unity first in the different ‘nations, nationalities, and peoples’ or the states they constituted and secondarily in the Ethiopian state, notwithstanding the objectives of the regimes prior to 1991. Although there was no agreement more on mechanisms for addressing the problem than on the nature of the problem itself, the major political forces of the time considered it critical to deploy ethnicity, expressed in terms of national self-determination, as foundational principle of political organization.

On the other hand, there is a rumor that federalism undermines national unity and encourages conflict. One among many misapprehension about the assumption of federalism and its practical experiences is that nation-building may suffer as a result of the ethnic based division of powers; and that secession may be pursued by regional groupings. Some federations have failed (most notably, Yugoslavia) and many other federations continue to be challenged by the demands brought about by diversity. There is doubt that federalism leads to division which may puts national unity in danger which in turn may bring disintegration. Particularly, this group argues that different ethnic conflicts happened in different parts of Ethiopia that displaced millions of peoples indicate that Ethiopian national unity is undermined and it will lead to disintegration of the state as a whole. Nevertheless, there is no empirical support whether the so far multiethnic federalism experience of the country has been contributing to or not in attaining national unity as well as national consensus. There is,

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8 The Preamble to the FDRE Constitution distinctly depicts the place of honor that the numerous ethno-linguistic groups of the country occupy in the new constitutional order. It is not with the familiar words ‘We the people...’ that the Preamble commences, but rather with ‘We the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia’. See the preamble of the 1995 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia’s Constitution.


10 According to Daniel Elazar, federalism is not universally accepted without any opposition. There are oppositions that come from two directions. The forces that oppose federalism are forces of centralization and of fragmentation. Those who oppose federalism on behalf of centralization tend to be totalitarian with consolidationist trends while those who oppose it on behalf of fragmentation are ethno-nationalist movements seeking secession. Yet contemporary problems of ethnic conflict seem to have brought about a drift into ethnic federations as a situation.

thus, an absence of empirical evidence to suggest that federations in general and Ethiopia in particular more likely to experience internal conflict or instability. Backing to this, it is putting doubt on Ethiopian national unity recently and this study is inspired by the realization of such a change. Based on this, it requires a study such kind of this that would fill the gap. Therefore, the questions that would be answered include: What are the implications of current circumstance on the Ethiopian national unity? What are the challenges of building national unity with in diversity in Ethiopian federation? What measures has been taken so far at policy level to maintain national unity? Based on today’s experience, what measures should be taken to overcome the existing challenges and build strong unity within diversity in Ethiopia?

2. Ethno-linguistic Federalism in Ethiopia: A Political Maneuver or Remedy of the past?\(^\text{12}\)

After Ethiopia took its current shape, Ethiopian leaders followed the Jacobin republicanism approach meaning that they governed the state by suppressing ethnic and language diversity and imposing the language, culture and religion of one ethnic identity over the other ethnic groups. This principle of governance by Ethiopian successive regimes brought a never ending growing protest opposing a highly centralized system of governance that marginalized socioeconomic and cultural rights and suppressed self-determination\(^\text{13}\) of ethnic groups. At the end, political history of Ethiopia is changed through the adoption of ethno-linguistic based federal system which is a turning point.

According to the architect of Ethiopian federalism, EPRDF, ethnic federalism was a reaction to the ethnic domination and marginalization in the history of the Ethiopian state.

Existing literature\(^\text{14}\) demonstrates that ethno-linguistic federalism was not only a way of maintaining unity and preventing civil war, but also it became a means to overcome the Amhara hegemony.\(^\text{15}\) There are scholars\(^\text{16}\) who have favored the adoption of federalism in

\(^{12}\) In Ethiopia, there are different contending views concerning the ethno-linguistic based federal system and the content of national unity and the challenges surrounding it.


Ethiopia on the assumption that it will lead to efficient delivery of public services, enhance regional/local economic growth and balanced regional development. According to this assumption, national unity of Ethiopia would have been at the end had it not been for ethno-linguistic federalism’s ability to accommodate diversity and enhance national unity. The adoption of ethno-linguistic federalism brought an end to the long history of disproportionate centralization and assimilation project, nation building approach around the identity of one particular national group, the Amhara. At least at theory level, it introduced an accommodative approach by recognizing diversity as a foundation of reorganizing the state.

On the other hand, some Ethiopian scholars and political parties have criticized the idea of ethno-linguistic federalism from its inception and many have viewed it as a political maneuver of TPLF/EPRDF to divide the country and loosen the sense of national unity and Ethiopianism.

When we look at Ethiopian national unity before and after the adoption of ethno-linguistic federalism there are still unresolved hot contests. There are scholars who argue that in Africa, following independence, a notable state that became successful in maintaining national unity was Ethiopia. It is due to the then regimes promoted religious and linguistic homogenization policies in Ethiopia, where Amharic became the sole language of primary education and literature was banned in all other languages. Moreover, the constitution affirmed the church to be the national church and for the first time legally required the emperor to be a member of the church. Many non-Amharic speakers, non-Amhara ethnic groups and non-Christian Ethiopians thus converted to Christianity and/or changed their names to Amharic ones as a result of these policies.

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17 As a post cold war constitution, the federal democratic republic of Ethiopia’s constitution encompasses some specific elements in the context of the country’s political environment, especially in relation to national diversity, which according to many commentators enabled the country to survive from total disintegration taking in to account the then political demand of several ethno-nationalist groups.

18 Turton ‘Four Questions about Ethiopia’s Ethnic Federalism’ (2005) 1 (2) STAIR 88-101

19 There are still those who oppose federalism and mourn loss of the past. For some, federalism seems a diminishment of Ethiopian identity, even events and symbols commanding wide collective pride are not equally or similarly prized by all peoples of Ethiopia.


22 The 1955 revised constitution of Ethiopian emperor.
One cannot deny that Ethiopia under theocracy and feudalism, when the Abyssinian Christians were powerful, there was totalitarian system with firm central control and dictatorship. There was no diversity accommodation as well as no religious freedom that there was imposition of religion and ideologies on indigenous people through colonization. Here, figurative Ethiopian national unity was maintained by power through forced conversions and depopulation, mass reversion and/or conversion. There is no doubt that in real world this kind of maintaining national unity through assimilation would not have long existence. The central argument of this paper here is that there was no national unity at all if not however, it is fake national unity for the reason that identity of one ethnic group is imposed on the other and the majority of Ethiopian nation, nationalities and peoples identity is oppressed. Today, elites and ethnic based political parties organized in the name of an ethnic group\(^{23}\) that was dominating, oppressing and exploiting others identity hold responsible ethno-linguistic based federalism as a reason for absence/constraint of national unity as well as national consensus in Ethiopia. However, the reality on the ground is far from this that there are factors contributing rather than ethnic-based federalism.\(^{24}\) Based on this, the next section of this study would focus on identifying factors affecting Ethiopian national unity.

3. Challenges of National Unity in Ethiopian Ethno-linguistic Based Federalism

The peaceful interaction between the state and identity groups and among identity groups plays critical role in constructing national unity of a given federation. Respect and equality of identity among the multicultural societies is a bridge in creating an understanding and cooperation to national unity project since it possibly result in national consensus for all inclusive and collective political and economic destinies. However, in existing Ethiopian circumstances, the problem of creating national unity is that there are two clear ideologies which cannot go together. The first ideology is ‘follow mine only’ called fake unitary group

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\(^{23}\) For instance, National Movement of Amhara, an officially established political party is explicitly intimidating the Ethiopian ethno-linguistic based federal system and the Ethiopian constitutional order. Dr. Desalegne Chane, a chairman of the party stated that Ethiopian national unity is danger since the adoption of federal system. It is one of the greatest prides to be an Amhara that Ethiopia is made based on this ethnic group identity. And Amhara is the father of Ethiopia’s national unity. For full speech [http://www.tobiatube247.com/ltv-world-interview-with-dr-desalegn-chane-chairman-of-nama_fa2be363f.html](http://www.tobiatube247.com/ltv-world-interview-with-dr-desalegn-chane-chairman-of-nama_fa2be363f.html) See also full speech from national movement of Amhara convention - Bahir Dar, Ethiopia [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6L-3OvqM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O6L-3OvqM)

\(^{24}\) These groups argue that ethno-linguistic based federalism largely affects loyalty to the center by creating artificial loyalty to one’s ethnicity. It brought a trade-off or conflict of loyalty between the center and the units.
and the other is ‘follow yours for yourself and let others follow theirs’ called federalist group. Here, one can argue that it is very difficult to build a common country with two insignificant opposite ideology. Even if it is almost three decades since Ethiopia started to experiment ethno-federalism as a means to overcome if not reduce its internal identity instability, these ideologies are negatively affecting Ethiopian national unity. In one hand, there is an attempt of developing self-rule at local level and building ‘one political and economic society’ which is to improve national unity at centre. In doing this, though there are limitations in order to ascertain autonomous local government, there are constraints that are influencing national unity which includes ideology differences, weak and/poor institutions and identity policies. A cautious look at Ethiopian ongoing political discourses is jam-packed of doubt and misdirection and pointing finger to ethno-linguistic based federal system, while in reality there are aspects that require due attention. Under this section, this study would try to highlight these concerns for readers.

3.1 Unbalanced Interest

As explained earlier, ethno-linguistic federalism was supposed to be the best one than territorial federalism which is aimed at answering the long protracted question of nationalities. There was no or little option other than ethnic federalism for the liberation fronts of that time. Basically, it requires accepting this reality in order to build national unity as well as national consensus. For this study, it is possible to identify two generalized perspectives that exist at opposite pole. Firstly, conflicts among ethno-linguistic groups Ethiopian nationalities were subjected to the national operation nation of the Amhara the ruling circles from which the cultures and identities imposed. Secondly, tension between values of citizens and ethno-cultural identity: some value favored the central government as a

25 Habtu, 91-123. Will Kymlicka notes in this regard that what makes Ethiopian federalism strikingly distinct from other multi-nation federal systems is the ‘explicitness, at constitutional level, of its affirmation of the national self-determination and the logical consistency with which it attempts to institutionalize that principle’. WKymlicka Emerging Western Models of Multination Federations: Are They Relevant for Africa? Paper delivered at the Seminar on Ethnic Federalism: The Challenges for Ethiopia held on 14-16 April 2004 in Addis Ababa.

26 It is very difficult to argue that local governments are autonomous for the reason that Ethiopia has been experiencing extreme and repeated mass protests, uprising and society-government relationship crisis over the past two to three decades. The absolute dominance of a single vanguard party, EPRDF as well as the absence of fair representation of Ethiopian nations, nationalities and peoples at federal institutions resulted power dominance by single ethnic group, deterioration of institutions and political opposition.

sign of national cohesion and correct rule in creating uniform values of Ethiopian citizenship, but for others, modern Ethiopia where naked force by the unitarist and assimilation is empire of the north had made a set of historical blunders that should be redressed at present through the respect of self-determination and self-administration.

From its nature, a federal system requires negotiation of interest\(^{(28)}\) which is absent if not limited in Ethiopian context. There are ethnic groups who struggle to regain superiority and dominance while other ethnic groups run for the equality. One indication of this fact is that they oppose the existing political system from its adoption. Basically, as it is stated under conceptual framework of this study, in its principle federalism is one option in order to improve unity within diversity though there maybe gaps in democratically and genuinely implementing its principle.\(^{(29)}\) However, in any federation, when there are interests that are difficult to come together, it is inevitable that national unity as well as national consensus of that federation is under doubt. Due to this, conflict may happen and we should not condemn the ethno-linguistic federal system rather than ethnic group interest that is very far from each other. The other wonder in this line that can be raised concerning absence or limitation of consensus among ethnic-groups in Ethiopia is on the content and nature of constitution itself, type of government and the flag.

Finally, it is not bad to raise disagreement that exists between Ethiopians themselves and historians as far as Ethiopia is concerned. There is no clear agreement concerning how and when did today’s Ethiopia really formed. It is true that it would be difficult to sum up the century’s issue within one piece of this kind of study. However, some historian affirm that the Ethiopian history has date back three thousand years ago and above. From this study point of view, those historians are counting back Ethiopian history for thousands years considering

\(^{(28)}\) The lack of cross-ethnic consensus on diversity and patronage reduces the possibility of the success of multination federalism. The fear that prevails in many developing multi-ethnic countries is that any state recognition of ethnic pluralism could undermine national unity and embolden neighboring countries with territorial ambitions. In contrast, the lack of cross-ethnic commitment to accommodation of diversity adversely affects the relationship between local majorities and minorities. Hence, it makes ethno-linguistic federalism less attractive.

\(^{(29)}\) As the units of a federal system form a federation to maintain a balance between unity and diversity, strengthening unity or diversity alone may result in the collapse of the federation. Too much emphasis on unity may gradually take away the powers of constituent units. That may force member states to leave the federation. Excessive emphasis on diversity is also equally dangerous to a union in a federation. It in the long run, may make states stronger than the federal government and that may enable them to ignore the federal government and secede from the federation unilaterally. The latter one is visible in Ethiopian context that after Abiy Ahimad came to power; Tigray region of Ethiopia is acting as independent state.
about the different kingdoms that had been in the current Ethiopia territory. The other historian camp argues that the modern Ethiopian history start from the unification era in 19th century. It is better to categorize under Pre-unification and post-unification. The current Ethiopian figure is the output of 19th century unification characterized by making Ethiopia and re-making Ethiopia. The unification route was kind of conquering by force that escorts for causalities and the coercion has imprinted an awful history in the mind of those ethnic groups who have been conquered by force; for the generation as well. Indeed, there are ethnic group elites who have a high regard for the then vanquisher as the hero of unified Ethiopia.

3.2 Lack of Commitment to the principle of Ethno-linguistic Federalism

Existing literature suggests that genuine implementation of ethno-linguistic federalism needs commitment from both institution and policy of the government. Coming to Ethiopia, as stated under conceptual framework, democratic federalism is a pathway to diversity accommodation and creation of unity within diversity. There will be hardly possible choices except ethno-linguistic based federalism to address the nationalities question. Since, unitary states failed to answer this long standing question and further more it perpetuated this problem it will be wise to come up with effective practice of ethno-linguistic federalism. Thus, ethno-linguistic federalism has many things for the nationalities of Ethiopia than serving only as a political maneuver. It would again be unrealistic to assume that due to the fact that Ethiopia opts for ethnic-linguistic based federalism it will disintegrate and civil war erupts. This does not mean that based on three decades experiment of federal system, Ethiopia applied democratic and genuine federalism as there are still gaps in its practice, particularly, absence of fair representations at federal institutions.

As explained earlier, accommodation of diversity is one of the purposes of federalism in multicultural federal systems like Ethiopia. Due to the existing reality in Ethiopian federation, accommodation of diversity does necessarily need commitment to ethno-linguistic based federalism principles otherwise it would be limited to paper only. It is so because accommodation of diversity and the establishment of a democratic environment that

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31 Accommodation seeks to ensure each ethnic group has the public space necessary to express its identity, make its own decisions in areas of critical importance and to protect itself against the majority. [http://aigaforum.com/article2016/Diversity-Conflicts-and-Multi-Cultural-Federations.htm](http://aigaforum.com/article2016/Diversity-Conflicts-and-Multi-Cultural-Federations.htm)
enhances the participation of diverse groups are crucial to avoid marginalization of some groups within a multi-cultural federation. If these conditions are lacking in practice, those groups left behind or groups which do not get appropriate share of power will opt to leave a union. From this, we can understand that failure to justifiably represent diversity through shared federal institutions will create real threats to the unity of a federation. This article argues it is important to promote a democratic federal political system in Ethiopia along with genuine democratic institutions that are accountable to the people.

The other concern that is influencing national unity as well as diversity management in Ethiopia is media. The role of media in building national unity is to promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among the individuals and various ethnic groups. It plays a pivotal role by patronizing joint good relations in different occasion of different religious, racial and ethnic groups. It contributes to eradicate discrimination and superiority of one ethnic group through encouraging them to participate in different fest of mainstream. Historically, in Ethiopian politics, media particularly diasporas media played a critical role in removing TPLF regime. However, study shows that there is limited role played by Medias in order to improve Ethiopian national unity and equal protection of all identities in Ethiopia.

3.3 Elite’s Misconception of Nationalism and National Unity

The challenge to Ethiopia is the challenge either to accept the past injustices and awful history and lead the common struggle for national unity and democracy or reject it and reduce national consensus. In this regard, the role of elites and political activist plays lion share roles. Under this sub-section, we will look at the controversy around nationalism and its link with Ethiopian national unity.

32 Whenever the issue of maintaining national unity comes, the role of media including social media becomes a burning question. In most multiethnic developing countries, media attempt to play crucial role in managing ethnic tensions and integrating diverged ethnicities. In this study I will focus on the role of media in national unity.

33 This does not mean that media has no role in changing political landscape of Ethiopia. For instance, an accumulation of years of frustration from ethnic groups who are marginalized by the TPLF government brought endless protests that finally lead to the coming to power of new leadership.

34 The term ‘elite’ is originally from the Latin, eligere, which means "to elect". The elites are a relatively small dominant group within a large society, which enjoys a privileged status in comparison to other individuals’ status in the society. There are various elite groups in society those who have explicit and implicit role in national unity. And these are political, business, professional and education elite. This study would focus on both political and educational elite.

35 In Ethiopia, there is only ethno-nationalism and there is no strand of nationalism that could be described as Pan-Ethiopian. The so-called Pan-Ethiopian nationalism is a deviation of Amhara nationalism which is hidden as Ethiopian and this could lead to confrontation.
Basically, the term nationalism is the principle that recognizes the nation as the primary unit of political commitment where as nation is group that people define as their in group. When it comes to national identity, it is linked to genetics, that there is a basic particular difference between people of one nationality and another. On the other hand, some scholars view a nation as great that is supposed rather than based in substantial reality that are socially constructed in its virulent forms, it can by itself lead to conflict. When one group of people believes that it is superior to others that it has the right to rule over or even exterminate other groups, it is easy to see how violence can result. That sort of doctrine was widespread.

Some scholars argue that the development of nationalism would affect national unity and the most important for them is not economical exploitation and political dominance of particular nation but maintaining national unity. On the other hand, some other writers warn that given the diversity found in a particular state, if the quests for nationalism exist, the possibility to have national unity is in danger. Here they argue that the development of nationalism may be negative nationalism, would negatively affect the progress of national unity. Coming to Ethiopian political discourse, some criticize the quest of nationalism, self-respect and self-determination as evil to the Ethiopian national unity. This group gives concern, not to the elimination of diversified identity that the Ethiopian state experienced but maintaining the Ethiopian national unity. Based on two decades experiment of federal system, there is a fear that the existing political crisis is due to development of nationalism where as in fact it is not. However, existing literature suggests that there are still gaps in implementing genuine federal political system hand in hand with democratic nationalism which help us to bring national unity.

The other wonder to be discussed here is elite roles in building national consensus. In Ethiopia, there is lack of national consensus on some of the contents of the constitution.

36 Paul D'Anieri; ‘International Politics: Power and Purpose in Global Affairs,’ Brief Edition, PP.321
37 Ibid
40 John Markakis, a long-time scholar on Ethiopia, suggests that causes of ethnic conflicts are mostly competition for resources and power although in what looks like a lapse in thought he also seems to endorse the cultural difference theory when he tried to explain the Issa-Afar conflict in the light of historical/traditional enmity between the two groups. Merera Gudina attributes ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia to, among other things, contending nationalisms that have emerged and evolved over time in Ethiopia. He also deplores the incomplete transition to democracy as a result of which we continue to have political instability that is rooted in ethnicity. From both scholars perspective, we can argue that the development of nationalism strengths national unity as well as federal system in Ethiopia.
and/or its practice, type of government, flag, the continuity of centripetal and centrifugal forces and polarized politics and this demonstrate the continuity of Ethiopia’s exclusionary politics. In the absence of consensus it is difficult to bring unity that it needs a major breach by concerned groups.

The ruling party and the oppositions (elites/academicians/activists/civilians) and the opposition among themselves need to develop an art of concession and cooperation, civility and responsibility, in their political discourse otherwise no one can improve national unity as a whole. Above all, Pan-Ethiopians are a threat to Ethiopian federation national unity. As it stands now, elites and/or political parties who call themselves Pan-Ethiopians are centrifugal forces who should learn from the failure of former governments and opt for new democratic Ethiopia that accommodates diversity and fair representation of nations and nationalities otherwise the disintegration of Ethiopia is not far. There should, moreover, be a national consensus on national issues so that it is possible to build national unity on one hand and maintaining diversity on the other hand.

Finally, it is wise to look at the constitutional set up of Ethiopia in line with national unity and diversity. From its nature, Ethiopian constitutional blueprint has some structural limitations as far as diversity accommodation and building national unity is concerned. Concerning this, some attribute these to its full institutionalization of ethnicity where as it is, however, possible to argue that the limitation is attributable to a more fundamental problem which involves a couple of things. Firstly, the constitution’s conception of the characteristics of ethnic groups in general and the nature of Ethiopia’s ethnic diversity in particular, and secondly, the mechanisms through which national self-determination is translated into state structures through instituting a particular form of federation.

4. Conclusion
National unity and equal respect of all identities through democratic self-rule in a federation is an integral as well as part and parcel of state stability. We noted that if Ethiopia is going to be surviving as a state in the future, it highly demands the enhancement of self-rule at local hand in hand with democratic federalism, if not but it is impossible to bring national unity by eliminating nation’s self-rule which will even facilitate the disintegration of Ethiopia. Now, Ethiopia is facing lack of national consensus not because of development of ethnic groups’ nationalism but due to these groups who think that its development would affect negatively the Ethiopian national unity. Particularly, those groups favor unitary system of governance
for Ethiopia arguing that ethno-linguistic federal system brought division along ethnic lines which create favorable condition for ethnic conflict to occur in different parts of Ethiopia.

At present, there still are constraints and dilemmas in the field of national unity and local self-rule of nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia. The federal formula lacked genuine institutions and policies to encourage democratic national unity within diversity. Generally, this study argue that if the wars are fought to preserve national unity in the face fragmentation ethnic-linguistic groups nationalism, then ethno-linguistic federalism can offer a solution to the concern of both national unity and self-rule. Ethno-linguistic federalism can be an incentive (motivation or encouragement) for national unity and peace. However, it can do so only if both/or all groups are willing to compromise having realized that the assimilation approach and military option is not viable any more.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.
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